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# A Miracle on the Horizon

If the month of August during the second year in Garabandal was marked with a special Eucharistic sign by repeated Mystical Communions, the following month of September will pass into history as the month of the great prophecy. What was foretold for the future of Garabandal in that month would forevermore be the principal expectation of those who believe that the events were supernatural.

The month began brilliantly. September 1st was a Saturday, the day dedicated to Mary.

After the rosary in the evening, at nine o'clock (we are extracting this from Father Valentín's journal) Conchita fell into ecstasy at the doors of the church. Two minutes later Loli and Jacinta went into a trance; and two minutes later, Mari Cruz too. At this period, it was very unusual for the four girls to have an ecstasy on the same day and at the same time. In the ecstatic walk, Conchita went alone; Mari Cruz went alone too; Jacinta and Loli were together; a large crowd accompanied and followed them.

First they went to the Pines where they prayed a rosary. They continued praying on the way down, *backwards*. Loli, Jacinta and Conchita were together. Mari Cruz followed alone the entire time, which was for her about 45 minutes. They went to the cemetery. They made circles around the church.

All this, though interesting, was nothing outstanding and what we could call the *normal* routine of Garabandal.

But three days later something new, of great proportion, occurred.

## Recorded on Tape

September 4th, 1962 was a Tuesday. According to Fr. Valentín's annotations, toward 11:00 in the morning, Conchita fell into ecstasy at the door of the church, and there received Communion from the hand of the Angel; somewhat later, the same thing happened to Loli.

The afternoon passed; the night began, and at 1:30 Conchita had an ecstasy again. She went to the graveyard, made her way through the streets of

the village, prayed the rosary, sang the Salve. On entering her home, she fell on her knees and said farewell to the Vision. As she was speaking, a person near to her — not satisfied with just hearing what the girl was saying — held a microphone to her lips. What he recorded confirmed afterwards what his ears had not understood well.

*«You say there's going to be a miracle? . . . And the miracle is going to be that? . . . And the Virgin will be seen? . . . And when? . . . So long away? . . . With me alone . . . No. I don't want that . . . Don't do that! Perform it with the four . . .»*

Such words could not but cause repercussions, and soon began to be the foremost reason for comments and expectation.

Five days later, on Sunday, September 9th, Dr. Ortiz in Santander noted in his agenda concerning Garabandal:

*«My wife and I with her cousin María López-Dóriga were at Maximina's house. Conchita came to present a gift as we were beginning to eat. We invited her, and soon Maximina began talking in jest:*

*— We already know your secret . . . That there is going to be a miracle! You can't deny it, since it has been recorded on tape.*

*Conchita smiled, and after a moment of silence said, Yes, there's going to be a miracle. The Virgin told me, and it's going to be very great . . .*

*— When will it be?*

*— I don't know.*

*— Then none of us will see it.*

*— Everyone will see it who is here. And the Pope, from wherever he is. And also Padre Pio. Everyday I pray that the miracle will be with everybody. But don't say anything to anyone.*

*— Not even to Fr. Ramón and Fr. Retenaga?*

*— Well . . . to them . . . yes.»*

On that very night of September 9th, as it progressed into the early morning of September 10th, Conchita was heard again (and this was recorded on a tape recorder too):

*«When you perform the miracle, perform it with all (the four of us). I don't want to be alone by myself. Look! With everyone, do you want*

*that? You aren't telling me? Should I tell it so that she will know?»<sup>(1)</sup>*

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This matter is useful to alert those who believe in Garabandal and encourage them to keep watching.

Naturally those who came to the village, especially if they belonged to the circle related to the girls' families, soon noticed what was in the air.

On September 24th from Hotel Real in Santander, María Herrero de Gallardo wrote to her sister in Madrid to tell her about her last visits to the site of the apparitions:

«The other day, while in Conchita's house, there was a very interesting conversation, with 2 psychiatrists and 3 priests<sup>(2)</sup> present . . . Fr. Valentín told me that Conchita, according to his words, had to tell him something under the seal of confession, because of which — he added laughing — he could not tell me anything about it. What I know for certain is that the next *proof* (of the truth of the apparitions) is going to be, according to what the girls say, much greater than the day of Conchita's visible Communion.»

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Two weeks later on October 7th, she wrote her sister another letter from Santander:

«Friday, two days ago, I was back in Garabandal again. No one was there . . . And during all the time that I spent there, the girls and their mothers told me about such marvels that it seemed a bottomless well from which they were pulling up, little by little, a multitude of things. How I profited by it and how I remembered you! We went to see Conchita at the time she was going outside for the rosary with her mother . . . Two women who were coming with me hung on to her and I wasn't able to ask her anything on the way to church. I took Aniceta by the arm and tried to question her about

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1. I do not know what this could refer: perhaps to Loli who seemed destined to share many things.

2. Concerning the three priests, María Herrero says: «Jesuit, Passionist, and pastor.» From the notes of Dr. Ortiz, it comes out that the Jesuit was Fr. Argila and the pastor Fr. Antonio Yllensa Borrás of San Cucufate. It seems that both came with Dr. Puncernau and were considering, according to Fr. Valentín, «bringing information to the archbishop of Barcelona.» The Passionist had to be Fr. Eliseo, whom the lawyer Luis Navas speaks about in his report.

Of the psychiatrists, the only one we know for sure is the previously mentioned Dr. Ricardo Puncernau.

when the announced miracle was going to be.

— *I don't know. Possibly Conchita doesn't know either . . . What I can tell you is that the other time* (July 28th) *she told me: "Mama, there's going to be a little miracle." And today she told me: "There's going to be a very great miracle!"*»

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And so from the information that I have been able to gather, it was in September, 1962, that the prediction of the great miracle was made for the first time in a clear and open way. A miracle which, for what later began to be said about it and because of its outstanding singularity, soon began to be called "*The Miracle.*"

The first announcements about it reported:

- That it was going to be «*very great*».
- That everyone in Garabandal when it was performed would see it.
- That the Pope would see it «*wherever he would be*», and «*also Padre Pio.*»

But Conchita, who seemed to be the only seer who had anything to do with the Miracle, still did not know the date on which it would take place.

And for the moment, the news of the Miracle could not be unrestrictedly divulged. We have heard the girl's words in Maximina's house in front of Dr. Ortiz and his wife, and what she told Fr. Valentín «*under the seal of confession.*»

But the news was not shrouded in total secrecy. Perhaps Loli's questions during her ecstasy on Monday, September 17th refer to this; and also Conchita's on September 18th:

**LOLI:** *Yes, should I write today? . . . Most Holy Virgin, then should I tell it? . . . When can it be said? . . . He's waiting for me to tell him by letter or when I see him . . . Good, I'll tell it . . .*

**CONCHITA:** *Can I tell it to Father Valentín tomorrow? . . . In confession? . . . To whom else can I tell it? . . . To the bishop? . . . Did Loli tell it to Father Andreu? . . . Do I tell it to him? . . . No? . . . When? . . .*

Perhaps the person to whom Loli communicated

the announcement was Fr. José Ramón de la Riva, since among his papers I have seen a small holy card of the Virgin with these lines on its back, written in poor penmanship:

*San Sebastián*

*October 8, 1962*

*The Virgin told us there is going to be a miracle.*

*With all my love,  
María Dolores Mazón  
(For Father José Ramón)*



**“foretold to me”**

The prediction of *the Miracle* is unmistakably confirmed by these lines from Conchita's diary:<sup>(3)</sup>

**The Most Holy Virgin has foretold to me a great Miracle,**

**that God Our Lord is going to perform through her intercession.**

**As the chastisement is very great, as we merit;**

**the Miracle also is immeasurably great, as the world needs.**

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3. According to my information, the girl began the diary in September of 1962, and ended it in the spring of 1963.

# Among the Marvels

We have previously seen how María Herrero de Gallardo wrote in her letter of «such marvels that it seemed to be a bottomless well from which they were pulling up a multitude of things.»

If the Miracle was the *news* of September, it was not the only thing of interest in that month. It is certain that the days of September, 1962 were some of the most *eventful* in the astounding evolution of Garabandal. This can be gathered from reading Fr. Valentín's notes for the month.

## The Visionaries' Mystical Communions

Conchita and Loli received Communion from the Angel on all, or almost all, of the days on which they could not receive it from a priest. Mrs. Herrero de Gallardo wrote about one of these Communions in a letter dated September 24th:

«The day that I was there, Conchita received Communion at 2:30 in the afternoon in front of the church door. A Jesuit from Cataluña, who saw it, told me about it. It had pleased him very much because the body, the hands, the eyes . . . had a manner of moving that was completely opposite to the agitated gesticulations of hysteria . . .»<sup>(4)</sup>

This Jesuit priest must have been Fr. Argila (whom Dr. Ortíz mentions), and he must have

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4. We have another valuable observation from a specialist in the matter (Dr. Puncernau):

«The entrance and the departure from the trance merits special attention.

They said that they had three calls . . .

They said, *I have already had one call . . . I've had two calls . . .* The length of time between the calls was extremely variable.

One time when I knew that they had two calls, I managed to talk with them, attempting to distract them . . . And especially to make them talk about something that interested them. In the middle of a sentence, they suddenly fell on their knees in the state of trance as if struck by lightning — in spite of being observed to be interested in what they were discussing.

This drew my attention. This is not the normal way to enter into a hypnotic trance, especially if the person has not been conditioned to a sign or signal. Among the spectators I was never able to find such a sign. Or even to know of what it could consist.»



... for worthy reception.



The Angel instructed the girls in proper preparation . . .

come from Barcelona with the pastor of San Cucufate, Fr. Antonio Yllensa Borrás, and the neuropsychiatrist Dr. Ricardo Puncernau. Fr. Valentín calls him P. Aguilar in his notes and says that on Saturday, September 22nd, he saw a Mystical Communion for the first time, and that *«he was very much impressed»*.

Luis Navas, the lawyer from Palencia tells us of the same effect it had on him when he was finally able to view a Communion of this type on October 2nd, after ardently longing for it:

**«A little before 6:30 in the morning, we set out for the church. It was still dark. A meter and a half from the doors, Loli fell on her knees and went into a trance. This was something that impressed me more than anything else I have seen in the visionaries. The devotion in making the sign of the cross, the drama of the tongue extending and then withdrawing, the movement of the throat as if she were swallowing something . . . The prayer of thanksgiving . . . Everything seemed so dramatic to me, as if deserving the greatest respect.»**

Speaking of this type of Communion, Father Valentín wrote on September 10th:

**«The ecstasy usually lasts only a few minutes, but it is moving. The girl falls on her knees, softly says the "Confiteor", makes the sign of the cross, joins her hands on her chest, holds out her tongue; and it is seen perfectly how she swallows. She makes the sign of the cross again, and is heard to say in a low voice, "Soul of Christ, sanctify me . . ." Once again she makes the sign of the cross and is back in the normal state. It seems the prayers after Communion are said by the Angel.»**

What the pastor notes on September 22nd is interesting:

**«The girls always keep the fast until the hour that they receive Communion — the fast according to the old custom.»** (*without eating or drinking anything after 12:00 midnight*)

### **Waiting for the Ecstasies**

As has already been shown, when the Virgin was the one who was going to appear, the ecstasies were always preceded with three mysterious *calls* . . . We find observations about these calls in Fr. Valentín's notes on September 6th:

**«The children were accustomed to wait until 10:30 at night. If by that hour they hadn't received the first call, they went to bed. However, if they received a call before going to bed, then they would wait up for the apparition until the time it came, even though they fell asleep. They didn't want to go to sleep, since the Virgin had told them that they should wait up and *make sacrifices* . . . In other things, they each led a normal life at home and helped their mothers.»**<sup>(5)</sup>

On the night of September 5th, Fr. Valentín told Loli that it was very late, that it would be better not to wait for an apparition. But she answered that the *calls* were unmistakable, that the apparition would come, and that because of this, although she was half asleep, she did not want to go to bed. And so the penance of waiting night after night was no small one, either for the girls themselves or for their families and those who accompanied them.

Evidently, the wonderful phenomena of Garabandal were not given as free entertainment . . . In Fr. Valentín's notes (*Monday, September 24*) appear these lines:

**«The girls led a life of true sacrifice. Conchita's mother told me that her daughter slept**



5. God never calls any of those on earth — a time for merit — to a life of easy convenience.



village chapel dedicated to the Virgin of Health

better on a chair than in her bed, because she spent the night sitting down, waiting for the apparition like all of us. She slept with her head leaning on the wall. And the next day she didn't fail to walk to work. The four girls worked, swept, cleaned, went to the river to wash, and did everything like the other girls. Because of this, they were seen very little on working days; but on Sundays they played in the streets like the other young children in the village. In spite of the little that they slept and rested, they looked strong and healthy . . .»

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Besides the marvelous *normalness* that extended throughout September, there were some days that had their own particular note.

For example, there was the night that bridged September 5th to September 6th, Wednesday to Thursday. There were many people from Barcelona, Madrid, Bilbao, Santander, and Seville. But probably the person with the most special invitation from heaven was an English Protestant (Anglican), who had been there once before. She was watching the ecstasy that Loli was having in her home when suddenly the girl, in a very special way, gave her the cross to kiss several times, and one of the times she left it applied to her lips for some time.

«Barbara» — read Fr. Valentín's notes — «was blanched white, very excited. When the ecstasy was over, I spoke to her. She was sure that all this was the work of the Virgin, and she was already disposed to becoming a Catholic.»

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That night when she passed by the English woman in ecstasy, Conchita also stopped very significantly and gave her the cross to kiss.

On the night of September 7th to the 8th, Loli had an apparition alone, toward 3:45 in the early morning. During the ecstasy, among other things she was heard to say, «*Is it the feastday of the Virgin of Health? Is it your feastday?*» The village had a little chapel dedicated to Mary under the title of The Virgin of Health, and its celebration (like so many other of Mary's titles and appellations) was on September 8th, the feastday of the Nativity of Our Lady.

«When Loli's ecstasy ended» — as we read in Fr. Valentín's notes — «we met Jacinta and her brothers who were going to the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Light, which is six hours of hiking by foot on trails across the mountains.»<sup>(6)</sup> They

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6. This hermitage or sanctuary of Mary was on the other side of the Peña Sagra Mountains, on the slope facing Liébana.

carried a flashlight for illumination. The first thing that they did was to pray a rosary in the Cuadro. (Jacinta prayed there every day at six in the morning.) Jacinta was full of joy, and was making the sacrifice of getting up early in the morning and the long hike to ask the Virgin to return to see her soon . . . She and Mari Cruz are the ones who see the Virgin the least. Later I learned that Mari Cruz also had gone to another sanctuary to request the same . . .»



Mari Cruz and Jacinta

September 16th, Sunday, was memorable and instructive. We read in Fr. Valentín's journal:

«There was a man in the village who was half-crazy, and he was doing ridiculous things that could have been very wrongly interpreted by the visitors who didn't know his mental condition. He had been in an insane asylum for a year, and now he was staying here. This was causing trouble and annoyance, and he had to be sent away.

During the ecstasy on that day, Loli and Conchita went to the house where this disturbed man called Alfonso was. And with a crucifix

they made a cross there on the pillow on his bed. And while passing by him, they gave him the crucifix to kiss several times. The disturbed man was struck to his knees.

That night Fr. Anzizu<sup>(7)</sup> commented: *What a lesson in charity the girls gave us.* Everyone who had been talking about the necessity of throwing the insane man from the village was touched; above all, the Cardinal's secretary, Fr. Guillermo Hausschildt, who had thought of refusing him Communion. He said: *It is clear the Virgin wanted to give us a lesson.*

Conchita was asked why she had gone to the place where the deranged man was and had repeatedly given him the crucifix to kiss. And she answered, *The Virgin told us: "you despise him; but I love him."*

A response like this put us down, making us see our great lack of charity.»

Perhaps the words that Conchita was heard to say during the ecstasy had some relation with this unforgettable lesson from the Mother of God: *«When you come down here to earth, why do you come? To save the world?»* Surely mental cases are not the only ones who need salvation; nor are they the cases that need it the most.

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The neuropsychiatrist from Barcelona, Dr. Puncernau, who had carefully studied the girls previously, continued his studies and examinations during these days. He discussed his findings with a colleague, the pediatrician from Santander, Dr. Ortiz, who wrote:

«Jacinta's father asked me to please be present; and it was no wonder, since they had had enough of doctors' inquisitions.

I asked Puncernau for his conclusions.

He answered, *I have no doubt about the complete normality of the girls; since the facts can't*

7. The two priests mentioned here came from Argentina, accompanying Cardinal Caggiano (Archbishop of Rosario, who was journeying at the time to Rome to participate in the coming Ecumenical Council). These priests took advantage of their passage through Spain to take a trip to Garabandal. The impression that they received there could not have been better, especially for Fr. Anzizu. He openly declared his intention of speaking in Rome about the extraordinary phenomena.



be attributed to any illness. With regard to this matter, this is the third time that I have come to Garabandal with the intention of studying the visionaries. If I would have seen anything suspicious, I would have said it immediately.

In that we were in agreement.»

On several of these days, the girls' words and phrases were recorded on tape. Although many of the words had only insignificant meaning, at times others came forth of greater scope:

*«Most Holy Virgin, let me not abandon you! Let me love you all my life! Oh! That I may never leave you. That I may love you always, always, until death. Most Holy Virgin, do not refuse us help.»*

(Loli, on the night of September 12th-13th)

*«What is heaven like? . . . In heaven there are no chairs? . . . Do they walk there? . . . Is there fire in purgatory? . . . Do they come out burned? . . . One cannot enter into heaven even with a very little sin? . . . How can they paint you so ugly, since you are so beautiful? . . .»*

(Conchita, September 25th)



“. . . a nun or a wife?”

*«Does the conversion of sinners cost much? . . . I pray so that many come and be converted, and the good become better . . . Is it better to be a nun or a wife? . . . If you wish, make it so that I may be at 14 years — they say that at 16, one cannot . . . Ease the pain of my brother,<sup>(8)</sup> who suffers much from his stomach — don't take it away.»*

(Conchita on the same date)

## A Torch Dies Out

The Light of Garabandal came from the start through four reflectors. But in the month of September, 1962, one of them would fade out.

During these days the youngest of the four visionaries, Mari Cruz González, stopped having apparitions.

She had one on September 1st, as has been noted, and it must have been important, judging from its duration: 45 minutes. But on the other days the girl had to wait in vain. It was mentioned how she had made a little pilgrimage to implore the Virgin to visit her again.

Perhaps as a result of this pressing supplication, the Virgin returned, since we see in Fr. Valentín's journal:

**«September 18th: In the morning, Loli and Conchita received Communion from the hands of the Angel. In the afternoon at 5:30, the other two girls had an apparition. They came together in the street, traveled through the village, prayed the rosary, went up to the Pines, and descended backwards; it ended at the church doors. I asked Loli why the Angel didn't give Communion to Mari Cruz and Jacinta. And she**

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8. It seems clear that Conchita was asking to be able to enter the convent at 14 years of age. And she was asking for a special grace, since she had learned that there was nothing that could be done until 16 years of age, as someone had told her. Canon Law fixes this age of 16 years as the minimum for being able to take religious vows.

The brother about whom she speaks in this last petition was Aniceto —familiarily called Cetuco—who was suffering from the pains of an illness that a few years later would bring him to his death, an exemplary death at the hospital in Burgos, lovingly cared for by his only sister, Conchita.



Mari Cruz

told me that she didn't know, that perhaps they were better and for that reason, didn't need it.»

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September 18th had to be the last gleam of light from the lamp of Mari Cruz,<sup>(9)</sup> since from that time on it appears to have been definitely extinguished. María Herrero de Gallardo, writes from Santander on October 7th:

«I went to Mari Cruz' house to bring her some cakes, and she told me that a month had passed without seeing the Virgin . . .»

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And Dr. Ortiz, who went up one more time to Garabandal with Plácido Ruiloba on Saturday, November 24th, notes on this day:

«The three girls were singing in ecstasy at Mari Cruz's door. They were asking that she see the Virgin again . . . I asked Mari Cruz, in front of her mother, if she was continuing to go up to say the rosary in the Cuadro at six in the morning.

— *No, now I pray it in the house.*

— *But didn't the Virgin tell you to pray it there in the Calleja?*

— *Yes.*

— *Why don't you do it then?*

Without letting the girl speak, her mother quickly intervened to say that she hadn't stopped her, that she hadn't said anything . . .

I insisted, glancing at Mari Cruz . . .

— *Then who stopped you from going there?*

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9. A few days later, Dr. Puncernau paid special attention to Mari Cruz:

«I gave her my wedding ring to give to the Virgin to kiss, as was the custom to do.

She was very pleased and put my ring on one of her fingers.

Three days passed and Mari Cruz didn't have an apparition, nor did she enter into a trance. On the night before I had to leave I said to her, *You'll have to give back my ring, since this morning at 3 I have to leave.*

—*Let me have it a little longer . . . Perhaps I will have an apparition tonight.* I left it with her.

The other three entered into ecstasy. The three girls went walking in a trance, holding arms. Mari Cruz approached, she took the arm of one of the others, raised her head and walked like this ten or twelve steps to see if the trance would take her too. But there was no trance. She detached herself sorrowfully. Without saying a word she returned the ring and went away with her head held low.

I have to say though that the ring was kissed on another occasion, during one of Conchita's ecstasies. I mention this so that it can be seen that the ecstasies came when they came . . . not when the girls wanted them to come.»

Why don't you go?

The girl blushed, but she didn't answer.

Later, I was with Jacinta, and I asked her the same, if she was still going to the Calleja . . .

— *Yes, I go every day at six in the morning. I have never stopped doing it. One day it occurred to me to ask the Virgin if I could change the hours. She told me yes, that I could change it. But later I preferred to continue as before, so that the same thing doesn't happen to me that happened to Mari Cruz.*

— *What happened to Mari Cruz?*

— *In September she stopped praying the rosary in the Calleja as the Virgin had told her, and since that time she hasn't seen her again!»*



“She stopped saying the rosary.”

The flame from Mari Cruz was definitely out. Was this something that had to happen according to God's plans, without anyone's fault? Was it someone's fault? If there was a fault, whose was it? The girl's? Her parents' or family's? I know of no one who is in a position to give a competent answer to these questions. Let us leave them then to the judgment of God and not meddle in what is above our competence. But this does not mean that we should renounce thinking about the matter, seeking

to find, as Jacinta seems to have done, a salu-tary lesson . . .

Jacinta herself should have feared at the time that her own *light* was going to be extinguished.

The month of September had begun well for her, since on the first and second days she was seen in ecstasy beside her companions. But an entire week followed without an apparition, and poor Jacinta, although silently resigned, had to be consumed with desire, anxiety and worry. And so on the early morning of September 8th she undertook with her brothers the difficult pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Light, as we have seen.

The pilgrimage seems to have had an immediate effect, since on the following day, September 9th, Fr. Valentín mentions:

**«On going out from the rosary at 8:30 at night, Conchita and Jacinta went into ecstasy; they went to Loli's home, holding arms . . .»** *But this was an isolated favor, since on October 7th, he notes again: «Jacinta hasn't had an apparition for more than 20 days.»*

How this affected the girl can be gathered from these sentences found in a letter from María Herrero, written in Santander on October 7th:

**«On returning from Mari Cruz's home, I met Jacinta, thin and sad. She told me that 26 days had passed without seeing the Virgin, since the Nativity of Mary. I don't think she ever went so long without seeing her. I gave her the cakes. She took them; but she remained for some time with them in her hands, as if not knowing what to do, with an expression of sorrow that appalled me.»**

In Jacinta's case, as a great consolation for her, all this was only a frightening test. On October 8th, Fr. Valentín notes:

**«Jacinta had an apparition, after a month of not having one.»** *And he adds later: «She also had one on October 9th, 11th, 13th and 14th.»*

Maximina writes on her part to Eloísa de la Roza Velarde, Dr. Ortiz' sister-in-law, in a letter dated November 8th:

**«The apparitions continue as usual. I see nothing extraordinary at present. Loli continues having apparitions every day, ordinarily at 4:00 or 5:00 in the early morning. Conchita has**

**ones that are known about on four days of the week (Tuesday and Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday), frequently also at the same hour of the morning, and she almost always goes outside on the street. Jacinta also has apparitions on many days. *But Mari Cruz has not had one for many months.»***



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The mystery of Garabandal was continuing its march . . . Almost monotonously, disturbing many, inspiring some. How would it end?

One of the protagonists was already out of the picture. Another had long eclipses between apparitions.

But the affair, as a whole, was not diminishing, but rather seemed to be getting stronger, even taking on new force.

How would it conclude?

How long would it last?

What would its final outcome be!

For now, one important thing is known for certain:

***There would be a miracle,  
an exceptional miracle.  
Dawn was on the horizon.***