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After the 18th of
July

The *Miracle of the Host* left marks in people's minds, and a trail of changes in their lives.

Some were more suspicious than ever about Garabandal. (We have already seen the opinion that the Commission made). Conversely, others believed more than ever in it.

Now for the first time, or at least with an intensity previously unknown, a regrettable thing came about. The village divided into opposing opinions. Hostility, even antagonism, developed between the parents of the visionaries.

Explosion of Opinions

Concerning the days that followed immediately after July 18th, we have a valuable store of information in the notes taken by the lawyer from Palencia, Luis Navas Carrillo. Although he speaks with great prudence and delicateness, it is not hard to detect the attitude of the village in his remarks:

«After 11:00 on the morning of Thursday, July 19th, a sunny and warm day, I left for Torrelavega to take my mother and sister to the train.

In the village only a few still remained from the great number of strangers who had come for July 18th. There were two young girls from Reinosa camping near Conchita's house, a teacher from Cadiz and his wife and two daughters, and perhaps a few more.

During the trip to Torrelavega, we were of course exchanging opinions about all that had happened. I was preoccupied with the tremendous effect that the apparitions had made on my mother, and I tried to convince her that she shouldn't get so worked up and heated in defending their credibility. Nevertheless, I felt a joy in seeing her stirred so much, telling about the many things that had left a mark in her heart, an old heart of 70 years, but which still maintained its good sense. Listening to her, tears filled our eyes, for she spoke in words favorable toward everything that she had seen and heard. And who can resist the person who lives and breathes what he says?

Loli's father was waiting for me at the Hostal

Gloria in Torrelavega. We stayed for dinner and returned together to the village. There we met the pastor, Father Valentín, who was going to Santander to report to the bishop everything that had happened on the previous day.

We got back at nightfall in sufficient time to be present at the first apparition, the only one of the day, which was his daughter's . . . She kept us up until after 4:30 in the morning . . . And at six o'clock, when I had barely fallen asleep, Jacinta's father called me to pray the rosary at the *calleja*. The girl was waiting there, seated on the rocks. We prayed the rosary in silence and solitude. And then we went to the church, in front of whose doors, still locked, we said the prayers for a Visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Then I understood the sacrifice that was entailed for a girl like Jacinta to get up every day at six in the morning to go to the *cuadro* and pray the first rosary of the day there. Although in the beginning this had been a command from the Virgin, it had not been commanded for months, and still the girl continued coming just to please the Blue and White Lady.»

Among the various things that Mr. Navas wrote down in his notes on July 20th, Friday, I do not want to omit these:

«After eating, so as to be prepared for what could happen during the night, I took a long nap. (I had adapted my sleeping hours to the girls.) The room in which I was reposing was like a cave; it was chilly and had none of the flies that were so numerous in the village due to the cattle. I had the feeling of being in a catacomb, in an atmosphere of great recollection and devotion, worthy of the Spiritual Exercises, with an interior joy, under the loving glance and direction of the *Queen and Mistress of Heaven and Earth*, according to the title that the visionaries had given her in their ecstasies.

During the day, while discussing with the people her unfulfilled hope of receiving Communion that day from the hands of the Angel, Conchita said: *How unfortunate that the Angel didn't come!* And responding to people about the reason for her receiving Communion more frequently than the others, she replied, *Because I'm the worst of all.* They told me that this answer was given to her by the Angel when



“I’m the worst of all.”

the girl had insisted on knowing the reason for the difference.

On July 21st, Saturday, when we had barely slept an hour, Jacinta’s father woke me up again by knocking on the window of my room. It was getting to be 6:00 o’clock and the girl was going to the *cuadro* to pray the customary dawn rosary. We also went there, accompanied by an old woman. We found Jacinta seated; she had placed some paper on top of the rocks to avoid the wetness from the heavy rainfall.

As on the previous day, we went to the church after finishing the rosary. In the courtyard we prayed a Visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament . . .»

The day passed without notable episodes, until 1:00 at night when the first ecstasy occurred. It was Loli’s, in the kitchen of her home. The lawyer from Palencia described it:

«It was something marvelous. I couldn’t imagine anything comparable. The silence was absolute and the attention complete. The girl offered the Vision whatever had been deposited on the table for this purpose. I had put there a collection of holycards bought in Cabezón de la Sal, and the theme of which was the titles of the lity. With greater dexterity than a card player, the girl opened the holycards in a fan and held them up very graciously like that to be kissed by the Vision . . . She was completely transfigured. Her face was radiant and full of light; the expression didn’t belong to her, but to an angel. It seemed as if she were radiating a supernatural halo and we were all immersed in a sensation of serenity and peace, as if being under the gaze of Our Lady.»

Concerning Conchita’s ecstasy, which followed Loli’s, Luis Navas writes:

«She went out of her house and through the various streets of the village; she made a complete circle around the church; she went to the cemetery and knelt at the gate. We went with her to the *cuadro*, and from there she descended backwards in a marvelous ecstatic dance. The rosary was recited and later we sang the Salve. The voice of the visionary didn’t belong to this world. There were still other trips through the village. The girl’s expression was held constantly in an ineffable smile, very different from the almost ironical quality that she had many times out of the ecstasies.



“radiant and full of light”

Toward the end, when she began giving back the chains and medals, she noticed that she had dropped a medal. She asked the Vision about it and was astonished at the response she received, since she was heard to say, *But how could I lose it near the church if I haven't gone out of the house?* After the ecstasy she was also astonished in seeing us all perspiring, while she had no sign of exertion or fatigue. And the affair had lasted until 4:30 in the morning! We went to bed happy since the Virgin had presented us a night which for me was happier and richer in the interior life than July 18th itself.»⁽¹⁾

Luis Navas used Sunday, July 22nd to speak at leisure with the four girls:

«They were the ones who brought up the subject of the miracle on July 18th. I noticed some of them, especially Jacinta, had still not spoken about it to their companion Conchita. And I was surprised at the attitude that was then adopted. Jacinta, a timid girl, soon showed herself harsh, always taking the initiative and displaying in her speech a series of judgments and opinions that surely were those beginning to be circulated through the village. And so there came to my knowledge some of what the people thought and what they usually were careful not to mention in the presence of strangers.



“Jacinta, a timid girl, soon showed herself harsh.”

1. Dr. Puncernau writes in his pamphlet about another night at Garabandal:

«I went out on the streets. It was a cold, starry night. For a person from Barcelona, the stars shone with unusual brilliance.

I thought that the Mother of Heaven truly watched over and protected with open arms the inhabitants and visitors at Garabandal.

Passing through the dark and lonely streets of the village, I also had the feeling of being protected.

In spite of the masses of people who came to Garabandal, no unpleasant accident ever occurred that I know about.»

While Jacinta was stating the remarks that were running through the village concerning the disputed Communion of the Angel, she gave me the impression that she was identifying with those remarks, or at least partially accepted them, since she took on a very personal tone in what she said. Loli hardly opened her mouth. Mari Cruz enclosed herself in her habitual silence. And Conchita merely smiled before these absurdities reflecting the bad disposition and bitterness of ignorant people inclined to suspicion. And all this, even though some of the villagers had been able to be present up close to the Communion, not leaving them room for doubt.

It pained me that these open cracks in the friendship between the families of the visionaries existed, and were coming to the surface like this, and that they were also having an effect on the girls themselves. Several times I mentioned in the houses there that the Virgin wanted the four girls to be united, and that they couldn't be separated . . .

They were humanizing the realm of the supernatural that was rising up from the apparitions with proofs and signs more evident each day. This made me remember the scene of the Gospel in which the mother of the sons of Zebedee asked Christ to reserve the first two places in His kingdom for her sons. Here also, each family was endeavoring to make their daughter stand out as if distinguished by special signs as proof of the predilection of the Vision and the people for her. Perhaps Jacinta was irritated by the distinction that this supposed for Conchita, if the event of the miraculous Communion is regarded with the eyes of the flesh, and not those of the spirit and faith.»

Luis Navas ended this dialogue, which he said was *«characterized by a sharpness that was unusual in Jacinta»*, with words that were conciliatory and Christian in sentiment.

This episode is revealing, not only for showing the atmosphere existing in the village after that memorable day, but also for illustrating once again the co-existence of high divine gifts with low human weaknesses. These must displease God; but He has infinite patience, waiting for souls to overcome their faults.

The multitude of supernatural favors that the

visionaries at Garabandal received from God did not substantially change their human nature, strongly influenced by the bad inclinations that we call *vices* or *capital sins*. Their failures should have urged them to a moral fight against their inclinations. The girls were certainly not free from them, and outflows of their weak human nature would inexorably appear on more than one occasion.

We should not then be surprised that a certain feeling of envy was shown with regard to the marked distinction that Conchita had on July 18th. And making it worse were the parents' village rivalries and their neighbors' vicious comments.



“from the hands of the Angel”

On Monday, July 23rd, writes Luis Navas:

«After 10:00 in the morning, I was sitting at the door of Mari Loli's house. And she told me that right after the visit that she had made following her morning rosary, she had received Communion near the church door from the hands of the Angel. I didn't expect this because for some time only Conchita had been receiving Communion like this . . . She also told me that she had asked the Angel

for the reason why he had not given Communion to them too on July 18th, since the people of the village had commented that certainly it had been due to their being bad. The Angel answered that it wasn't so.

Jacinta arrived shortly afterwards, and Mari Loli told her about the Communion. My attention was drawn when Jacinta didn't answer and continued into the interior of the store in search of bread, leaving her best friend deserted.»

Of the things that Mr. Navas Carrillo continued to write, I am only putting down those that have the greatest interest for us:

«Observing the ecstasies of the girls produces different effects in people. While it makes some more fervent, it almost scandalizes others, confirming their disbelief.⁽²⁾

I have been informed of another very meaningful episode that occurred some time later. Loli's newest little brother had just been born. One day she fell into ecstasy near to him, and was heard to speak about him, showing astonishment at one time. *How? So very little and already in mortal sin?*

She didn't put the crucifix on his lips until the child was baptized.⁽³⁾

One day the girls, speaking about the sins that most offend God, put in second place those that were committed in marriage. They used words whose significance was certainly beyond their rudimentary education.»

On that Monday, July 23rd, Luis Navas said

2. This can be considered with the prophecy about Jesus. Behold this child—the aged Simeon told Mary at the Presentation in the Temple—is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted. (Luke 2:34)

3. Once again Garabandal comes ahead of its time to indicate deviations that would soon show themselves openly in the Church.

And today no one can be unaware—just a few years after Loli's ecstasy— what at that time only the most learned could have perceived: the attack by the *new theology* on the old Christian dogma concerning original sin. This attack has not stopped in spite of the unequivocal words of Paul VI that proclaimed again in the *Credo of the People of God* (June 29th, 1968) what has always been believed by the Roman Catholic Church about original sin.

farewell to Garabandal. The result of his stay he expressed in this way:

«Fortified by pure air, both spiritual and material, my continued meditations led me to accept with internal joy the troubles of this life, and also to look without excessive fear at death, which, at the end of everything, is no more than a frontier . . .

I felt a burning desire (and I petitioned the Mother of God and Our Mother many times) to be truly good, not halfway; for example, correcting my brusqueness, my stubbornness, my obstinacy, which together with a frankness that is sometimes excessive, are the origin of much discourtesy and many disagreements. Trying to defend the truth, I haven't always been charitable. And I need to be convinced that, if charity is given, sanctity is earned.»

It would be magnificent if every pilgrimage to Garabandal produced the same effects!

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On the following Wednesday, July 25th, all over Spain there was a big celebration: the feast day of its patron and Father in the Faith, the Apostle St. James. It was the second time during the apparitions that this holy day took place in Garabandal. Would something happen on this day?

Leafing through a mixed-up stack of references and testimonies referring to this time, I found this statement from María Herrero de Gallardo, who wrote down what she heard from Father Valentín months later:

«You see, Señora, that at times I tell you things that I don't tell anyone else, since I know that you receive them well and think about them, while many others find them ridiculous.

For example, I remember the feast day of St. James the Apostle. It was almost midnight and about twenty people were watching the girls' ecstasy. At times I looked at the sky, a beautiful summer sky covered with stars, with here and there a little white cloud drifting by. Suddenly — I saw this with my own eyes, and the persons that I mentioned also saw it — our patron St. James appeared on a beautiful white horse, like the tradition described in Spanish history. For a few minutes he seemed to make a path across the sky,

disappearing at times behind white clouds and reappearing again. It was really wonderful.»

I find no great difficulty in accepting that this happened. And I would point out further how opportune would be a new appearance and intervention of the *Defender of the Spanish Main*, when once again it is the hour of a great battle for the faith of its people against many enemies within and without. If he was needed so much in the days of horses and swords, he is needed much more today against enemies wielding more sinister weapons in the heart of the land dedicated to the apostle called the *Son of Thunder*.⁽⁴⁾

Expert Witnesses

Three days later, on Sunday, July 28th, there came to Garabandal for the first time an illustrious priest from Madrid: Father Enrique Valcarce Alfayate.⁽⁵⁾ He made a digest of his observations in a report that he wrote later in Comillas and that bears the date of July 30th, 1962.

In it he describes a most remarkable experience: his own participation in one of the girls' ecstatic marches:

«After the rosary, I remained praying for a while in the church. Suddenly Dr. Ortiz came in and told me to go outside if I wanted to see the girls in ecstasy. I went out immediately. They were walking with the people behind them. I pushed my way through and managed to join Mari Loli and Conchita, who were walking together, holding arms. Later I was told that the other two, Jacinta and Mari Cruz, were going in the same way with another group of people down a different street.⁽⁶⁾

4. Mark 3: 17

5. A cardinal for many years in the diocese of Madrid with important functions and duties there, this priest came from the area of Leon in Bierzo, where his brother was a parish priest.

6. On August 2nd, Maximina wrote a letter to the Pifarrè family: «Saturday (July 22) was extremely moving. There were many people and the four girls had an apparition. They went separated in pairs. As there were so many people, it was better that way: some in one direction and others in another. The four girls sang the rosary together—in different places. While we were with Loli and Conchita at the Pines, the singing of the people going with the other two girls through the village could be heard perfectly. All were singing at the same time up above and down below. Look, it made a marvelous sensation. It seemed that I saw Dr. Ortiz singing with all his might. Good, we all sing whatever we can.»



“tremendous and amazing”

The phenomena as a whole were for me something tremendous and amazing. The fast walk over really rough terrain, almost inaccessible, strewn with the worst obstacles . . . running at times at incredible speeds, both forwards and backwards, as if the girls had wings on their feet . . . with their heads tilted sharply backwards,

with their eyes unblinking and fixed constantly on the alleged vision . . .

The trip was made while singing the holy rosary (the girls leading and the people in the village following) except for the Our Fathers and certain ejaculations which the girls said

with great devotion, very slowly and with deep feeling. Furthermore their singing was beautifully intoned, with dulcet voices and excellent harmony.

The walk lasted from about 10:15 at night until after 11:30. During almost all this time, I was able to go with them, hanging on either to Loli's or Conchita's arm. By holding on this way, I was able to follow them in spite of many obstacles, running swiftly and with a strange sensation of security. The falls and stumbles that I made at times always happened to me when I let go of the girls.⁽⁷⁾

The end of it all took place at the church doors, which were locked. First of all Loli raised Conchita in her arms, higher than Loli herself, and then Conchita did the same with Mari Loli. After kneeling down and suddenly recovering their normal state, they looked around with a smile, which later they shared with all of us.»

To these experiences on Saturday, Fr. Enrique added those of the following Sunday, July 29th, which he also spent in Garabandal. On Father Valentin's request he celebrated Mass in the village at 9:00 in the morning.

And the *personal impression* of his experiences he wrote down in a report at Comillas:

«The rivalry displayed against Conchita by the other three didn't make a good impression on me.⁽⁸⁾ Nor the prefixing of the time for the

7. It should be pointed out that Father Enrique Valcarce was advanced in both years and kilograms and was not exactly in shape for an obstacle course. Only when he was hanging onto the girls did he feel extremely light.

—Heavens, Reverend Father —someone said—*be careful on these streets at such speed, or you'll kill yourself.*

—Don't worry—he answered—*I feel as though I have lost 40 years.*

8. Father Enrique put down in his report:

«I had the good luck that the first persons whom I met were the alleged visionaries. I had just heard that on that day, Saturday, July 28th, Mari Loli had received Communion from the hands of an angel, and only she. Meeting then with Conchita, I immediately told her that I had learned that Mari Loli had received Communion. Right

ecstasy; nor the fact of the walks, seemingly senseless,⁽⁹⁾ around the church, to the Pines from the church, and from the church to the Pines or the cemetery, through the streets of the village, time and time again.⁽¹⁰⁾



“The facts do not have a natural explanation.”



Nevertheless, taken as a whole, everything that I have tried to describe was truly exceptional and amazing. It is certain that it is not a product of disease, either psychiatric or organic. It seems to me, therefore, that the facts do not have a natural explanation.

away she answered me with a certain air of reproach: *I myself receive many more times than anyone else; I—almost every day; they—very few times.*»

If the report of Father Enrique reproduces *faithfully* the words and tone of Conchita, it should be recognized that the girl was still far from perfection, like Jesus' disciples who, even at the time of the Last Supper, were disputing among themselves **which of them was the greatest.** (Luke 22: 24)

9. At the time of making his report, it seems this way to Father Enrique; but it should be pointed out that he had different feelings when he was taking part in these things.

10. It is easy to answer these and the other difficulties of Father Enrique, understandable in someone with only brief experience with Garabandal. Those who have attentively followed it from the beginning can see clearer in the matters that were obscure to him.



“expression of great beauty”

The girls show an expression of great beauty when they are in ecstasy, an expression frequently angelic (for example, with Mari Loli). But in the normal state, they are quite withdrawn, and very taciturn.

The remarks that I have just made should not be taken out of proportion. The very matter of the rivalry that I thought was found between Conchita and the other girls is a good proof that this is not an act concocted by the four girls together. What leaves me the most confused is the matter of the senseless walks, which seem to be without basis.

But I recognize that I lack material for judgment so as to take definitive position. I would have to go many times to the village and observe everything more minutely.

Therefore, if no medical explanation can be found for these phenomena, I consequently reject the explanation saying it was an act concocted either by the girls themselves, or by third parties. But I don't go so far as to say it is a supernatural phenomena due to Our Lady.

Then, what is it? *I don't know.*»

If the illustrious priest from Madrid left Garabandal without knowing the cause of it, or without venturing to express his opinion, it was not the same with two visitors who arrived in the village at the very time he was leaving. Their names should be mentioned, since they comprise part of this enigmatic story. They were Dr. Ricardo Puncernau, a distinguished neurologist from Barcelona, and Fr. Luis López Retenaga, a professor of theology in the diocesan seminary at San Sebastián.

I cannot give the exact dates of their arrivals; but certainly they were in Garabandal in the early days of August, 1962; and for the neurologist, it was not the first visit, although perhaps it was the first for the priest.

The attorney Luis Navas left Garabandal on July 23rd and was not planning to return until Saturday, August 11th, to be there for the feast of the Assumption. But he returned a week earlier as he explained:

«I was with my in-laws in Santander. I aroused their curiosity first, and then their interest in Garabandal, in such a way that we agreed to return there on Saturday, August 4th. On that day, after having enjoyed a beautiful and sunny morning at the beach, we ate and set out for San Sebastián de Garabandal.

I was very happy to renew friendships there that had been formed during the apparitions. Dr. Puncernau was there, having come from Barcelona, this time with his wife and oldest son. I single him out from the rest because of his position as the neurologist who prepared a complete report for the pastor about the visionaries' irrefutable normalness before and after their ecstasies. Also, I met many priests and religious there, among whom was one from the province of San Sebastián who had the intention of informing the bishop of his diocese about all these things.»

This priest from the Basque province of San Sebastián undoubtedly was Fr. Luis López Retenaga, although Mr. Navas does not mention his name.⁽¹¹⁾

«As on other occasions, the people had hardly gone outside after the rosary on that Saturday,

11. I do not want to pass over the appearance of Fr. Luis Retenaga in Garabandal since he was to assume an important role in the observation and judgment of these phenomena. Perhaps it could be said that he was for the events of 1962 what Fr. Ramón María Andreu was for those of 1961.

He was soon able to capture the confidence of the seers and their families, which assured him a privileged place for following the events near at hand.

As a result of his observations and reflections, he composed a long three part report addressed to Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal, the bishop of Santander at the time. The first part was completed in San Sebastián on December 18th, 1962; the second, in the same city on April 6th, 1963; and the third on April 9th of the same year. We will refer several times to this report in what is still left of our story.

Our Lady's day, when Conchita and María Dolores were in ecstasy at the very door of the church. I was very happy about this since I had not seen them together in ecstasy since that famous October 18th of the previous year, the day of the message; although on that occasion, the four girls had been together.

They went out holding hands, as if Mari Loli were letting herself be docilely led by her older sister, obeying the suggestions of the Vision.»

What the attorney goes on to narrate coincides with what Fr. Enrique Valcarce wrote in his report about the happenings of the previous Saturday. From this we can see that within the almost continual variations of the phenomena, there was a certain uniformity of procedure.

From the pastor Fr. Valentín we have some brief notes that complement those of Luis Navas and Maximina González, helping us to better re-create in our minds the atmosphere at Garabandal during the early days of August, 1962:

«August 3rd. At 4:00 in the morning, Loli went into ecstasy in her home. There were many people from Barcelona, Madrid, Santander . . . a diocesan priest, a Claretian Father and a Jesuit. She gave the articles to be kissed to the Vision, and afterwards she returned them to their owners. She didn't leave her home.

August 4th. At 9:30, after the rosary, the four girls went into ecstasy. They went toward the *cuadro*. Later they went to the Pines praying the rosary. During the Hail Mary, they said, *Hail Mary, Mother of God and Our Mother*.⁽¹²⁾

12. Fr. Valentín was struck by the addition of *our Mother* to the recitation of the Hail Mary. And he was not the only one—Luis Navas, the lawyer from Palencia, who was present that day, wrote:

«We had never heard them say it this way, *Mother of God and our Mother*. The village priest took note of this very interesting detail that so much reflects the maternal character of the Virgin. The visionaries' way of speaking, with their even-pitched, soft, delicate, melodious voices filled our souls with tranquility, as though we were feeling Our Lady above our heads.»

We can understand Mr. Navas' sentiments. But if the new form of the Hail Mary was a novelty to him, certainly it was not to Fr. Valentín, unless it was due to the tone and the persistence of the girls, since *Mother of God and our Mother* was heard for the first time in Garabandal on August 1st of the previous year, as has been mentioned.



“Hail Mary, Mother of God and Our Mother.”

They descended backwards toward the church; they walked around it. It lasted about an hour. There were two professors from San Sebastián, a Claretian priest, a Jesuit — Father Alba, from Barcelona — and Father José Ramón.»⁽¹³⁾

* * *

And so at the beginning of the second August of apparitions in Garabandal we see that the phenomena continued without eclipse. And the questions continued . . . without answers. The inquisitive came and went, but also those who seriously sought to understand the reasons and the explanations for all these things.

13. We already know one of these two professors at San Sebastián: Fr. José Ramón, the pastor of Barro. As for the Jesuit from Barcelona, Fr. Alba, it could be said that he was a distinguished apostle, deeply appreciated in religious and spiritual circles in the city of Ciudad Condal. Who then was the Claretian father that Fr. Valentín mentions? Certainly it was the missionary father spoke of in Maximina’s letter; in another report the name of Fr. Ellacuria has been seen.

As can be seen, a fine contingent of visiting priests.

The memory of July 18th lingered on, the day of the *Miracle of the Host*.

Now we see better that the unequivocally predicted miracle or *milagrucu* came mainly to call attention to the most important treasure that we have in our Christian and ecclesiastical heritage: *the actual presence of the God-man among us as our daily nourishment*.

However, as so often occurs in the affairs of God, this served also as a test, as a means **for the fall and for the rise of many**. (Luke 2:34) Some believed more than ever; others doubted more than ever. Some became fervent; some lost interest; and some took on a spirit most opposed to the Eucharist: that of discord, hostility, jealousy.

* * *

The hidden mystery, in spite of everything, continued onward. The expectation of its final outcome did not die with the defections in the ranks of the first followers; soon new disciples came forth from those called at the last hour.