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# Eucharistic Miracle or Sacrilegious Fraud?

About the same time as the feast of Corpus Christi on June 22nd, 1962, began an event that has, more than anything else about Garabandal, aroused discussion and doubt; an event that would be named the *Miracle of the Host*.

Returning to Conchita's diary:

**As we had so often insisted that the Virgin and the Angel perform a miracle, on June 22nd,<sup>(1)</sup> when I was receiving Holy Communion from the Angel, he told me:**

***I am going to perform a miracle. Not I: God, through my intercession and yours.*<sup>(2)</sup>**

**And I said:**

***And what is it going to be?***

**And he told me:**

***When I give you Holy Communion, the Sacred Host will be seen on your tongue.***

**And I thought it over<sup>(3)</sup> and said:**

***Surely, when I receive Communion from you, the Host is seen on my tongue!***

**And he told me that it wasn't so, that the people around me didn't see It; but that on the day when he would perform the miracle, It would be seen.**

**And I said to him:**

***But that's very small!*<sup>(4)</sup>**

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1. We have seen that Fr. Valentín noted on June 22, following the feastday of Corpus Christi: «*There were no apparitions.*» Was Conchita mistaken then as to the date? Or was this an error of the pastor who at times made his notes from what others told him? Conchita's short ecstasy to receive Communion could have occurred unnoticed by everyone or almost everyone since the ecstasies for the Mystical Communion were brief and frequently without witnesses.

2. One of Conchita's maladroito expressions. She should have said *by means of us*. The Angel told her that she and he would serve as instruments for the accomplishment of a prodigy. Conchita has often improperly used the word *intercession*.

3. The girl was very surprised by what she had just heard the Angel say. It had never occurred to her that the Sacred Host, so visible to them during their ecstasies, could remain completely invisible to the spectators.

4. The miracle announced by the Angel seemed very small to Conchita; she doubted that it would make an impression. She used the term *milagruco* which signifies a very small miracle in the idiom of her country.

**And he laughed. And that day, after telling me this, he left.**

**On the following day, as there wasn't a Mass in the village, after reciting a rosary in the Cuadro,<sup>(5)</sup> I went to pray a Station at the church.**

**And before I went inside, the Angel appeared to me, smiling very much, and he spoke to me as usual:**

***Pray the "I Confess" and consider that you are going to receive God.***

**And then he gave me Communion.**

**And he told me to say the "Soul of Christ" with him. And I did it.**

**When I had made my thanksgiving, I asked the Angel:**

***And when is the miracle going to be?***

**And he told me:**

***The Virgin will tell you that.***

**And then he left. This apparition was on June 29th.**

Conchita, who frequently confuses dates in her diary,<sup>(6)</sup> seems to incur here an obvious contradiction. She has just told us that the meeting with the Angel was **on the following day** after June 22nd. For this reason, it would not have been June 29th, but June 23rd, which in that year fell on Saturday. This confusion must have been due to the fact that the following Friday, June 29th (feast of the holy apostles Peter and Paul), was the day on which she learned the date of the *little miracle*.

**After the Angel told me that he was going to perform a miracle, I told it to the other girls: Loli, Jacinta, and Mari Cruz.**

**I told them that the Angel was going to perform a miracle with us.**

**At night on that date, while asking the Angel when the miracle would be, the Virgin came.**

**She came smiling very much as usual.**

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5. Since the preceding winter, on the Virgin's request, the girls had to go every morning to pray the rosary at the *Cuadro*, each one at her own time; the time for Conchita was 8 o'clock in the morning.

6. It should be taken into account that she wrote the diary many months after the episode that she is here relating.



“When is the miracle?”

**And I said to her:**

***The Angel St. Michael told me that through his intercession and mine,<sup>(7)</sup> God, Our Lord, was going to perform a miracle.***

**She didn't say anything to me and I said,  
*When is the miracle?***

**And she told me:**

***On Friday, the 29th,<sup>(8)</sup> you will hear a voice that will tell you.***

**And I said to her:**

***Whose voice will this be?***

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7. Here should be repeated what was said in footnote 2.

8. In the original, crossed out and erased, there perhaps could be read 30, rather than 29; but there is no doubt that Friday was the 29th.

**And she didn't say anything to me . . .**

**Friday came, and as the Virgin had told me, I felt a voice while at the Pines which told me:**

***July 18th would be when the miracle would occur.***

**The voice that I felt said to me:**

***The little miracle, as you say.***

But let us not go too fast. June 29th, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, has always been held in Spain with great festivities. Falling that year on Friday, as has been indicated, it gave the occasion for a holiday weekend, leaving three days free for vacation, as the people were off work on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. A good occasion for people from the various distant provinces to meet in Garabandal. And actually that is what happened.

# An Unforgettable Holiday Weekend

Among the many people who came was a lawyer from Palencia named Luis Navas Carrillo. Not satisfied merely with devoutly living those days, he also made a report of them, which now serves us well for that period of the year 1962:

«After passing through the mountain pass at Piedras Luengas and from there viewing on the left the fantastic panorama of the Picos de Europa mountains, we took the narrow and tortuous highway that went down to the rapids of the Nansa River. And it was well into the afternoon when we came to Cossío. It was June 29th.

We began the ascent to Garabandal. The temperature was pleasant and the sky clear. During the way up, I couldn't put out of my mind the

memory of another day that was very different — the dark and stormy October 18th that I had experienced in the same place. Today the soft mountain breeze purified our lungs and prepared our spirits for the possible beneficial actions of the Virgin Mary.

In the village, we had time to rest about an hour and a half. Afterward, at nightfall, they told us that the girls were walking through one of the streets, already in ecstasy. We easily found them and joined a group of people who were following them toward the Pines. We lost them from view a little beyond the Cuadro since — according to the instructions that had been given by the Most Holy Virgin, as they said — we all were to stay at a distance.<sup>(9)</sup> There we were waiting, a little anguished, since some heard, or thought they heard faint

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9. It may have been during the ecstasy at the Pines that Conchita heard the voice that was foretold, telling her the date of the *milagru* (little miracle); or it may have been during the day while she was walking alone through the area.



“The girls were walking through one of the streets, already in ecstasy.”

shrieks, that in the silence of the night and darkness had to remind many of the screams on the night of Corpus Christi.

After a while the girls appeared and they came down toward us. And they stayed rather close; sufficiently close so that with illumination from a powerful flashlight we were able to observe how they fell and how they got up off the stony ground. The beams of light from the flashlights that the girls themselves carried, and with which they had gone out of their houses to come to the rendezvous with the Virgin, lent a special charm to the scene. Not far from them, Mari Loli's father and Jacinta's mother could be distinguished slightly in front of the others.

The silence, which seemed a strange echo on that serene and starry night, helped us to meditate.<sup>(10)</sup>

After the ecstasy had ended, the girls showed tears on their faces and serious and sad expressions that contrasted with the joyful countenances that they usually had.

The impressions from that first day tempered my spirit so as to understand better this array of things that were beyond reason and the senses, that only could be comprehended by opening wide the eyes of faith.

### June 30th, Saturday

This was the most moving of the three days that I spent at the time in Garabandal.

At the beginning of the evening, we were waiting in Conchita's house. Her mother told her to put on her boots, sensing that the time was drawing near. A little later the girl fell into ecstasy, went out from her home, and drawing with her all the strangers and many from the village, went praying the rosary through the streets and alleys. Some of the decades were recited, others were sung. The voice of the girl in ecstasy, so musical, so full of real, sincere and profound piety, penetrated into us, and immersed us in a sensation of well-being and serenity.

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10. The affairs of Garabandal always brought those who were watching them, and who were not too frivolous, to this attitude of respect, silence and meditation.

I had never seen the girls walking backwards;



but I had heard talk about it, and actually with a certain repugnance bordering on ridicule. Now I can testify that *that* by its harmony, by its grace and rhythm, appeared to be a thrilling celestial dance.

On the way, the seer came up to Fidelín's car. She stopped and made the sign of the cross on the



hood and windshield. It occurred to me that perhaps the Virgin wanted to bless and show her approval this way to the only taxi driver who, at the time, was taking the risk of bringing people over those dangerous roads.

Not long afterwards, the visionary went to search for Mari Cruz. The door of her house was locked. Conchita knocked on it forcefully and persistently until it was opened. Then she went up the steep staircase, came to the place where her companion was, and put the crucifix on her lips. It appeared that Conchita didn't forget Mari Cruz even during her vision, asking the Virgin to appear to Mari Cruz with the same frequency as with the others.

Afterward, to my great surprise, she took us to the cemetery, through those solitary and

somber trails. In front of the gate, she stopped for a while and solemnly made the sign of the cross toward the inside, as imparting a blessing upon the graves.<sup>(11)</sup>

On returning, she entered the house of her aunt Maximina. And finally came the time for *the race*, which for me was a genuine novelty. Before starting it, she stopped and extended her arms slightly; she went like a wind through the winding path, without touching the walls, the fences, or the stones that were scattered everywhere — without forgetting the low balconies, against which one could hang his head, as happened to me. We couldn't follow her, much less catch up to her.

When she returned, we all went toward the church, and in the churchyard itself a remarkable rosary concluded what had lasted so long and contained so many incidents. There the *Salve* was sung and the *Credo* recited. My attention was certainly attracted when the girl, after *Holy Catholic Church*, clearly added *Apostolic and Roman*. They told me that she only did this when she recited the *Credo* in ecstasy.<sup>(12)</sup>

Mari Loli had the second vision of that Saturday night. I was there to see the beginning in her home. She went up some almost perpendicular stairs; she began going through different rooms, and right away her father sensed that she was looking for her rubber sandals. He put them near the girl's feet. She had hardly put them on when she fell violently on her knees, and leaned backwards till she struck her head smack against the floor. Her father Ceferino, told Jacinta, who was present, to ask her:<sup>(13)</sup>

— *What did that smack on your head do to you?*

We all saw the girl in ecstasy open her lips in a slight smile and answer:

— *What smack?*

A little later, Jacinta went into ecstasy too. The two went into the street and began their march toward the Pines while saying the second rosary of the night. On the hilltop they fell on their knees. Afterwards, they went backwards . . . By their attitude they gave the impression that the weight of the world was lying upon them and crushing them.

The descent from the hill, backwards, was amazing. Instead of coming down by the regular straight way, they took a transverse shortcut, without following any trail, after going over an almost vertical cliff of considerable height. It seemed to me that the figure that they were seeing was moving quite gradually, so that they could glide slowly toward the village.

And down below, I don't think there was a street or alley that didn't see the passage of the night rosary procession. Even the young men singing and drinking in a tavern couldn't avoid it, since the girls entered the tavern and gave them the crucifix to kiss; they certainly took on an attitude of complete respect.<sup>(14)</sup>

During these marches back and forth, Mari Loli lost one of her sandals; a little later, she began to retrace her way back, while walking backwards, until her bare foot touched against the lost sandal. Without lowering her head and without using her hands, she put it on her foot.

Seconds later, graciously raising her arms, she began to run at dizzying speed, avoiding all types of obstacles. Suddenly, she stopped beside a stranger of elegant appearance: this was Concepción Zorrilla, a member of the cast of a foreign theatrical company that had performed in Madrid several days previously. This woman,

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11. Christians realize that *the dead* are not in the tombs. The dead in the essential part of their being — their soul or their spirit — are in another location. What is in the grave is not the *person* but his remains or dust, which deserve great care, and from which afterward will come the restoration and the life after the resurrection.

12. The *Credo* that is ordinarily said outside the Mass is more brief than this; in speaking of the Church, it only says: *I believe in One Holy Catholic Church*, without the *Apostolic and Roman*. Perhaps the child, inspired from above — and therefore not comprehending the reason — was warning in advance against certain *ecumenical* attitudes that were going to come and which would lead the Church into confusion.

13. As has already been mentioned in the early chapters, the girl in ecstasy was not able to establish communication with anyone except another visionary in the normal state.

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14. The young men's attitude is not unexpected. Rather negative toward the practice of religion as all those of that age and environment are inclined, they were furthermore habituated to the things that were happening in their village every day; perhaps also, a little tired of them. How could they be expected to renounce all their leisure time!

before returning to her native Uruguay, had detoured from the route to Paris, desiring to go up to that remote spot on the Spanish map in search of . . .

What she was searching for — certainly an answer to her doubts and worries — she must have found when the girl in ecstasy, with her gaze upwards and without turning her head toward her, held out her arm, giving her the crucifix to kiss. She refused it two times, but had to give in to the sweet persistence of the girl and put her lips on the sacred image, while big tears ran down from her eyes. She herself confessed later that, if she had held back from the crucifix, she had done it only because she considered herself completely unworthy to give it her kiss.

On the day she left, I had the opportunity of taking her photograph with Mari Loli, and I sent it to her so that she could forever remember, in her distant native land, the unforgettable moments of her visit to Garabandal.<sup>(15)</sup>

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15. Dr. Puncernau, the neuro-psychiatrist from Barcelona, described his experiences in this case in the pamphlet, *Psychological Phenomena of Garabandal*, but he puts Conchita in the place of Loli:

«In Ceferino's tavern there was a young woman from Uruguay who worked in the *Follies Bergère* of Paris. We soon started up a conversation. She told me that she not only didn't believe in these supposed apparitions, but she didn't believe in anything about religion. She had come to Garabandal simply out of curiosity. After a while I suggested going outside to see what was happening with the visionaries.

We saw them at a distance (being hidden ourselves in the shadows of the house) as they headed toward the little village church, praying the rosary. From our hidden observation point we saw what was happening.

Soon we saw Conchita, in a trance, detach herself from the procession and make her way — walking normally, but with an unusual swiftness — toward us, who were all staying hidden in the shadows, leaning against the wall of the house.

She was carrying a little crucifix in her hand.

I thought, *She has found out that I am a doctor, and now is coming to make something of it. But how could she have seen me?*

But no, she headed toward my companion and put the crucifix very forcefully on her lips so that she kissed it once, twice, and a third time.

The Virgin Mary was for the dancers of the *Follies Bergère* too.

Afterwards Conchita, still in the trance, joined the other girls and continued praying the rosary.

As previously with Conchita's rosary, this one also ended in the courtyard of the church with the singing of a *Salve Regina*.

My curiosity led me to ask why the girls in ecstasy came so often to the church, knowing that for them, in those circumstances, it was always closed. The answer had been given sometime before, through the voice of the girls themselves:

*The reason is that the Virgin likes to go near to where Jesus is.»*

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In days like these, the presence of priests and religious could not be missing. With regard to their presence, Luis Navas says in his report:

«I was greatly pleased to see the deference that the girls held toward priests; it was worthy of St. Teresa of Jesus. There were four priests there in the village on that Saturday, June 30th; and the Virgin had to be happy since, according to the girls: *The Virgin likes priests and people without faith to come.*<sup>(16)</sup>

During Loli's vision in her home, a Passionist Father and a Carmelite Father stayed respectfully on their knees. The girl gently lifted both of them up, making them stand on their feet. On the following day the Passionist Father told me, *I weighed 78 kilos and on top of that, I*

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My companion, the ballerina, was weeping unstopably, with deep heartfelt sobs, so inconsolable that I thought she was having an attack. I accompanied her to the wooden benches propped against the outside wall of Ceferino's tavern.

The crowd gathered around. I tried to calm her down.

She was finally able to tell that she had thought in her mind, *"If it is true that the Virgin is appearing, then let one of the girls come to give me a sign."*

— *Hardly had I thought this when Conchita came running toward me to give me the crucifix to kiss. I didn't want to kiss it, and I held her hand back. But with exceptional strength she forced the crucifix against my lips, and I had no other choice but to kiss it once, twice, and a third time — I, the unbeliever, the atheist, who believed in nothing. This shook me intensely.*

We met days later on the train back to Bilbao. And I know, since we wrote each other several times, that she left the *Follies Bergère* and went back to her family in Uruguay.»

16. As in so many other points, Garabandal was coming in advance to warn about the other imminent crisis of doctrine concerning the priesthood. The furious *desacralization*, that soon would show itself in the clergy, could not at that time be foreseen.



Dr. Puncernau with Mari Cruz and Loli at the Pines

*used force to make myself stay down; nevertheless, the girl raised me to my feet with the greatest of ease.*<sup>(17)</sup> The Carmelite Father edified me with his humility and silence. He had come that very afternoon from Burgos and he spent almost his entire stay with the people, distributing and investing scapulars. I felt nostalgic, recalling the month of May in my student years at the Instituto de Burgos.»

On Sunday, July 1st, much the same history took place as on the two previous days. Luis Navas tells of it:

«On this day, we had a longer wait. The first apparition, which was Conchita's, began at ten at night. The people had left her home, thinking that nothing would happen. I had the good fortune of going out at the time to seek a paralytic girl, whom I had advised to remain at Conchita's house until the people came to pick

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17. Maximina writes about this in her letters to the Pifarré family; but she says Conchita was the one in ecstasy, similar to the misnaming of the visionary in the case of the woman from Uruguay.

her up. There I met Doctor Puncernau from Barcelona.<sup>(18)</sup> Conchita fell violently on her knees and began the vision. She offered the crucifix to us to kiss; when the doctor's turn came, the girl did something different: with a single movement of her extended arms, she gave it to him three times to kiss.

Before the vision began, I had complained to Conchita that she had never offered me the crucifix. Because of this, I felt a considerable consolation on seeing how she presented it to me, since I well knew that the girls don't act by their own volition in giving the crucifix to kiss or in holding up holy cards and rosaries toward the Vision; they do it according to the directions of the Virgin. This helped me to understand something I had read about Padre

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18. This doctor, an eminent neuro-psychiatrist, who practiced and taught in the capital of Cataluña, tenaciously studied the affairs of Garabandal and came to the conclusion, repeatedly expressed by him, that *«from the medical and scientific point of view, I have found no satisfactory physiological or psychological explanation for these events which have produced such extraordinary phenomena.»*



*Pio, Many times God makes me forget certain people for whom I had intended expressly to pray, and He presents others to me for whose salvation I should intercede.*

The doctor had handed Conchita a letter in order that she might ask the Virgin for the cure of a patient. On the following day, I saw the girl write the answer she had received; later she gave it to the doctor with the request not to open the letter until he was in the presence of the sick person, who was dying of an incurable illness according to what I heard.»

From what Luis Navas described of the second apparition which concerned Loli, this is what seems to have the greatest interest:

«The time for giving the crucifix to kiss was thrilling. Kissing it themselves first, as was their custom; then, giving it first to the Virgin and then to the person . . . When it came to the time for eight persons who had come that day from Cádiz, I was really edified by the reverence and faith with which they kissed the crucifix.

Loli's ecstasy had lasted an hour and twenty minutes. Eighty minutes that seemed to me to be ten! Something very strong must have held my attention to lose the notion of time like this.

After a clear, moonlit night, I awoke to a magnificent dawn. It was the day of departure. I made up my mind once again to keep the resolution made on the previous trip: to recite daily the holy family rosary, remembering in difficult times and lukewarmness the words transmitted from the Virgin by the visionaries: *Hail Marys are the flowers that please her the most.*

With a farewell to the Passionist priest and a great desire to return again, we ended our stay at San Sebastián de Garabandal on Monday, July 2, 1962.»

## The News Spreads; Expectation Mounts

Luis Navas Carrillo left Garabandal without

knowing anything of the *little miracle (milagruco)* that the Angel had foretold. But on the same day as his departure, Monday, July 2nd, 1962 — the anniversary of the first apparition of the Virgin — a person came to the village who was going to be the first to know about it, after the girls.

**The first person whom I told that the Angel was going to perform a miracle was a priest: Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva.**



Fr. de la Riva and *child witnesses*

**And on the same day I told it to Mari Cruz, Loli, and Jacinta too.<sup>(19)</sup>**

Conchita does not give the date or the circumstances of her communication; we know them, thanks to the *Memorias* of Fr. de la Riva himself:

«On the 2nd of July, 1962, I went up to Garabandal, desiring to spend several days of vacation.

19. According to the text, it would seem that Conchita had revealed the date of the miracle first to Fr. De la Riva, then to her companions. But by what follows and by other information available, one arrives at the conclusion that her companions were the first ones notified; afterwards, by mutual agreement, the girls informed Fr. de la Riva.



Visionaries in front of *Virgin's Pine*

During the course of the afternoon, I was with the young visionaries at the Pines. They were playing and I was seated next to them, very pleased to note their happiness; they were playing a game called *los tios*.<sup>(20)</sup>

Their happiness at this moment was equal to that which they felt, but tried to hide, when they had their famous *calls*.

Suddenly Conchita came up to me and said unexpectedly:

— *I am going to tell you what the Angel's miracle consists of.*

Certainly curious, but refusing to show my feelings, I told her that if it was a secret, she shouldn't reveal it to me . . . She was thoughtful for a few seconds, then she returned to the other three girls, as if to consult them:

— *Shouldn't he be told?*

All three, from the place where they were playing (near what was called the *Virgin's Pine*),

answered in a single voice:

— *Yes. Yes.*

Then I got up and said to them:

— *All right, but you are going to tell me individually.*<sup>(21)</sup>

Conchita spoke first, then her companions. And they all told me the same thing:

— *They are going to see the Host . . .*

On coming down from the Pines, Loli told her father about the news and the nature of the miracle. Learning this, Conchita was very angry:

— *Now — she said to her mother — there certainly won't be a miracle because Loli has mentioned it to her father . . .*

Then I learned what the predicted miracle would consist of, and I had the chance to be the first to know about it; but I didn't know the date on which it would take place. On the eve of

20. Similar to *Hide and Seek*.

21. A very shrewd decision by the priest; thus it was easy for him to discern if it was something fabricated by the girls.

July 5th, I returned back to my parish in Barro and Conchita still didn't know the date.»

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I think that my fellow priest from Barro is in error because we have seen how, during the ecstasy of June 29th, the young girl heard the voice that said to her:

***July 18th would be when the miracle would occur . . . the little miracle (milagrucu), as you say.***

At the time the girl still could not reveal the date. This can be seen from her diary:

***During the Communion that the Angel gave me, I asked when I would be able to tell that there was going to be a miracle and what it was going to be.***

***And he told me in the fifteen days before.***<sup>(22)</sup>

***When the apparition ended, the people from the village asked me if the Angel had told me anything about the miracle (since I had already said to the village that the Angel was going to perform a miracle) . . .***

***But they didn't believe much.***

***When the day came in which I had to announce the date, I told it to the village and I wrote letters . . .***

I have seen the text of some of those letters and they are similar to the one printed in the Mexican edition of Conchita's Diary:

***«A few words to tell you great news for me, and I think for you also. The Angel told me that he was going to perform a sign; and the sign is that — when I receive Communion — the Host will be seen on me. It is soon, during this month, on the 18th.***

***For me it really doesn't seem a miracle; since I thought that they always saw it on me. Will they believe then?»***

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22. Strictly holding to 15 days before, Conchita could have been able to tell Fr. de la Riva the date of the miracle before he left Garabandal on July 5th. Why did she not do it? Was she waiting for some sign to begin spreading the news? Or did she have some other reason for hiding the time from the priest?

This letter is dated July 6th, the day after Fr. de la Riva had left Garabandal. Four days later, Conchita wrote to Dr. Celestino Ortiz in Santander:

*Ave María*

*San Sebastián,*

*July 10th, 1962*

*Dear Doctor Celestino,*

***Just a few words to tell you that the Angel told me that on the 18th of this month they are going to see the Host on my tongue when I receive Communion.***

*Well, nothing more. Love,*<sup>(23)</sup>

*Conchita González*

Mr. Ruiloba had gone up to Garabandal during those days, something he did frequently. On saying farewell to Conchita, she gave him a letter to give personally to the Reverend Father Francisco Odriozola, the «factotum» of the Commission.

Plácido Ruiloba faithfully fulfilled what was asked of him; and he learned the contents of the letter since the recipient himself, Father Francisco, read it to him. The letter said the same as the others that we know; but it added some lines strongly requesting Father Francisco to come to Garabandal on the day foretold . . . ***«Don't worry and come, since even the children in the village won't recognize you.»***<sup>(24)</sup>

Doctor Ortiz, after having received the letter, used his first free day to go up to Garabandal to better inform himself about what was so tersely written by the girl. He was able to converse alone with her and spoke in this way:

***— Conchita, I don't know if you understand the importance of all this. A miracle predicted for a fixed date is a very great miracle . . .***<sup>(25)</sup>

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23. The girls at this time were disposed to be friendly to everyone, especially those whom they met most frequently there.

24. Because of his actions, Fr. Francisco Odriozola was well aware that the people in the village did not hold him in high esteem. Conchita is trying now to give him confidence, with the indication that sufficient time had passed so that many things would be forgotten.

25. Besides the value that the miracle might have in itself, it had another value of no less quality: that of prophecy.

— But to me this seems to be a very little miracle. Later the Virgin's miracle will come, and that will be a MIRACLE! Then there won't be any doubt.

— *Maybe. I just don't believe that the miracle that you mention will happen . . .*

— You don't believe? Then do me this favor. You know Father Francisco Odriozola. I've written him to come . . . But in case he hasn't received the letter, you go in person to tell him . . . So that he doesn't miss coming on July 18th! He will see the miracle. I assure you that nothing will happen to him because here in the village even the little children don't know him.

— *Conchita, do you know how distasteful it is for me to tell news like this to a man whom I barely know . . . Besides, he is secretary of the Commission . . . And on top of everything else the village says terrible things about him, since he doesn't believe in the apparitions . . .*

— If it is distasteful for you to do what I ask, offer it up to the Virgin!

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As the girl sent out notices, and news spread out, and expectation increased, there was also an increase in the apprehension of some of those who were *responsible*. They trembled before the possibility of a new swarm of people, followed by a dismal disaster. October 18th was still fresh in their memories!

### **I wrote letters.**

**But Father Valentín, who doubted that the miracle would happen, told me not to write any more letters, since perhaps it might not happen.**

**And there was a man in the village, Eustaquio Cuenca,<sup>(26)</sup> who told me the same thing as Father Valentín, that I shouldn't write any more letters.**

**And I said to them that the Virgin and Angel had told me to predict the miracle.**

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26. It has already been said that this man was an *indiano* of the village, and different from the others by his better economic situation.

### **But the people of the village didn't believe it.<sup>(27)</sup>**

As can be imagined, on the days before July 18th, which in that year fell on Wednesday — as the previously heralded October 18th had fallen on Wednesday — the influx of visitors to Garabandal began. Many set out on the way, taking advantage of the previous weekend, and so many came on Saturday, July 14th. Among these was the attorney from Palencia, Luis Navas Carrillo, who this time came accompanied by his aged mother. All were able to assist on that same night at a long, very interesting, and moving ecstasy of Mari Loli . . . But they waited in vain for one to happen to Conchita, who never missed having one on Saturday. When they retired for sleep, it was 5 o'clock Sunday morning. And they had to get up early, since the only Mass of the day, celebrated by Fr. Valentín, had been scheduled for 9 o'clock. They could take, if they were able, a long siesta to make up for the loss of sleep at night.

All Sunday long pilgrims continued to arrive. Luis Navas remembers that at 1 o'clock in the afternoon, while they were waiting for the beginning of the rosary in the church, the fine rain typical of the Cantabrian mountains was falling. In the village appeared a large gathering of people «**who came from Córdoba and other places, also a priest from El Aaiún,<sup>(28)</sup> who accidentally found himself in the neighboring village of Celis.**»

The following Monday, July 16th, had a special distinction, since it was the feastday of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Luis Nava's notes for this day read:

«**We celebrated the feastday of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, but without a Mass, since the Mass on that day took place in the village of Cossío. This made me think of a Communion by the Angel. Since there was no priest to distribute**

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27. The attitude of firm resistance that the people of Garabandal had against the girls' phenomena has been shown enough; their hearts were too hard to believe in the truth of those things.

On July 14th, 1962, Luis Navas set out to take down impressions throughout the village «*from the greatest number of persons possible.*» He spent a long time with Mari Cruz' mother who made this revealing statement: «*I believe my daughter when she says that she sees the Virgin; but I'm not so sure that she actually does see the Virgin.*»

In September of 1963, Jacinta's mother, María, said to Fr. Laffineur: «*I certainly believe when I see an ecstasy; when the ecstasy is over, I don't believe anymore.*»

28. A small town on the African coast. It was the capital of Spanish Sahara.

Communion, it could well be expected that the Angel would come as on other occasions to give Communion to the girls.

I went up early to the Pines; there I was enjoying the marvelous view and the pleasant temperature, since it was a sunny day . . . Looking down, I made out one of the visionaries, without being able to distinguish which one of them it was, seated in the Cuadro, together with two or three other persons. I supposed that she was waiting for Communion, and I went down in a hurry . . . It was Mari Loli who was praying her morning rosary; I joined devoutly in the prayer and waited . . . Nothing happened and I went down to the village. I soon learned that Conchita hadn't gone to the Pines, as I had hoped, because she had forgotten and eaten some bread; but that she would go up a few hours later, toward one o'clock.

We accompanied her there. Some clouds began to appear in the sky while we were waiting. We prayed a Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, later an entire rosary. Some birds that were flying back and forth accompanied us with their singing.

As the clouds thickened, the sun gradually faded, as did my hope of being able to see — only one time! — the extraordinary phenomenon of the Mystical Communion about which I had heard so much said. Conchita waited standing up, sheltering herself against one of the nine pines there, protecting herself from a wet breeze that began to blow, and which was turning cold. The sky became completely overcast and the Angel didn't appear, in spite of waiting until about four in the afternoon.

Rather disappointed, we went down to the village to eat. And I took a siesta, expecting that later, most probably, we would have to spend the night standing up.

The rosary in the church was not at the time for holy days, but instead at nightfall, as on working days. Hardly had the girls gone outside, when Mari Loli went into ecstasy near her house, accompanied by Jacinta.»

We are familiar with what followed since it has been repeated so many times: walks through the

streets of the village, marvelous ascents and descents on the trail to the Pines (frontwards, backwards), prayers, songs, holding out the crucifix to those present . . . As almost always, the episode ended in the church courtyard, and Luis Navas tells us about the ending:

«It was a moving scene that penetrated to the depths of my heart when the girls with angelic smiles, completely transfigured by a radiant beauty, raised themselves lightly on their toes, offering their two cheeks to the Vision's kiss. And after this, alternating, each one effortlessly lifted up the other in her arms to reach the mysterious Apparition, and again kiss and be kissed.<sup>(29)</sup>

Previously during the rosary the girls had recited the Credo; and, as was their custom whenever they prayed it in ecstasy, they added to *Catholic Church* the words *Apostolic and Roman*. In a similar way, they introduced an innovation in some final invocations. In place of saying *True Apparition of Our Lady, Queen and Patron of the Montaña*, they said, *Our Lady and Queen of all Creation*.<sup>(30)</sup>

This universal title makes me feel that Our Lady is sending a call to all her children. She makes it understood that her messages here do not have a restricted or local character.»

There was still more as the night of July 16th wore on. Navas Carrillo terminated his notes like this:

«I came to the conclusion that mere curiosity, if it could well be the initial reason for making

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29. These positions, which undoubtedly were due to the Vision being elevated in front of them when they wished to reach her to give the final kiss, are seen in several photographs taken by the spectators.

30. From the days of the holy bishop of Santander, José Eguino Trecu (†1961), there had been established in the diocesan churches the practice of concluding the rosary with the invocation *Our Lady of the True Apparition, Queen and Mother of the Montaña, pray for us*. This invocation was repeated three times, followed each time by a Hail Mary.

It is due to this bishop that Mary, under the title of *La Bien Aparecida (The True Apparition)* was proclaimed patroness of Santander, a territory covered with Marian sanctuaries. The sanctuary of Our Lady of the True Apparition is perched on a gorgeous hill overlooking the valley of the Asón River with views of Udalía and Ampuero, and is cared for by a community of Trinitarian fathers. The statue was taken from Santander during the last years of Bishop Eguino Trecu's episcopate to be solemnly crowned in the sanctuary.



“Each one effortlessly lifted up the other in her arms to reach the mysterious Apparition.”

the trip to Garabandal, soon dissipates, since it does not have its proper place there. What is felt here brings one, little by little, to prayer and sacrifice, to taste the peace and serenity of this little Mount Tabor.»<sup>(31)</sup>

\* \* \*

On July 17th, Tuesday, the arrival of pilgrims took on an accelerated pace, as would be expected, and everyone's thoughts were on what was going to happen on the next day . . . according to Conchita's prediction . . .

Our lawyer from Palencia seems to have dedicated the hours of this day to reflecting on the unusual *normality* of the girls who for more than a year had been plunged into the daily *abnormality* of most unsettling phenomena:

«I spoke to the pastor of the village, and he told me that he had just received a report, completely favorable in this regard, from Doctor

Ricardo Puncernau, a psychiatrist from Barcelona. This doctor had associated with the girls for several days, both individually and collectively. He had taken walks with them. He had expressed his impressions and doubts to them, which they always received with friendliness and good nature.

My study was limited to observing them, especially when they played with the other girls. I was pleased at the way Mari Cruz fought with a girl who was bothering her. Actually, she fought with a certain mildness, and only insofar as was necessary to stop the girl's annoying attitude.

In the prayers that they said in the normal state, I didn't notice anything special. I even had the impression that Conchita, for example, did not pronounce the words clearly, especially the Ave Marías, and she reminded me of some persons who pray from the pulpit as if they were in a hurry to finish. With regard to punctuality, that was not a quality that characterized them. Many times I saw them come late to church, sometimes

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31. Mount Tabor in Palestine is considered the mountain of Our Lord's Transfiguration, where His glory was shown to three of His apostles.



“She made repeated trips from the fields to her home, carrying enormous stacks of hay.”

one, sometimes another. I assisted at two of Jacinta's rosaries in the Cuadro at 6 in the morning; and besides the great sacrifice that could be supposed for a girl of her age to get up so early, her prayer had nothing special about it; frequently she opened her mouth and yawned.<sup>(32)</sup>

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32. As already was pointed out in another place, only those unfamiliar with the life of the spirit would be scandalized by the girls' weaknesses. A basic tenet in theology is *Grace does not destroy nature*. It does not destroy it, nor does it change it . . . suddenly. And the condition of our nature is rather pitiful. The special graces that a soul receives (even those *very special* graces that could be expected in Garabandal) certainly create a necessity or requirement to change, to go on from better to better; but they do not cause it . . . and souls can respond with various degrees of fidelity. Some might say, *If the apparitions were truly authentic, the girls, after such a long time of close contact with the Virgin, would have to be different than they are.*

Actually, the apostles were in close contact with Jesus for a longer period of time — three years — and at the hour of His death, what were they like? If anyone does not know, the Gospel tells the story.

I do not pretend to make saints out of the visionaries since they unquestionably have many faults. I only mean to say that their real and apparent faults and weaknesses cannot be used as a proof against the ecstasies which they said they had, and which so many others were able to observe.

In summary, it appears that the girls, with the exception of their visions, were not distinguishable from other girls of the village, and didn't show the influence of anything that wasn't natural, something that amazed people.

It was the same with regard to their daily chores. I remember that one early morning we had gone to bed at 6:00 a.m. in broad daylight; and at 10:00 María Dolores was in church, assisting at Mass. A little later I watched as she made repeated trips from the fields to her home, carrying enormous stacks of hay on her shoulders. I was able to take pictures.

On the evening of July 17th, I noticed that Mari Loli was missing at the rosary. When we left, her mother was walking around searching for her with a worried look. A young boy and I went up to the Pines in case she could be found there following some *call*; but all that was there were the nine trees, like sentinels in the night. After we returned to the village, María Dolores was found in the home of some friends from Aguilar de Campoo where — absorbed in conversation — the time had passed without her

noticing it. Her father scolded and punished her; it hurt me to see such chagrin in that little child, the instrument which Our Lady had used to give me so many and such unmerited signs of love. But Loli must have understood her father's reasons; since if her face appeared hurt, no sign of protest or rebellion against the one exercising authority could be found on it.»

## Awaiting the Hour

This brief notation by Luis Navas Carrillo gives us an idea of the atmosphere in Garabandal on the evening of July 17th, 1962:

«During the day, countless cars had come. The houses were full, making it very difficult to find a bed in which to sleep. Once again many people used the stables for sleeping.»

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But many gave up their sleep in order not to miss the scenes on that night, which was almost completely occupied by vigils and ecstasies. Jacinta's came first; later, at 5:15 in the morning, with the first rays of dawn, came Mari Loli's ecstasy. She was initially at the Cuadro, and later made her way toward the church, accompanied by a group of people— Luis Navas among them:

«I went ahead to enter the church and I saw a visiting priest, already dressed in the sacred vestments, who was getting the altar ready to say Mass. He couldn't hide the surprise that the unexpected coming of that parade caused him and began to say, *Don't enter! Don't enter!* As if the girl's entrance would bring upon him some grave responsibility!

His fears ended immediately since the visionary, despite the door being open, stopped at the entrance, and falling on her knees there, came out of the trance. I remember at that time, as on other occasions after the time when the ecclesiastical authorities ordered the church doors closed during the girls' ecstasies, that they stopped at the entrance of the church, and at times were heard to whisper, *Oh what doesn't the bishop want?* They always adopted an attitude of complete obedience and submission.»

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The day of July 18th, which began in such an unusual way, continued with a climate much different

from other days. For the visitors, there was the special waiting for the miracle predicted by Conchita; for the villagers, there was the special *fiesta*, the big celebration of the year, when they met again with their distant relatives and friends, the day on which all the houses were full of happy people wearing their best clothes and eating lavishly. Officially the feastday was to honor St. Sebastián, patron saint of the village, who was martyred by being pierced with arrows. For some time, the feastday had been moved from January 20th, the actual feastday of the saint, to this date in July (a holiday in Spain) in order to allow better weather and opportunity for the arrival of relatives and guests.

«Well into the morning» — said Luis Navas — «we assisted at a chanted high Mass, in which 3 priests officiated;<sup>(33)</sup> the sermon was preached by a friend of mine from Burgos, who was stationed in San Vicente de la Barquera.<sup>(34)</sup> It was beautiful to see so many Communion, especially with the strangers who had come for the miracle; the Hosts had to be broken into particles.»

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At noon the festive atmosphere reached its peak. But as the afternoon hours waned, impatience and unrest began to increase among those waiting . . . Nothing was happening, nor were there any signs that something was going to happen!

«As time passed» — wrote Luis Navas — «our restlessness grew, until it came to reach a level of actual anguish as the afternoon wore on.

We blamed the dance<sup>(35)</sup> as the cause of the delay, and perhaps the failure of the prodigy to take place; and full of confusion, we made a multitude of conjectures . . . I personally was not asking anything for myself since I had no need of a miracle to believe in the apparitions.

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33. In those days the rite of *concelebration* had not been established. Solemn High Mass was performed by three persons: the priest who celebrated, a deacon, and a sub-deacon. It was what in the villages was called the *Mass of Three*, and was celebrated only on important feast days; otherwise, the feast days did not carry as much importance.

34. For many years, the Heart of Mary (Claretian) fathers came to the parish church from that village on the coast of Santander. Frequently some of them traveled around to preach in the villages of the area.

35. The dance was a *sine qua non* with the young men during the village holiday. The people at Garabandal did not know how to stop it, in spite of Conchita's announcement; and it was held, according to custom, near to her house.



However, it deeply grieved me that, since what had been predicted was not happening, the good opinions of countless people, principally those who had come for the first time to Garabandal, were being put down together with their faith. I couldn't forget the episode of October 18th, and at that time, the girls hadn't predicted any prodigy!»

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In order to better support his hopes during the anguishing wait, as Mr. Navas wrote:

«I kept in my mind that days previously the visionary had addressed a letter to a priest in Santander, Father Odriozola, inviting him to be present when the Angel gave her Communion. She had foretold this fact in unmistakable terms, with firmness and absolute sureness. She didn't mention the hour, and the solar day wouldn't end until 1:20 on our watches;<sup>(36)</sup> but each minute that went by increased my anxiety and made me think of what would happen with that priest whom the girl had so insistently requested to be there. Later, they told me that he had sent a representative in his place . . .»

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According to the reports made, the person sent by Father Odriozola was an attorney from Santander, Mr. R. M.,<sup>(37)</sup> who comported himself in Garabandal according to the most *orthodox* line of the Commission:

«Toward 5 in the afternoon, he proposed to Conchita that she stop all this . . . That he would give her the broadest pardon on behalf of the bishop . . . That if she wanted to leave for Santander, he himself would take her with great pleasure . . . The Marquis of Santa María, who was present there in the girl's home, couldn't contain himself and engaged in a heated argument with the lawyer, who ended up going away in bad humor.»

(A report from another witness)

Conchita's house naturally had to be, on that evening of July 18th, the center of maximum anticipation. Whoever could get in at the time and stay in the house had to be considered definitely privileged; the priests easily obtained such privileges,

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36. For many years the official time in Spain had been 60 minutes ahead of the solar time, so as to synchronize better with the rest of Europe.

37. This refers to Regino Mateo, born in the land of Reinosa but residing in the Santander capital; he was a lawyer.

as would be expected. Paquina de la Roza Velarde, the wife of Dr. Ortiz, remembers that there were present there, besides close relatives of the visionary, a young girl from Aguilar (daughter of Rafael Fontaneda); a priest from Madrid, Fr. Justo; a Franciscan, Fr. Bravo; a Jesuit from Comillas; and a Dominican priest from Asturias. This Dominican priest — Etelvino González — furnishes us information to help relive again those tense hours of July 18th.

Weeks later, on August 10th, the new bishop of Santander, Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal, wrote to Fr. Etelvino requesting him to answer a questionnaire that he was sending him: a long questionnaire that had been composed by the secretary of the Commission. He charged Fr. Etelvino to proceed with '*the strictest secrecy*', and at the same time consider '*the exceptional importance of his describing the facts objectively, with simplicity and brevity*'.

The letter was answered by Fr. Etelvino after a month delay, for which he asked pardon.

Of the 41 questions on the questionnaire, he only answered 23, since he did not have direct knowledge on the content of the others.

«In order to be as exact and objective as possible, I have tried, in describing this, to limit myself to those details and facts of which I was personally a witness. I have avoided not only reporting what I merely heard, but also as much as possible, mixing my own personal opinion in this.»

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Before beginning his answers, he confided to the bishops something that had to be his own personal opinion. He mentions . . .

«. . . the unhappy impression that it made on me in seeing Conchita surrounded in her home by gifts, and circled by wealthy people who apparently came there frequently and gave the impression of having made Garabandal their domain. I was not the only one to lament this; among the priests and faithful this was mentioned very unfavorably, leading at times to conclusions that were definitely not favorable. Without falling to this extreme, I think that the circumstances to which I am referring prevent a clear visualization of what could be happening at the bottom of these *events*, which

seem more and more confusing.»<sup>(38)</sup>

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What this eyewitness then says — detrimentally — illustrates what was happening around Conchita on the night of July 18th, 1962.

**First question — *Were you in the kitchen of Conchita's home before she went into 'rapture'?***

**Answer —** I passed the evening in Conchita's house, in the kitchen and principally on the second floor,<sup>(39)</sup> in company with several secular priests, a Franciscan priest, a Jesuit priest and a seminarian. During the time immediately prior to the rapture, I was practically absent, except for intervals.

**Second question — *What was the mental attitude***

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38. What Father Etelvino speaks about is certainly lamentable, and it is not the only case to be pointed out and regretted. I am sorry to say that some of those who are considered — or consider themselves — as *Garabandalistas* of the first rank have done very poor service to its cause. And I am afraid that it is the same with the girls themselves and their families, at least some of them, who have not always shown sufficiently high example with regard to generosity and detachment in their actions.

But from this, one cannot draw a decisive proof against the supernaturalism of those unexplainable phenomena; but only the conclusion that, as so many times has happened in the Story of Salvation, the instruments with which God works are not always the best, nor do they immediately lose their natural tendency to fall; especially if they remain in some respects attached to their own selves. The plain people of Garabandal were immersed in phenomena that were so much beyond them. Did they not have the right to expect from their religious guides in the diocese something better and quite different from what they received? Did these guides in this case fulfill their own obligations with their aloof policies of distrust, remoteness, and partial *non-intervention*.

39. Conchita was on the same floor during almost all the afternoon of the feast day according to the testimony given by Father Etelvino González to questions asked by the Commission:

«Conchita stayed upstairs from the middle of the afternoon. In all this time, I believe that she only came down to the kitchen about two times. In her room, on whose balcony she stayed almost all afternoon, she was accompanied by various friends whose names I do not know. Everyone played; (it is not to be forgotten that it was the afternoon of the village fiesta) but I noted in her an air as if a little absent. She laughed, she answered the questions with serenity, and wrote on holycards with an admirable facility for composition.

During the afternoon, she was very accessible and agreeable to the priests. She even came one time to tell me, *I would like the priests to be near to me, bending down (surely in respect for the Lord Whom she was expecting to receive), referring to the moment that was awaited.*»

*of the young girl?*

**Answer —** The general tone, during the time that I saw her, was of sureness concerning the accomplishment of the prediction and care in preparing spiritually for it; praying and making us pray; we prayed a Station to the Blessed Sacrament and two rosaries. At the same time the girl showed herself uncertain over what should be done about a dance that had been organized in front of her home; she wanted to have the music, but indicated weakly that they should stop dancing.»

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The dancing had a bad effect on many of those who had gone up to the village. Conchita herself reports this:

**Next to my house there was a holiday dance.**

**There were the two things together: some were praying the rosary, and others were dancing.<sup>(40)</sup>**

**Some of the people wanted to stop the dancing, since they were afraid that if there were a dance, there wouldn't be a miracle.**

**And at one time, a man among those who wanted to stop the dancing, Ignacio Rubio, asked me if I wanted the dancing to stop.**

**I told him that, dance or no dance, the miracle would happen.**

**And then they didn't discuss the dancing anymore.**

Perhaps the man whom Conchita mentions is the same person about whom we have another report:

«A spectator, a professor from Granada, asked assistance from someone influential in the village to convince the young boys that the dancing should stop. With this assistance he went up to the boys and offered to pay the musicians to play on the next three Sundays . . .

— *Who told you this?* — someone asked — *Conchita?*

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40. The contrast is notable. What a strange melange men make. And what a melange there is in each man, too. The task of life is to put everything in order, above all, interior order, eliminating what prevents us from going to heaven, putting everything that can bring us there in its place.

— Yes. (Actually Conchita hadn't said this.)

— *Let's go see* — said the young boy, and taking the arm of his questioner, he went in search of the girl:

— *We are coming to see, Conchita. Did the Virgin tell you that we shouldn't dance?*

— *No. Not exactly that. You can dance, but you shouldn't offend God, Our Lord.*<sup>(41)</sup>

The young boy left satisfied, and naturally the dance continued on for some time.»

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If the few people huddled in Conchita's house were perturbed by this, and were upset because they were waiting in vain during the final hours of July 18th, we can imagine how it must have been with those not present there who could only learn about what was happening through vague rumors. We have Luis Navas' testimony:

«I was in the house of María Dolores, together with her father, the marquis of Santa María, a friend of his, and some other persons whom I don't remember. Someone came to tell us that one of the priests who was in Conchita's house had already gone and was leaving the village; and also that they had even locked the house. I could imagine what Conchita's mother was like, after her daughter had not had either the customary apparition on Saturday or one on Sunday, or Communion from the Angel on Monday, July 16th, the feastday of Our Lady of Mount Carmel . . .

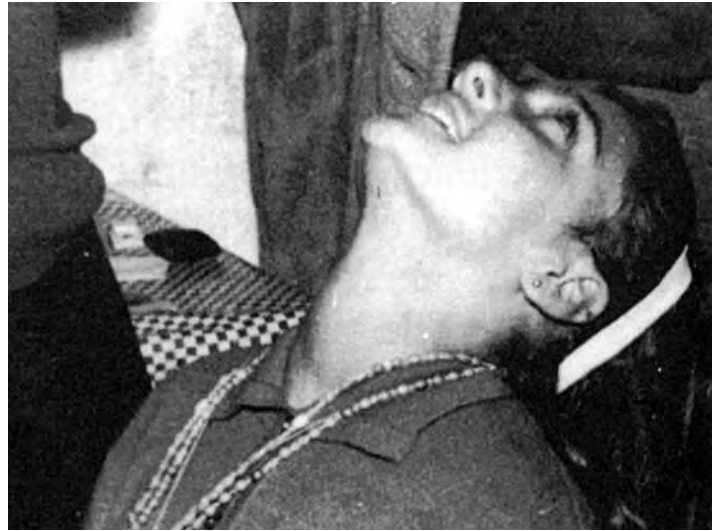
Among ourselves, someone thought that if the Communion didn't take place, it could well be in order to test our faith. Others were of the opinion, on the contrary, that the cause could have been some fault of pride in the girl. And there was not lacking someone to say that he had found all these things of the miracle of the Host very strange from the beginning. But in general we resisted thinking that the visionary had made all this up to try to force the events.»

Conchita perfectly sensed the atmosphere that surrounded her:

**When night came, the people were upset.**

**But since the Angel and the Virgin had told me that the miracle would come, I had no fear, since neither the**

**Virgin nor the Angel had ever told me that a thing would happen and it didn't happen.**



“The miracle would come.”

The tension of waiting in the circles closest to Conchita is well reflected in this detail that the wife of Doctor Ortiz gives us:

«Everyone kept silent. Her brother, seated on the fireplace, had been dozing. Suddenly, he jumped up and said, speaking to Conchita, *I can't bear this anymore. I am going to bed. You have deceived us all terribly!* No one answered. Then the young boy said the same thing again and got up to leave.

— *No! Don't go* — Conchita called to him — *Wait just a little longer.»*

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The girl had to feel that the moment was coming:

**At 10 at night, I had a call, and at 12, another, and after . . .**

**1:40 a.m.**

It is beyond all doubt that on the night between July 18th and 19th in 1962, in the village of San Sebastián de Garabandal, *something* happened that was going to matter very much in the history of the events taking place there.

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41. Here is something very important and often very difficult. Unfortunately amusements are so frequently directed to the harmful service of sensuality.

We have a brief report that gives this *something* as it happened internally, as further reports will describe it as seen externally.

**At two o'clock, the Angel appeared to me in my room.**

**In my home were my mother Aniceta, my brother Aniceto, and an uncle, Elías, and a cousin, Luciuca, and a person from Aguilar, María del Carmen Fontaneda.**

**And the Angel was with me for a while<sup>(42)</sup> and he told me, as on other days:**

***Pray the "I Confess" and think of Whom you are going to receive.***

**And I did this. And afterwards he gave me Communion.**

**And after giving me Communion, he told me to say the "Soul of Christ,"**

**And to make my thanksgiving,**

**And to hold out my tongue with the Sacred Host,**

**Until he left and the Virgin came.**

**And I did this.**

We cannot designate the exact time that Conchita's ecstasy started. We have just seen that she said, **at 2 o'clock**, but her chronometric accuracy cannot be trusted. All the witnesses agree that the affair happened some time after July 18th ended, after one o'clock at night. the concordance of information from several witnesses makes it certain that the disputed trance began between 1:30 and 1:40.

A little before it started, Conchita, who had gone down for a while to the kitchen, went up again to the upper floor. One of the persons there, Dr. Ortiz' wife, says this expressly:

**«After a while, Conchita went upstairs again, and a little while later, I saw her come down with her hands joined.»**

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In her room upstairs for almost an hour was a

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42. It must be remembered that the long periods of time in ecstasy seemed minutes to the girls.

And it is also to be remembered that they could move long distances in their trances and make long swift walks without losing the sensation of being still in the same place. Since they did not leave the light that enveloped their field of vision, they did not have the normal faculty to *sense* the change of locations.

man not easily disposed to religious fervor: Elías González Cuenca. Although he was Conchita's carnal uncle he did not have much faith in his niece, nor did he maintain cordial relations with her family. Let us hear his testimony.<sup>(43)</sup>

«It was after 12:30. I was drinking beer with someone at Elena's house when we heard a commotion in the crowd. And at the time, I went in its direction and entered her house — to see mischievously if I would see something that I didn't like. She is my niece by blood; but even so, I think that there have been three times that I have gone in there. I was with her in her house about an hour. She, her mother, her brother Cetuco, a little girl and I were praying. And later her mother went down to the kitchen leaving the four of us alone.<sup>(44)</sup>

After a while, her brother said, *Do you see what time it is? It is today already. Nothing!*

And Conchita answered, *The time has not yet passed.*

A few minutes later she fell into ecstasy. We were seated on her bed, and she was speaking with us when suddenly she fell there to the side of me against the door.»

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Soon the girl got up, left her room and began to descend majestically down the stairway. Dr. Ortiz' wife stated:

**«I saw her go down with her hands joined in front of her chest, her head turned backwards, her mouth slightly open, and with an expression of marvelous happiness!»**

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Father Bravo, a professor from the University of Comillas, a specialist in the spiritual life, looking at the young girl transfigured like this, could only repeat, *How marvelous! How marvelous!*

Those that were in the house intended to follow close to Conchita as she went outside. However, they found themselves prevented by the masses of people who were waiting impatiently, and literally threw themselves on top of her, seeking to get the best place for observation.

Dr. Ortiz' wife stated: ***«I went out on the street***

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43. This was recorded on a tape recorder.

44. Father Etelevino González had left for awhile since after 10:30 Conchita had indicated to those present, *You can go eat if you wish*, giving them to understand that what they were expecting was not going to take place for awhile.



Site of the miracle

*and I couldn't follow her.»*

Uncle Elías said, *«I went out after her into the crowd; but they knocked me down.»*

And they pushed Father Bravo so much that he was almost bowled over; he had to forget being in the first ranks. Miguel, Conchita's brother, and some other husky young men attempted to protect the girl as she walked.

Luis Navas wrote:

**«It was 15 or 20 minutes before two in the morning, when just after going out in the street, and no farther than turning a corner to the left — in the place least expected — in front of the house of her friend Olguita, the visionary fell on her knees and the Communion took place. It was a wet place, hardly agreeable, since at times dirty water from the homes was dumped there.»**

The visionary was removed from all this, being unaware of her own movements and positions; the only thing that she knew was that:

**The angel appeared to me in my room . . . etc.**

It is indisputable that in the girl's open mouth and upon her graciously extended tongue there was seen for some time the white Host of Communion, since testimony of this has been signed and sworn to by many witnesses . . . Although it was in the middle of the night, the scene and the protagonist were adequately illuminated.

Concerning this, there is a report that has special value because of the situation of its proponent and because of the *official nature* of his testimony. The questions were put in writing by the Commission at Santander through a diocesan prelate, and the answers were also given in writing by the Dominican previously mentioned: Fr. Etelevino González.

— *«What time was it? Had July 18th passed?*

— *It was exactly a quarter to two in the early morning of July 19th.*

— *Was there sufficient light?*



“a white body of the same size and shape as the hosts used for Communion”

— Yes. There was a full moon. Furthermore, there were many flashlights around the girl even before the object predicted appeared on her tongue. I myself, with my back to her (from a distance of about a meter), on hearing the shout, “*The Host!*”, turned around in front of her, focusing on my flashlight on her open mouth.

— *Did you see something in her mouth like the Host used for Communion?*

— Yes. With complete certainty.

— *Before it was in the girl's mouth, did you*

*see the Host outside of it, for example in the hands of the supposed angel, while she was making the sign of the cross, or in the path from the hands of the angel to the mouth of the girl?*

— As I had my back turned, trying to hold back the crowd, I didn't see it appear.

— *What was the host like?*

— The object was a white body of the same size and shape as the Hosts used for Communion; perhaps somewhat thicker. It gave the impression of being somewhat spongy and it adhered perfectly to her tongue.

— *How long did the phenomenon last?*

— I estimate about 45 seconds; perhaps 60.

— *Did you hear the girl speak with the alleged angel? What did he say?*

— I didn't see or hear her speak.

— *What effects did this cause in you?*

— I distinguished three periods:

A) With my back to the girl, on hearing the shout: "*The Host! Miracle!*" I turned around, not believing it was true.

B) On seeing It with my eyes, I was impressed and completely absorbed in the examination of the "*Host.*"

C) Finally, I attempted to impose silence and reverence (since there was obviously the presence of the white body with characteristics similar to the Hosts of Communion.)»

## Miracle or Fraud?

This *fact* cannot be denied or evaded: that a Host was seen on Conchita's tongue like those used for Communion. But is this fact enough to call it an authentic miracle?

For some, a miracle was unquestionable from the first moment; for others, doubts began immediately and have not yet dissipated.

As men debate about the works of men, they are inclined to debate about the works of God, too. And to God this does not seem to matter, since He never takes away all the problems in such a way that disbelief and resistance to belief would be impossible. He never forces us to believe. We are merely given adequate information and sufficient leads to bring us to an attitude of faith based on good reasonable logic.

Whoever avoids searching into obscure areas ends up finding total security. The rich man of the parable said to the patriarch Abraham, *If Lazarus, risen from the dead, goes to my brothers, they will not refuse his testimony.* The patriarch (and it was Jesus Himself who spoke through him) answered: *If they do not accept Moses and the prophets, they will not accept one who has risen from the dead either.*

And so on the night of the *milagruco* began the doubts, the suspicions, the twisted interpretations.

Conchita was told to remain with her tongue extended after having received the Host, until . . .

**. . . the Virgin would come.**

**And I did it like this.**

**And when the Virgin came, she told me:**

***They all still do not believe.***

The girl found out the truth of this as soon as she returned to her house, once the long trance had ended. For the trance was long; the Communion was only the beginning.

While many were keeping watch around the girl's home, hoping for what might happen there (and these were the ones who saw, some well, some not so well, the things just described), others situated themselves in the *calleja*, thinking that there, at the site of so many other miraculous happenings, Conchita's miraculous Communion would transpire.

Among these was Luis Navas; expectantly he ran to the Cuadro, seeking to secure the best observation point. But there he had to wait, although he tried to do it with resignation:

«I expressed» — he wrote — «my resignation to the Virgin while waiting there, *If we don't have the good fortune to see the miracle, at least let it be realized!* I didn't want to think of the consequences that would result from the non-realization of the predicted miracle, or the methods that might be adopted by the Commission, reticent from the start to admit any possibility of the apparitions being supernatural.

**When Conchita came to the Cuadro . . .** (*As we have seen, the Virgin appeared to her after the Communion. Then began an ecstatic march, whose first stop was apparently the Calleja, where the lawyer from Palencia was waiting with the other people.*) . . . **I didn't know whether she had received Communion. But I noticed that she held her mouth open. I saw this clearly since I found myself in the advantageous position that I had secured previously in case there would take place there, as was probable, the miracle that everyone was awaiting.**

After being there some time, the visionary

descended backwards toward the village, and I followed her with difficulty through the streets, since I had lost my glasses. It was at that time that I learned that she had already received Communion, and how it had occurred. There was nothing more for me to do than ask pardon for having doubted at the last hour, and to accept not having seen anything.

During the ecstasy, the visionary went in front of the church twice,<sup>(45)</sup> prayed the rosary through the streets,<sup>(46)</sup> visited the cemetery, and on returning from there, had barely passed over the little brook when she knelt down and advanced in this position about 50 meters. Finally she sang the

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45. Luis Navas noted something that particularly attracted his attention: the «open mouth of Conchita»; but he does not give more detail. Nevertheless, there are other testimonies that speak of something very remarkable in this regard.

Félix Gallego, a doctor from Polanco (Santander), tells how he, while going with the girl toward the church after the miracle, saw perfectly a halo of light in the back of her open mouth. That same night, on returning to his home in Polanco, he wrote down a report that days later he gave to Father Valentín for him to take, if it seemed useful, to his superiors at the chancery.

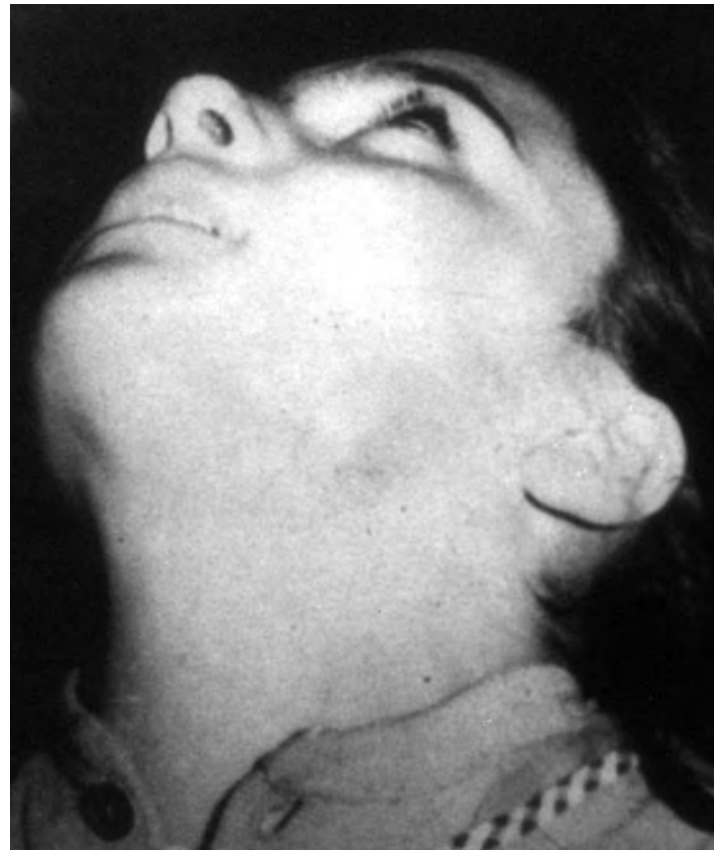
And I myself was able to receive an unequivocal testimony from a woman from Madrid, María Paloma Fernández-Pacheco de Larrauri. She had come to the village in the early morning of July 18th, and was spending the day waiting like so many others . . . When Conchita finally left her house in ecstasy, this woman, who had been waiting a long time outside, could not follow her because of the commotion and the people throwing themselves on top of her. Resigned and silent, she went down another street and was walking aimlessly when she perceived, muffled and far away, the noise of those who were coming with the visionary. Soon above the noise that was breaking the silence of the night, she heard a woman shout excitedly: *Oh! She's carrying it in her mouth!*

She rushed toward the sound and found there, at the entrance of the church, a spectacle that she will never be able to forget. Within the churchyard in the middle of the people who had arranged themselves in a wide circle, or perhaps rather a rectangle, Conchita was moving in ecstasy. Flashlights were converging on her with their beams of light, but surpassing that light was another light which shone from the mouth of the girl with an unusual resplendence.

Mrs. Paloma succeeded in situating herself well on the left side of the courtyard and was able to observe perfectly, for some minutes, this extraordinary phenomenon in front of her. *«It was»* — she said — *«as if in the center of her wide-open mouth, on the tongue of the child, there were a host or "forma" of concentrated light, around which radiated a little halo of light of a different kind.»*

This phenomenon was definitely observed by other persons too, some of whom did not want to talk about it for fear of being considered hysterical or subject to hallucinations.

46. Conchita wrote, **And she told me to pray the rosary, and I prayed it.**



**“All still do not believe.”**

Salve and went to conclude the vision where it had begun almost two hours previously, but not before offering the many articles placed on the kitchen table to be kissed.»

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It was at this time that the girl began to see evidence of what the Virgin had mentioned when she appeared to the girl after Communion: ***All still do not believe.***

She was . . . as anyone would be after an extraordinary favor from heaven. We know this through reliable testimony. The Commission had asked in its questionnaire:

— *«Is it true that Conchita, on returning home, smiled and avoided questions? Was she agitated?»*

Fr. Etelvino answered:

— *«She was calm when I saw her . . . She spoke calmly and happily.»*

Among the people in Conchita's kitchen at the end of the ecstasy was Dr. Ortiz's wife. She remembers that they were telling the girl:

— *How happy you must be Conchita! Finally the miracle has come.*





“You don’t believe.”

— *Yes, but the Virgin told me that many, in spite of seeing it, do not believe . . . And I think one of these is Plácido.*

At that moment, Plácido arrived. The girl smiled broadly and said to him:

— *You, you don't believe?*

— *Not much* — the man replied, trying in vain to smile.<sup>(47)</sup>

Plácido Ruiloba had been pushed away by the crowd and could not see the Host with his own eyes. Afterwards the Franciscan Fr. Justo, who had seen it and was full of doubts, relayed to him what he felt . . .

Dr. Ortiz's wife heard Fr. Justo speaking to Fr. Bravo:

— *I was tempted to take the Host with my hand, to see if it was real . . .*

— *Didn't that seem to be tempting God?*

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47. According to a witness' report, Plácido said then to Conchita: «*Liar! You've deceived us!*»

Undisturbed, the girl replied with a smile: «*The Virgin told me: In spite of everything, some do not believe!*»

**A Franciscan father, Father Justo, didn't believe what he had seen.**

**And he said to the people that he hadn't seen it, that it was a lie, that it was I who had done this . . .**

In the writings of Luis Navas are these lines:

«**In the days prior to July 18th Conchita had expressed her concern that many people would not witness the event, and as a consequence would not believe it . . . This prediction was verified because some didn't except it (*the presentation of the miracle seemed too much to them*), because many didn't see it, and because for other reasons the people in general were rather cold . . . And I think that during the time before the miracle was accomplished everyone doubted, more or less, that it would take place.**»

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Soon the Commission at Santander was deluged with a flood of comments, suspicions, and questions, all coming from the *unconvinced*.

And it was not hard for the Commission to think that there had been no miracle.

But *something* had definitely happened, because of which there was no other way out than to seek to offer *explanations*. The Commission members thought that by seeking evidence against Garabandal they were fulfilling their duty; but the rest of us might think that they did not accomplish another duty, a first and more important one: to be there at the place of the event, following everything that was occurring from the best point of observation.

The Commission members assert their right to speak out publicly and express their opinions on the events. That being the case, the least that could be asked of them would be to be there in the forefront of everyone else following, observing, and studying the events. It was not this way!

The letter in which Conchita invited them to be present at Garabandal on the 18th of July may or may not have been inspired by God; nevertheless those called had a serious obligation not to lose an occasion (that could well have been of great importance) to bring more light on the complete study that was entrusted to them. Instead of this, initially they showed no concern. Later when collecting information from witnesses, by design they sought

only witnesses from whom they expected unfavorable testimony.

What would have happened if the *responsible* persons in the diocesan chancery had been at the appointed spot on the day fixed by God?

God can perform things very well without man; but the History of Salvation shows us how certain divine designs have gone astray because of lack of human cooperation. God does not have to yield to our desires . . . How often He could say to us: *Since you attempt to come to the light through your own ways, and not through Mine, you will remain in the darkness!*

On July 18th, 1962, a thing that could have decisively clarified the mystery of Garabandal ended by leaving it like it was, or perhaps even more obscure. Whose fault was this?

\* \* \*

It seems that the official Commission in Santander first of all doubted the actuality of the *fact* of the Host on Conchita's tongue, attributing it to suggestion, madness or the collective hysteria of those who saw it. Afterwards, in the face of irrefutable proofs, especially the photographic pictures that had been taken, they maintained a hypothesis of fraud: *Conchita, aided by others, had put this over with great talent . . .*

In the questionnaire presented weeks later to Fr. Etelvino González, there is a collection of questions from which it can be seen that the Commission took seriously the many things that were said about the peculiar circumstances around the *miracle*. Their questions themselves clearly reveal this:

***«Is it true that Conchita and her cousin Luciuca Fernández González didn't stop laughing nervously and playing with their hands?»***

***At midnight did you see her write some words to her Uncle Elías González Cuenca?»***

***Is it true that on the back of the paper she drew two feminine figures?»***

***Did you identify them as Luciuca and Conchita?»***

***Is it true that on the drawing Luciuca brought her hand to Conchita's mouth?»***

***Is it true that Conchita avoided being accompanied by the priests present there?»***

***At 1:20, did her mother tell her to change her dress?»***

***With regard to this, did Conchita go upstairs?»***

***Who were the persons there upstairs?»***

***What purpose could her going upstairs have?»***

***How long did she delay in coming down?»***

***On coming down, did she go back into the kitchen?»***

***Did she come down in rapture?»***

***Did she have her mouth closed?»***

***Did she cover it with the crucifix?»***

***Did you notice anything strange in her mouth?»<sup>(48)</sup>***

We do not know the answers to any of these questions. Fr. Etelvino answered only the ones we have previously mentioned, and refrained from responding to these with excellent reasons:

***«I don't know because at the time I was absent from the house. At that time I didn't hear anything about the writing or the drawing; I heard about it days later from people who said they had heard it discussed by a priest.»***

The last question of the Commission was this:

— ***«Could the possibility of fraud be considered?»***

The Dominican father answered simply:

— ***«I think that's not impossible.»***

But we can well think that the Commission, with all these questions, had determined not just the simple possibility, but the actual probability that the alleged *motions* of Conchita had been designed to *stage* the miracle with the aid of her uncle and cousin. Taking advantage of some of her comings and goings, the girl had secretly put what she had prepared in her mouth, and thereupon the *ecstasy* began . . .

What is it that they could have prepared? A question from the Commission puts it down specifically:

***«The "host," could it have been a piece***

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48. Naturally, I do not criticize the Commission for trying to bring all the hidden elements out into the open; I criticize their actions for not *being open*, actions which have given reason to think that they were only interested in confirming adverse points, only calling for testimony and accepting it from those who were able to present something unfavorable.

*from a game of Bristol, a wafer made from flour, a pharmaceutical product?»*

Fr. Etelvino answered:

— «I've never seen a Bristol piece so thick, but it well could have resembled a wafer made of flour.»

\* \* \*

So many and such labored allegations can be easily torn down, since it was shown that at the moment of the Communion, when the girl opened her mouth and held out her tongue, the tongue appeared completely bare, and then . . .

Several premier witnesses say something overwhelming in this regard; but the Commission has never called them to testify or given any credence to their testimony.

The stonemason of the village, José Díez Contero,



familiarly called Pepe Díez, enjoyed a privileged position for minutely following the *Communion*, since he was at Conchita's one side, holding her arm and protecting her, while her brother Miguel was on her other side. And Pepe Díez never tires of explaining — with remarkable forcefulness — how he illuminated the girl's mouth with his flashlight very carefully during the time before and after she opened it:

«When I saw that she held out her tongue, and that there was nothing at all on it, I had, I think, the worst moment in my life. *Oh heavens!* — I said to myself — *This is terrible. Nothing is seen here!* And on saying this, I lit up the whole interior of her mouth with my flashlight. Suddenly without the girl moving her tongue in the least — in a most unexplainable way — there appeared on top of it, as if suddenly coming forth, a white, round thing, which seemed to grow . . . I don't know how long it lasted; perhaps two or three minutes.»

Conchita's brother Miguel, who was on the other side of the girl, was able to make the same meticulous observations that Pepe Díez made. Serafín, her older brother, could not come to Garabandal on July 18th, but he returned a few days later. Miguel went to greet him, and as soon as the two brothers met, the question came up:

— *What happened with the miracle of the Host?*

— I swear it's true. I saw it. I saw perfectly how she held out her tongue, bare without anything on it, and without putting it inside, a white Host suddenly came forth.

— *Are you really sure?*

— Completely. I swear it was so.

— *Well, it's enough for me that you say it.*

A long time later, during one of Fr. Laffineur's stays<sup>(49)</sup> in Garabandal, he and Serafín were speaking about the miracle of the Host, and of its closest witnesses . . .

**FATHER LAFFINEUR** — For me, the real witness is Pepe Díez.

**SERAFIN** — *I'm not going to argue about it; but for me, the real witness is Miguel, my brother. Perhaps you don't see it that way, since he's Conchita's brother . . . But look. Out in the fields, in the places where we had to go to work, Miguel and I spoke about this miracle many times. He has always told me that he saw it perfectly; that the miracle was true. He held Conchita by one arm and Pepe Díez held the other when she fell on her knees for the Communion.*

*The whole family's honor is at stake in regard to the truth of this happening. Miguel knows it, and considering his character, if he holds it with such firmness against the opinions of so many people, it's because he's very sure there was no fraud.<sup>(50)</sup>*

In spite of this, neither Miguel nor Pepe Díez made a report to the bishop's Commission. Two other of the witnesses did not make a report either: a farmer from the neighboring country, Benjamín Gómez; and an industrial worker from a distant city, Alejandro Damians.

49. This Belgian priest who lived in France is already well known to the reader; he died on November 28th, 1970.

50. Father Laffineur's statement was given in a conference at Saragossa on December 8th, 1968.

The first of these, Benjamín Gómez, was not



given to religious fervor as he admitted:<sup>(51)</sup>

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51. Benjamin Gómez has spoken many times with almost the same words about his extraordinary experience at Garabandal. Here we are following the report that was recorded on a tape recorder by a man in Santander.

«Prior to being in Garabandal, I was not what I am now. Let us not say that I didn't believe in God, since sometimes I thought about those things; but I put it aside, as if it had no importance. Was it my age? Was it my weak head? The fact is that now I feel differently. And this change began here.<sup>(52)</sup> In my opinion, things have happened here that are divine — that are not of this world.»

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Benjamín Gómez was a native of Liébana; but he had lived for years in Pesués, downstream from Puente Nansa. News had soon come to him of the unusual things that were happening in San Sebastián de Garabandal. And one day he finally decided to go up to the place. At the beginning, he did not attract attention by doing this — there were so many who were going there! But it did not take long until townspeople began to talk about his devotion and started making jokes about him, and at times harassed him — even the pastor, who was opposed to Garabandal.

Garabandal attracted Benjamín. But that did not change the deficiency in his practice of religion:

«In spite of coming, I was still holding back, and missing Mass on Sunday didn't matter to me . . . until it came to July 18th.

I remember it well. After midnight, many people began to leave; I was glad they left, since it would be easier to see. It was well past one o'clock and I was waiting near Conchita's house when the young girl came out. A little later she fell on her knees in ecstasy, and I was able to be very near to her, and to see everything at leisure.

The young girl opened her mouth, but in no hurry. She was in no hurry for anything there. She opened her mouth, I say, and I set myself to watch with all my attention. I committed the rudeness of not allowing others to see. I recognized this, but I wanted to check everything well . . . I looked into her open mouth again and again; and neither on the top of her mouth, nor beneath her tongue, nor in any part of her

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52. The event of July 18th left a definite mark on Benjamín. His religious life prior to this could be well described by what he himself said: «I went 23 years without going to confession . . . I didn't concern myself with God except to blaspheme Him . . .»

mouth could anything be seen. There was nothing there at all!

The tongue was like this, without anything; and then the Host appeared suddenly, and was seen by everyone for some time, sufficient time so that all who were there would see. I saw it well.

The color could not be compared with anything. It seemed most like snow when the sun rises and gives it splendor in the blinding light. But it was not quite that way; it was white, like I have never seen anything whiter . . . I stayed still and continued to watch. Finally she closed her mouth and left the place still in ecstasy.

I swear before God and all the saints that what I say is true.»

We have what Alejandro Damians from Barce-



lona experienced and put down in writing. First of all he tells about the unusual circumstances on star-

ting out on his journey, which only was decided on at the last hour on Monday, July 16th. Concerning these circumstances, Mr. Damians says there was . . .

« . . . a detail which was destined to be of the greatest importance. Before leaving Barcelona, my cousin lent me a friend's movie camera, giving me brief instructions on how it should be operated, since my knowledge in these things was absolutely nil.

I passed almost all of July 18th near to Conchita's house with my wife, a friend, several priests, and some other people.

Two circumstances joined together to cause doubt as to whether or not the hoped-for prodigy would take place: the *atmosphere of fiesta* that reigned in the village and the *presence of priests*. (It was known that normally the Angel did not come to give Communion if there were priests in the village who could do it.)

And so, between doubts, wishful thinking, boredom and hope, the long day went by. The discouragement and the lack of belief were general when we saw that, by the clock, July 18th had ended without anything happening. But toward 1:00 at night, after some had started to leave the village, there spread the news that, according to the solar time, the day would not end until 1:25 in the morning.<sup>(53)</sup>

53. It seems that there has been excessive attention put on determining if the moment of the miracle fell or did not fall within the chronological limits of July 18th. Those who are in favor of the miracle have made some distinctions between official time and sun time. Those who were opposed, like the Commission, saw the hour as one more proof of deceit. In the questionnaire sent to Father Etelvino González, there was a double question; «*What hour was it? Had July 18th already passed?*» I would ask if it had not occurred to the Commission that this *difficulty* of the time, rather than being opposed, speaks in favor of the authenticity of the miracle. If the affair had been staged by the girl and her accomplices, they would have taken great care to keep within the limitations of the announcement so that no one could have anything to criticize, and the scene would have occurred definitely within the time predicted. The actual happening shows that neither the will of the girl, nor the impatience of those who surrounded her, had any effect.

In this episode at Garabandal, similar to what has so often occurred in the Bible, things and sayings have to be understood according to common opinion. And in the understanding of people who do not live by a clock, the days are separated simply the night; the day itself begins with getting up in the morning and lasts until going to bed again.

A little later they asked those of us who were in Conchita's house to leave, and I stayed at the door in company with a friend of the family to prevent the entrance of other people. From my place of watching I held in my view the kitchen and the stairway that led to the upper floor, where Conchita was.

There the ecstasy took place; but we didn't learn about it until we saw her coming down the stairway with that classical attitude in which her features are softened and embellished in an extraordinary way.

As she stepped out the door, the waiting crowd opened just enough space to permit her passage, and immediately closed in around her like an overflowing river. I saw people fall on the ground and get stepped on by the others. To my knowledge, no one was injured. But the sight of that fantastic multitude on the run, pushing one another, couldn't have been more terrifying.<sup>(54)</sup>

I also had intended to follow Conchita; but five or six meters of heads were between the two of us. From time to time I distinguished her by the light from the flashlights, but without good visibility. She had barely gone outside when she turned to the left. Then she swerved to the left again. And right there in the center of the street, which is rather wide, she fell suddenly on her knees.

Her fall was so unexpected that the thrust of the crowd, by the force of inertia, pushed the people several meters beyond her. Thus, unexpectedly, I saw myself suddenly to the right

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54. In this near riot, the Commission wanted to find further proofs against Garabandal, as another question of their questionnaire shows:

*Was the climate of shoving, rushing, jostling, etc. proper for a Eucharistic event?*

Fr. Etelvino responded without much perspective:

«No. It seems to me it would be rather improper for several reasons.»

I would remind both him and the members of the Commission about what so often occurred around Jesus; for example in the episode of the woman with the hemorrhage. (Luke 8: 33-45)

Certainly reverence and proper decorum are required for a proper relationship with God; but this is not easy to be maintained when strong feelings pull on people. Fortunately God is more understanding than men.

and less than half a meter from her face. I firmly withstood the shoving of those coming from behind, and I succeeded in not being displaced from the privileged place in which I had fallen.

There was a relative calm. I should point out that, slightly before the middle of the night, the clouds previously covering the sky dissipated. And a multitude of stars began to shine around the moon. By their light and the numerous flashlights that lit up the street, I could clearly see Conchita with her mouth open and tongue extended, in the normal position for receiving Communion. She was more beautiful than ever! Her expression, her gestures, far from provoking laughter or being ridiculous, were of impressive and moving mysticism.

Soon, without being able to say how, without Conchita having changed her position or expression in the least, the Sacred Host appeared on her tongue.

It is impossible to describe the sensation that I felt at that moment! And that I still feel today on remembering it. It was something that engorged the heart in the chest, overflowing it with sweetness, and that made the eyes water with an almost uncontainable need to cry.<sup>(55)</sup>

Later they told me that Conchita had been immobile some two minutes, with the Sacred Host on her tongue, until she swallowed it normally. And then she kissed the crucifix that she carried in her hand.

I was unaware of the time that passed by. I only remember, as if in a dream, the voices that were shouting for me to stoop down. And I also remember feeling a hard whack on my head.

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55. I recently heard the impression of another qualified witness: Pepe Díez.

He told me that what he has always described about the miracle of the host is the actual thing that he personally observed very close up . . . But he also said that whenever he described it, it seemed that what he said did not actually correspond to the reality, since everything that he could say did not come close to what there was; it was only a pale reflection.

He could find no words to express what he had experienced.

While observing the thing on that night, he was neither nervous nor excited, but in control of himself and engaged only in observing with the greatest attention. It was only when it was all over that he felt a tremendous sensation; the thrill of experiencing something that could not be repeated in his lifetime.

# God is Here!

Then I remembered that I was carrying the motion picture camera around my neck. And without paying attention to the complaints, I remained standing, focused the camera, pressed the trigger, and filmed the last moments of Conchita's Communion. I had never before taken a picture; I barely remembered my cousin's instructions. It seemed doubtful that anything would result from this. And furthermore, there was — I noticed this later — the fact that the visibility was totally inadequate, since I had to operate by light from flashlights.

When the roll came back from being developed, I found myself with almost a new *miracle*: on the film appeared 79 photographs filming the scene. The shoving of the people surrounding me had caused me to be unsuccessful in centering the picture well on many of the frames; but several had taken the picture with complete accuracy.<sup>(56)</sup>



I don't know what most people think of all these things, nor the decision that the Church will adopt. The only thing of which I can be sure — and I hold this without any kind of doubt — is that on July 18th, 1962, in San Sebastián de Garabandal, two miracles occurred. The first, Conchita's Communion, displayed a supernatural character of enormous proportions; the second, very small showed proof of the infinite condescension of the Virgin toward me, because only through her condescension was I able to be present so close to the prodigy and have it clearly impressed on my film.»

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56. Some of these pictures are well known since they have appeared in various publications about Garabandal.

We see then, that there are formal statements from the closest witnesses in favor of the authenticity of the miracle of July 18th. These declarations are not only unambiguous affirmations of the actuality of the miracle, but they also furnish us with some interior experiences that are of great value in judging its origin.

We have seen what Pepe Díez said and continues to say.

And also what Benjamín Gómez confesses without human respect, «*For myself, there was the place that I truly believed in God!*»

Alejandro Damians continues his report:

«When Conchita got up after having received Communion and continued on her way, I couldn't follow her. I had no strength. I withdrew to a corner and there remained entirely alone, leaning on a wall, holding onto the motion picture camera with the little strength that I had left.

I don't know how long I was there. When a calm relaxation replaced the tenseness in my muscles caused by the excitement, I set out walking through the village, with slow steps, without a fixed aim.»

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These words describe a lot, but they are not the only ones available to aid us in assessing some of the extraordinary interior experiences that Mr. Damians had on that unforgettable night.

On that same night, in the same place as Alejandro Damians, as close to Conchita as he was, better prepared and more ready than he to film the whole scene, was a man who had come from Paris expressly to do this. He was Doctor Caux,<sup>(57)</sup> of great professional prestige among French movie makers. What he *felt* in Garabandal on that night, in contrast to what Mr. Damians *felt*, we can estimate through a conversation that took place between them a year later, on August 15th, 1963.

DR. CAUX — «So you were the one who made the

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57. I have the address and telephone number of this man.

film of Conchita's Communion . . . How glad I am to meet you, to talk about that day! Do you mind if I ask some questions?

MR. DAMIANS — *I'm glad to meet you too. Ask whatever you want.*

DR. CAUX — I read your report closely; but I would like more information.

MR. DAMIANS — *You might know that — although the report is complete — there is something that I couldn't put down: what I felt within, I wasn't able to describe.*

DR. CAUX — Tell me, were you watching all the time?

MR. DAMIANS — *From the time I saw myself next to the girl, I didn't look at anything else except her. I can swear that I didn't take my eyes off her tongue for a moment. Obviously I could have blinked, but as you know, that is a matter of a slight fraction of a second. And I saw how — with a speed too fast for the human eye — the Host formed on her tongue. To explain it better, I might say without the passing of a split second.*

DR. CAUX — Why didn't you film it from the beginning?

MR. DAMIANS — *I was struck speechless; stupefied! When I came to myself — I don't know if it actually was this way, since I wasn't able to remember how I filmed it — I took the camera and, in a hurry, was able to take the last seconds of the miracle.*

DR. CAUX — Did it occur to you to touch the Host?

MR. DAMIANS — *No.*

DR. CAUX — Was the girl's tongue in the normal position?

MR. DAMIANS — *I would say that it was held out more than it would ordinarily be extended for receiving Communion.*

DR. CAUX — Now permit me a question that I've wanted to ask for a long time: Did you feel at that moment, a joy so tremendous, so beyond this world, that you couldn't compare it with anything

else, that you wouldn't exchange it for anything, even for a thousand million pesetas, for example?

MR. DAMIANS — *That's a question that I've been asked more than once, and almost with the same words. I certainly wouldn't exchange the happiness that I felt during those moments for a thousand million pesetas, nor for anything in the world. It was a joy so intense, so profound, that I can't explain it, nor can I compare it with anything. It was something exceptional! Something for which I'd give my life, and which didn't allow me later to follow the girl's ecstasy, or to go with my wife, or with anyone; I was only able to take shelter in a corner and sob in silence.*

DR. CAUX — I'm delighted to hear this! Actually that is what I suspected. There still remain two things that I'd like very much to know: What was the reason for such a great joy? And were you in the state of grace at the time? Pardon my forwardness; don't answer if you don't want to.

MR. DAMIANS — *I'll answer gladly. I was in grace with God; and my enormous emotion wasn't caused by the miracle itself, or by seeing the girl with the white object on her tongue. (Some said that the Host had a cross in the center; others, that the cross was double; I didn't see any of this.)*

*I'm going to tell something great: the thing that I did see, and that had a tremendous effect on me, was finding myself with the Living and True God. I wouldn't exchange anything in the world for this. If God wants me to see the Miracle that is predicted, I'll be delighted; but if it is not that way, what can I say? I see that it would be difficult for anything in the world to make an impression like the one I had in SEEING HIM during that solemn and magnificent moment in my life.*

DR. CAUX — You don't know how happy you make me, on the one hand, and how miserable on the other. I felt the same as you, but in reverse!

Listen to this. I came all prepared to film the affair; I had everything completely ready. And everything went bad for me and I wasn't able to film anything. Only at the last moment, in the



last fraction of a second, did I manage to see the Host, which was disappearing, being swallowed by the girl. At that moment, I was struck by a terrible pain, a horrible pain that overwhelmed me! *The pain of a God that I had come to catch a glimpse of and Who was going away from me . . .*

It was only at that moment that I thought — I had not thought about it before — that I was in mortal sin. I wept like you, but from pain! I understood what sin was and what hell was . . . It was useless for my wife to try to console me; nor could I explain anything, nor could she understand me. That pain was something too great to share or be solaced.<sup>(58)</sup>

Because of this, I believe that only if God permits me to see the Miracle — now that I try to be always in His grace — will there depart from me this pain so profound that I think it's going to kill me, and which still continues piercing my heart. On that night in Garabandal, I even had the impression that the people were avoiding me, as if they saw my sins!

**MR. DAMIANS** — *I understand everything, my friend. I have to tell you that on that day it wasn't only your impression that the people didn't like you; it was the truth. The village thought that you had come with a woman who wasn't your wife; and they even asked me to find a way to throw you out. Now I understand why God didn't permit them to do it. You suffered more pain by staying than you would have by being roughly expelled.*

**DR. CAUX** — You're right. I'd have really preferred that to have happened. But now I know what God is, and what He wants of me, what the hell is of not seeing God and how this pain — I would give more than my whole fortune to avoid it — was relieved in confession, and now again with the hope of seeing the Miracle some day.

Whatever people say, and although many

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58. To understand something both about the joy of Mr. Damians and the suffering of Dr. Caux, the teaching of Catholic theology has to be taken into account:

— That heaven consists above all in the joy of the perfect vision of God.

— That hell is above all the horrible existence in having lost God forever.

ridicule me, I cannot abandon the service of the Garabandal cause, to which I owe something as profound as it is unknown and terribly magnificent, something that I hope will depart from me, and be eased on the day of the Miracle. The view of hell moves me to try to move the world myself, announcing what has happened and what is going to happen, so that it can be saved. My family was the first to think that I was crazy, although now they don't think that way. But I assure you that nothing that anyone thinks of me matters; the only thing that matters to me is God.»

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This conversation between the man from Barcelona and the doctor from Paris has extraordinary value for its theological implications and scope. Unfortunately, we will have to omit commenting on it here, so as not to lengthen the chapter unduly. However, I want to add what was said in a letter written in April of 1970 by María Teresa le Pelletier de Glatigny:

«One afternoon in Paris, Doctor Caux told us confidentially what he had felt on that night in Garabandal. Among other things, he told me how at the exact moment of the miracle, he had *lived* and experienced what human words could not convey: what it is to lose God — the true pain of hell. At the same time, he was filled with all the horror of being in mortal sin. *Pray for me, Señora* — he told me at the end — *in order that I may never fall again into sin, now that I have experienced its terrible meaning.*»

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This page from the story of Garabandal is of superlative worth to anyone who looks at it. Nevertheless, by an assembly of circumstances that cannot be explained, a thick cloud of doubt and suspicion has hovered permanently over the event.

## The Diocesan Commission Says NO

Mr. Damians wrote at the end of his report, «I don't know what most people think of all these things, nor the decision the Church will adopt.»

The Church has still not adopted a decision. But

those who said they were acting in the name and with the powers of the Church immediately took a stance: not to admit the actuality of the miracle. As a consequence, there was no other way for them to explain what had happened than to say it was the result of a well-staged fraud.

The principal perpetrator of the fraud could be none other than Conchita. But she could not have done it alone. Immediately the accomplices appeared: her uncle Elías and her cousin Luciuca. Some of those who were in Garabandal on that night began to single them out; and the Commission, with its propensity for negative positions, did not hesitate in taking their point of view.

It did not matter that some of these people, whose testimony in the beginning contributed to confuse the issue, later retracted their testimony.

For example, Fr. Justo wrote to Conchita from his residence two or three days later:

**«I saw the Host on your tongue perfectly; but I was disturbed by not having seen it from the beginning. On leaving your home and going behind you, with the intention of not missing a thing, I had the misfortune of falling and of being jostled by a larger number of people. When I recovered from the shock and wanted to get near you, the Host was already in your mouth.»**

**The devil tempted me and I came to think evil . . . Afterwards, having spent some sleepless nights, I have come to think more evenly. And now I am once again sure that it is God Who gives you His protection.»**

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The favorable testimonies that could have been taken from many persons who *had seen everything* meant nothing to the Commission.

Doctor Ortiz compiled the names and addresses of some 26 witnesses. And Father Valentín took statements from some more. In his notes, Doctor Ortiz wrote:

**«Everyone agrees that the Host was of an exceptional whiteness. And some added that it seemed somewhat thicker than normal. Those who saw the event from the beginning, expressed it like this: *It was as if suddenly the Host came forth from her tongue.* They said too that the miracle was not followed by cries or shouts, but only by some minutes of silence until the girl, still in**

**ecstasy, left the place.»**

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It is pointless to show the ridiculousness of the suspicions against Uncle Elías. The people from Garabandal never took them seriously since they knew what this man was: the least suited for such a thing. Nevertheless, Plácido Ruiloba, to dissipate better every doubt, submitted him later to an interrogation that was recorded on a tape recorder. (It took place in Santander, in the home of a woman born in Garabandal.) Whoever hears or reads the dialogue between the educated man from the city and the uneducated man from the village will see the complete inconsistency of the accusations and suspicions that were heaped on Uncle Elías.

It is not surprising that Uncle Elías, by this time, having had enough, replied to a remark from Mr. Ruiloba: *The first thing that they should do* (referring to the priests who had talked like this about him) *is take off their cassocks.* Who would have thought at the time that not many years later Uncle Elías' strong words would become a reality?

In spite of all this, trusting fully in some of the witnesses (which did not fulfill their duty to observe the matter directly), the Commission has continued in the opinion that the miracle of July 18th, 1962, did not happen.

Sometime later one of those who had been there in Garabandal met Fr. Francisco Odriozola in Santander. He mentioned how much he had been surprised that Fr. Odriozola had not come to witness a thing so important. He who was called the «*factotum*» of the Commission replied that he had done well in not going, since it was only a fraud: the visionary had taken the pretext of changing her skirt and blouse to put some hosts in her mouth and then had performed the comedy of the miracle.

*How could you say such a thing if you weren't present?* the amazed questioner exclaimed.

For a response, Fr. Odriozola spun around and walked away.<sup>(59)</sup>

Time has passed, but he has not changed his opinion.

In the early part of May, 1963, François Henri,

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59. Episode published by F. Corteville in *L'Impartial*, September-October, 1970.

a Frenchman from Paris who had come previously to Garabandal with Dr. Caux, came again. He told Conchita that in Santander he had spoken with the Commission members and that Fr. Francisco Odriozola had pointed out to him: *The miracle of the host was pure fraud. Conchita went out of her house already carrying on her tongue a piece of bread that she had prepared.*

The girl was grieved. She then wrote a letter for Fr. Odriozola, and handed it to the Frenchman to deliver personally.<sup>(60)</sup>

«The Frenchman told me that you think that I put the Host on my tongue. And that later I fell on my knees. And that I stuck out my tongue to show the Host. And that before that I was alone in my room . . . I had gone to change my dress. And during all the time that I was upstairs, my mother, my two brothers, a cousin, an uncle and one of the Fontanedas were present. And I was upstairs a quarter of an hour, and the Angel appeared to me. And afterward I went out on the street with many people and priests.

It isn't true that I put the Host on my tongue. What a responsibility for me that would be before God! Doesn't it seem that I would have to have some schooling to think that up? And furthermore, I would have to think that the people would observe me. And I wouldn't be smart enough to do a thing like that.

And so St. Michael was the one who put the visible Host on my tongue for the people. And on that day I didn't fake the ecstasy either.»<sup>(61)</sup>

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Obviously on July 18th, 1962, Garabandal, the

60. Maximina González wrote a letter on May 3rd, 1963 to the Pifarré family:

«A Frenchman has been in my house for 6 days now. He is a very good man and has come several times. He is very interested in the apparitions. On his way here he spoke with one of the Commission members at Santander; it seems to me it was the secretary. Conchita sent the following card to this Commission member, whose name is Francisco Odriozola . . .»

The copy that Maximina gives matches exactly with the test given in this book.

61. With this, Conchita alludes also to the fact, known and admitted by her, that sometimes the girls had the frivolousness to fake part of an ecstasy.



“On that day I didn't fake the ecstasy.”

site of so many events and actualities in the History of Salvation, soon became converted into a sign of contradiction. (Luke 2: 34) Some would consider the *miracru* decisively favorable; but others . . .

In his *Memorias* Father José Ramón García de la Riva condensed his impressions of that day like this:

«No member of the Commission came to the place; the *delegate* who took their place saw nothing since the commotion prevented him. Who would be surprised? God alone can name the conditions. And the conditions put down were not followed by those who were called. Those who should have been there, were not.

As a result of this event, there spread out the rumor that all had been a fraud.»

One cannot evade here a comparison with the distant echo of another story of long ago:

Some of the guards came into the city and told the chief priests all the things that had been done (*after the Resurrection of Jesus*) . . . And being assembled together with the ancients, taking counsel, they gave a great sum of money to the soldiers, saying: "Say his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep . . ." And this word was spread abroad among the Jews even unto this day. (Matt. 28: 11-15)

And so July 18th, 1962, the day that had seemed destined to be decisive in the history of Garabandal, ended in many respects as a miserable failure.

