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Toward the End

1962 was a year crammed with events in the process of Garabandal. There were innumerable apparitions by the Virgin, numerous *Mystical Communion*s, certain exceptional episodes like the *nights of the «gritos» or screams*, the *Miracle of the Host* on July 18th, and furthermore the increasing predictions of a great Miracle.

It was the Miracle that was beginning to appear as the finale of the whole process. On the one hand, it would come to put a definite *seal of authenticity* on the origin of so many and such extraordinary phenomena; on the other hand, it would come to give the last opportunity for salvation before the great catastrophe.

With the Miracle in sight, one could begin looking for a final outcome, since certainly no one could think that these phenomena would continue like this indefinitely.

And so the Miracle was being discussed more and more in the statements of the girls and was increasing in importance in the hopes of the pilgrims.

## More News More Expectation

The winter of 1963 began on the heights of Garabandal without an interruption in the *normal* march of the apparitions. The three girls who remained — Jacinta, Loli, and Conchita — were accustomed to have their ecstasies individually. But at times the three joined together, and the ecstatic march that resulted was singularly beautiful. In Fr. Valentín's notes of December 3rd, 1962, there is this excerpt:

**«Today our attention was attracted by their way of walking. A total synchronization of movements was observed. The three held their step perfectly, in the manner of a military march. They only lost the rhythm when they had to avoid some difficult obstacle, or on the rare occasions when they stumbled; but immediately they regained the cadence. Loli attracted the most attention because she has a natural tendency to walk with shorter steps than the other two, probably because she is much smaller.**

**On this day, Conchita came out of ecstasy before the other two;<sup>(1)</sup> and it was observed that, while the other two continued in their rhythmic step, perfectly synchronized, Conchita began to walk in her normal way. There was also another unusual thing on this day. We had always seen that when the three girls marched in ecstasy, Conchita infallibly occupied the center position. Today it was not this way; she constantly occupied a position on the side. Jacinta went in the center, Loli at the left, and Conchita at the right.»**

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December 6th was a Tuesday, the day before the vigil of the Immaculate Conception. Long before dusk had settled, toward 5:30, Conchita had an ecstasy that lasted 90 minutes. When it was over, the girl made two important announcements concerning the Miracle:

1) *One day, a little before the Miracle will be performed, something will happen that will cause many people to stop believing in the apparitions of Garabandal. The doubts and desertions will not be due to an excessive delay of the Miracle.*

2) *On the day of the Miracle, the note that she signed in Santander (stating the apparitions were*

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1. In Garabandal during these December days was a man from Barcelona named Francisco Clapes Maymó, who was kind enough to send me a copy of his notes from this period. In the notes pertaining to the night between December 2nd and 3rd, I see Fr. Valentín's statements confirmed:

**«Conchita ended the ecstasy first, and she continued holding the arms of Jacinta and María Dolores (Loli).**

**María Dolores had an expression of sorrow.**

**Ceferino, who was listening beside María Dolores in ecstasy, said that from what he had heard this was diabolical, and they were discussing this . . .**

**Conchita said the meeting that they had in ecstasy in a room of her house was not diabolical, but from the Virgin.»**

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This meeting took place on the previous afternoon, December 2, and we know of it from the testimony of this same Mr. Clapes Maymó:

**«At 6:20 in the afternoon Conchita fell into ecstasy while playing, and on seeing her, María Dolores and Jacinta had an ecstasy too.**

**They didn't say the rosary. They made tours through the village, coming to the church several times. At the beginning of the ecstasy the three entered Conchita's house, went up to her room, making signs so that no one would follow them. They were upstairs for a while. We don't know what they did or said.» (It might be asked whether this private audience might not have been for the Virgin to reveal the date of the Miracle.)**

not authentic) would disappear.<sup>(2)</sup>

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Two days later came the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the most solemn Marian feast and the one best observed in Spain. Furthermore, it was Conchita's nameday. Almost at the beginning of the day, at 3 o'clock in the morning, the girl was favored with an ecstasy. Part of what she said in conversation with the apparition was recorded on a tape recorder. Some of her phrases had an astounding childishness, if it is taken into account that she was approaching her 14th birthday. For example with regard to the Infant whom the Virgin brought this time:

*«Today they brought an infant to me that doesn't seem like the one that you bring . . .<sup>(3)</sup> And how long since you've come with the Infant! He hasn't grown at all! Look, He's the same as He was . . . Where has He been? Where has He been? . . . Oh! When the Infant doesn't come where does He stay? In heaven! In a cradle? . . . Oh! But you can't be here and there!»*

Interspersed with these childlike remarks and other unintelligible expressions, there also were heard words obviously related to the Miracle. But they did not spell out anything new, leaving up in the air any explanation that might have been given by the mysterious conversationalist.

The same kind of thing occurred in the ecstasy that Jacinta had almost immediately afterward. There were similar childish questions as:

*«Do you sometimes shiver there when snow comes like this? . . . But the snow comes from there up above.»*

Together with these remarks, there were other

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2. This refers to the paper that she signed — on pressure from Dr. Piñal — when she was taken to the capital at Santander at the end of July, 1961. (See chapter VI of Part One.)

The information about December 6th was taken from the notes of Fr. Valentín.

Mr. Clapes Maymó gives his version as an eyewitness:

«Conchita had an ecstasy that went from 5:35 to 6:40 in the morning . . .

When she was normal again, she said that the paper the doctor in Santander had made her sign — stating that the apparitions were false and that she was insane — would disappear by the Virgin's command.

She said too that just before the Miracle almost no one would believe in Garabandal . . .»

points of interest that could not be completely understood:

*«I want that day to come, to be part of it . . . You know why I want that day to come? My father doesn't believe . . . Oh! After the Miracle comes, will the people believe? . . . A week is enough? . . . when will the people see you?»*

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The topic of the Miracle filled the air in Garabandal in those final weeks of 1962. Fr. Valentín's notes, which end during these days, give as almost the last piece of information:

«On this day of December 15th, Conchita told Mercedes Salisachs that a totally paralyzed man would be cured on the day of the Miracle, wherever he was.»<sup>(4)</sup>



“A totally paralyzed man would be cured.”

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3. A young woman from Madrid, Paloma Fernandez-Pacheco, was present on that day in Garabandal with her husband Mr. de Larrauri. She wrote me several observations:

«The infant about whom Conchita talked in ecstasy was the Infant Jesus of the Nativity that I brought. I myself took the reel of tape that recorded the conversation to the NO-DO laboratories. It was rather long, and at times the Virgin's voice seemed to be heard. At NO-DO they told me that the tape had two voices on it. But that they were not at the same volume, as they were very different in tone and pitch. (I don't remember well the technical words they used.) They were amazed . . .»

4. Clapes Maymó also confirms this information. On the morning of December 10:

«Conchita had an ecstasy between 5:27 and 5:37 (ten minutes). Accompanying her were Mrs. (Mercedes) Salisachs, a lady friend, Felix (An ex-seminarian from Bilbao), a young child from Colunga (Asturias) and Mrs. Salisachs' chauffeur . . . She said that a paralyzed child — known by this woman — for whom she had asked Conchita to pray, would be cured wherever he was» (on the day of the Miracle).



“The apparitions continue as usual.”

In an atmosphere like this, what produced the tremendous crisis that abruptly dashed the hopes and annihilated most of the enthusiasm?

## Weariness & Disillusion

On December 28th, Maximina wrote to Eloísa de la Roza Velarde, the sister-in-law of Dr. Ortiz. Together with complaints about the absence of liturgical services for Christmas,<sup>(5)</sup> there was a brief

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5. «On Christmas Day, we didn't have a midnight Mass or a dawn Mass; that is, we had none, either at night or during the day. So we didn't know it was Christmas. Fr. Valentín didn't come up because of foul weather.»

But if the celebration of Mass was missing on Christmas Day for the townspeople of Garabandal, the special favor of God was not missing, and it came through the seers.

Maximina wrote:

«On Christmas Eve, Jacinta and Loli were at the Pines

remark about the situation:

«The apparitions continue as usual; but we haven't learned more about the miracle.» (She mentions the sentiments of two people from Asturias who were staying in here house because of a sign that they received, and then she continues.) «This caused no effect on those who are here since we have done all this. We hope to see something greater and I don't know when we'll see it, since it seems that the girls don't say anything about the miracle. It seems, according to what we have heard, that Loli and Jacinta's miracle is going to be this year. But it remains to be seen if it will be this year. The main thing is that it will be! Since we are afraid that it will not be. Conchita says that hers won't be delayed . . .»

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at 12:00 at night. And the weather was very bad that night, snowing and very cold. Conchita spent all night in her kitchen and at 4:00 in the morning went in ecstasy to the Pines, and from there came down a good part of the way on her knees on top of the snow, and later she went to the cemetery . . .»

From these lines and from other references of this period, it can be clearly seen that at the end of 1962 rumors were circulating of two predicted miracles. One miracle was being forecast by Conchita in her statements; another, by Loli and Jacinta in their remarks, foretelling a different miracle.<sup>(6)</sup> It appears that Loli and Jacinta were talking about *their miracle* as if it were to be very near; and the people, either because they heard this, or because they misunderstood, were convinced that the miracle would happen before the year ended.<sup>(7)</sup>

But the year did end and what was hoped for did not materialize. Oppressive dejection and bitter disenchantment began to descend on the parents, the townspeople, and the pilgrims. Not only because the miracle had not been performed on the date that they expected, but also because of the fear that it would never be performed. «**The main thing is that it will be!**» — we have heard Maximina say— «**Since we fear that it will not be.**»

And this was the beginning of the *great crisis of the winter of 1963*.

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Unquestionably we now find ourselves before

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6. It is certain that in the last months of 1962 the people were waiting for two miracles that had been predicted separately: one — more immediate — *that of Loli and Jacinta*; the other, *that of Conchita*.

Jacinta and Loli spoke definitely of *their miracle*; but there are reasons to question whether it had initially been their idea.

I finally was able to speak with Jacinta in Santander on November 10th, 1973. I questioned her on the matter, and from her words, these things were brought out clearly:

1) The Virgin had never clearly promised her a miracle. Whenever she had petitioned the Virgin «*so that the people would believe*» as an answer she had only obtained silence and a vague «*They will believe. They will believe.*»

2) That it was Conchita who put in her mind and Loli's the idea of an imminent miracle in which the two of them would take part. And in this sense and because of Conchita's words they spoke of *their miracle*.

It is hard to explain what Conchita sought in staging this.

7. From October to December, Maximina's frequent letters to the Pifarré family touch time and again on the subject of «*Jacinta and Loli's miracle*» . . . It was presented as being so imminent — from what the girls said — that Maximina repeatedly expressed her fear that she would not be able to warn them in time to make the trip from Barcelona to Garabandal. (At the time there was no telephone in the village that she could use.) At times she even held back mailing the letters she had written during those days, thinking the girls might tell her the date at any moment . . .

one of the most complicated and least clear of the episodes about Garabandal.

I have tried to bring it clearly into the open; but this has not been possible for two reasons:

1) Because of the lack of sufficient testimonies and written reports.

2) Because I was not able to investigate on the site, speaking with the visionaries and the villagers, due to the closed and ill-natured opposition of Bishop Cirarda.

But if it is not possible to bring it out clearly into the open, at least it can be partially brought out.

In February of 1963, Fr. Luis López Retenaga made another visit to Garabandal lasting three days, from the 22nd to the 24th. Afterwards he dictated a report for the prevailing bishop of Santander, Bishop Beitia Aldazábal (the visit to the site of the apparitions had been made with the bishop's express authorization), and in that report we find some very valuable information:

«**This is the fourth time that I have visited the mountain village . . . During my previous visit, in the final months of the past year, I heard of rumors that were circulating with regard to the realization, rather imminent, of a *miracle* predicted by Loli and Jacinta.**»

It was not possible in those circumstances to check personally on the accuracy of such predictions. But I know that at the beginning of the month of January of the present year, seeing that the hoped-for miracle predicted by the two girls was not crystallizing into reality, the hopes of many people were seen to fall. Not only the families but also the majority of the villagers felt themselves cheated and humiliated.

Subject to the rough manners and the extreme attitudes that are characteristic of the masses, the people changed the admiration that they felt for the girls into an attitude of rejection and distrust, converting them into a continuous object of their complaints. Such an attitude was directed principally against Conchita, who always has been considered as the most responsible, or culpable of the four . . .»

These lines help us to understand the feeling in the village at the beginning of 1963; but we would



“You will find a Virgin.”

also like to know how such a situation came about. And this is what Fr. López Retenaga says:

«Conchita mentioned to me that on returning one day from Cabezón de la Sal, Loli and Jacinta were speaking of a miracle that had occurred to them and which consisted in burying a statue of the Virgin in order to tell the people later when they were in ecstasy, *Dig here and you will find a Virgin.*



“She spoke of some *magic powders.*”

Conchita took it for a joke, and continuing in the same line of jesting,<sup>(8)</sup> she spoke of some *magic powders* that had the power to suspend whoever took them up in the air . . . The three girls then tried the marvelous powders, which

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8. Conchita has always shown a good sense of humor.

were nothing more than dentifrice.<sup>(9)</sup> Only Loli, perhaps because of the mixture of the marvelous and ingenuousness in which she had been involved for the preceding year and a half, seemed to take the thing seriously, and tried the powders with the hope of seeing herself suspended in the air.



“a practical joke”

Conchita assured me that her involvement in this incident was no more than this: a practical joke.»<sup>(10)</sup>

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9. What Fr. Retenaga says here is confirmed by some lines from Conchita's letter to the daughter of Eloísa de la Roza, on February 18th:

«You know what has happened . . . Well there's trouble here now. Some of those who believed in the apparitions now believe nothing, due to the problems there have been lately. And furthermore, do you know the cause of this mess? Because of some toothpowder that I gave Loli and Jacinta, telling them it would raise them up in the air . . .»

10. Fr. Retenaga records Conchita's version like this, giving her a better appearance than her companions. But I was finally able to record Jacinta's version, and according to it the affair was somewhat different. She told me that Conchita was the real inventor of the plan to bury a statue, etc., in the accomplishment of which she wanted to drag in the other two, remaining herself very clearly on the sidelines. And if Loli and Jacinta did not carry through with the plan, it was due to fear of the possible presence or intervention of the devil.

And with regard to the powders, I am afraid that this was not such an innocent *joke* as Conchita wanted Fr. Retenaga to believe . . . Anyhow the other two took it so seriously that Loli got sick to her stomach due to the repeated doses that she ingested with the hope of rising up into the air.

But the joke, as has been pointed out, brought many disagreeable consequences.

It is difficult to understand the whole affair with proper perspective. But if we can accept the matter of the *dental powders* as Conchita's practical joke (to which the other girls did not catch on), we cannot be so indulgent before the matter of burying the statue . . .

How could these girls calmly think up such a deceitful scheme?

**Objectively:** They had to recognize their actions were not upright and honest, if not absolutely reproachable.

**Subjectively:** What degree of culpability did they have?

It is impossible for me to say, because of insufficient information for judgment.

But I am inclined to think that, at least on the part of Loli and Jacinta, it was another display of the regrettable and almost unconscious *frivolousness* that they had shown in the previous year with their *faked ecstasies*.

Fr. Luis López Retenaga seems to think the same way in his report:

«I have to point out, that whoever judges the psychology of the girls, basing it on the maturity of judgment and reflection proper to an adult, well-educated person, will encounter many problems. I have already noted in my first report, as a general appraisal, the noticeable psychological backwardness of the girls as compared to girls of the same age from our industrial towns and cities. Together with their candid and ingenuous psychology, the girls have for a year and a half been presenting to the Vision things varying from the most puerile pranks to the most serious and urgent problems brought by the spectators. The spectators were seeking more to find the marvelous and striking than to adhere to the demands of the message proclaimed by the girls . . . And I think that in the mixture of these two psychological worlds, that of the girls and that of the crowds, is the explanation as to how there could come about things ranging from *jokes* up to the expectation of a great miracle.»

Together with the constant pressure made by the crowds on the *subconscious state* of the girls — habituated to experiencing the supernatural as something of everyday life — there were also other pressures that disturbed the pure flow of the *events* at Garabandal.

Fr. Retenaga adds something further here: «**A certain long-standing antagonism between the families of the girls.**»

This was the situation. Conchita was coming, little by little, but progressively more each day, into the forefront of attention. Perhaps the families and the friends of the other girls — because of village envies which we know about — were annoyed in a thousand ways, bringing them unconsciously to a certain desire not to be less: If Conchita had *her* miracle, why should not they likewise have *theirs*?

To this should be added, it seems to me, the urge to find an end or conclusion to all this. The families had to feel rather tired of the unending series of phenomena that had already lost much of their first excitement, but which were continuing to be a constant reason for preoccupation during the day and for loss of sleep at night. How and when was this going to end? For it seemed to be coming to the time when it was going to end. And that it should terminate in something that was *worth the trouble*.

«**To those who are here**» — remarked Maximina in her letter — «**this doesn't make any impression, since we have done all this. We hope to see something greater . . .**»

Perhaps at the time, the children thought to confront the situation by the announcement of a miracle. Since the Virgin had given them to understand with her repeated, «*They will believe, they will believe,*» that something marvelous was going to occur, why not speak about it with her (and even put pressure on her) by predicting a prodigy which could not wait?<sup>(11)</sup>

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11. It appears that talk about the proximate miracle began during the second half of October, since on October 25th, Maximina wrote to Dr. Ortiz' sister-in-law:

«It is seen that there is going to be a miracle: that of Loli and Jacinta. They already know the date, but have not told us yet. It's going to be very soon, and I believe it's going to be that they will be raised up in the air . . . Conchita's is going to be — if it is true what they say — something very great. Everyone in the village will see it. Conchita's miracle may take place in the sky.»



**“This doesn’t make any impression.  
We hope to see something greater.”**



I do not seek to justify the girls, but only to clarify the circumstances that could have lessened, perhaps substantially, their responsibility in a procedure that merits being condemned.

Well then, if what they sought was to force an outcome, they obtained it. However, the outcome that came was certainly very different from what they would have imagined.

## After 19 Months, the Final Period?

We must return now, in these high points of our story, to Conchita's diary, which helped us so much in the beginning, but which is not of equal service for the second half of 1962. She says on the final pages:



“We would deny that we had seen the Virgin.”

**At the beginning of it all, the Virgin told the four of us — Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz, and myself — that:**

**— we would contradict each other,**

**— that our families wouldn't get along well,**

**— and even that we would deny that we had seen the Virgin and the Angel.**

**Obviously we were very surprised that she told us these things.**



“The Virgin told us at the beginning.”

**And everything that the Virgin told us at the beginning happened during the month of January, 1963.**

**We came to contradict each other.**

**And we even denied that we had seen the Virgin.**

**We even went one day to confess it.**

**But we felt inside that the Angel and the Most Holy Virgin had appeared to us, since they had brought a peace and internal joy to our souls, and a great desire to love them with our whole hearts.**

**For their smile and their speech and what they told us made us love them, love them very much, and give ourselves completely to them.**

**When we went to confession, it was without thinking about it, without believing that it was a sin.**

**We went because the parish priest told us that we should go to confession.**

**And we, I don't know how it was, well . . .**

**We doubted a little, but a doubt of a type that seems from the devil, who wants us to deny the Virgin.**



**“Father Valentín Marichalar gave us . . . penance.”**

**And afterwards, we told our parents that we hadn't seen the Virgin; but that the *calls* and the Miracle of the Sacred Host were true.**

**In my heart, I was surprised to say these things.**

**But my conscience was completely calm about having seen the Most Holy Virgin.**

**And the parish priest, Father Valentín Marichalar, gave us ten rosaries and five Our Fathers for penance.**

**And after we had said this, in a few days, the Virgin appeared to us again.**

We have extensive material here in Conchita's words describing a precise, long-standing prophecy, which finally is fulfilled.

We are facing the development of the so-called denials (*negations*) of the girls. But more than denials or *negations*, we might speak of tremendous doubts or darkneses, which they were not capable of interpreting or of expressing. The whole process had been long and complicated. Its herald

breeze appeared in Mari Cruz, who found herself for some time — especially after the total cessation of her ecstasies during the previous September — in a special situation. On this follows now the storm of *negations* in January of 1963, during which the remaining visionaries are implicated. Conchita and her two companions will soon recover from this, as we will see later on. But in August of 1966, a new tempest of confusion in the girls concerning the apparitions will blast forth.



**“a natural explanation”**

The events will then be publicly denounced by the newly appointed Bishop Puchol, who personally disliked this affair,<sup>(12)</sup> in a questionable «Nota» on March 17th, 1967:

**«There have been no apparitions. There has been no message. All the events that happened have a natural explanation.»**

As now we are relating the facts, and are still in January of 1963, I do not wish to comment on the contents of that «Nota», the circumstances that preceded its composition, or the consequences that

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12. Eugenio Beitia Aldazábal, who three years previously had entered the bishop's mansion at Santander, was relieved of his pastoral duties on his own request in 1965. Vicente Puchol Montís succeeded him as bishop in August, 1965.

When the nomination was publicized, a Madrid canon wrote to Fr. Lucio Rodrigo of the Pontifical University at Comillas, warning him that «Garabandal had a great enemy in the new bishop», as he turned out to be.

Bishop Puchol died tragically in an automobile accident on May 8th, the feast of the apparition of St. Michael the Archangel at Mount Gargano in Italy.

followed it. The day will come to bring everything into the open. What I want to say here is that such a phenomenon of doubts and *negations* is not something exclusive to Garabandal,<sup>(13)</sup> nor is it substantial evidence against the truth of the *events*.

Let us return to the first *negations* of the visionaries in January of 1963. It can immediately be seen that they clearly showed wavering and hesitation. The girls themselves did not understand what was happening, and were surprised by what they had said — in such contrast with what they personally felt. It could be said that a strange and mysterious force — Conchita names it: **the devil** — brought them to express something that did not agree with their most undeniable experiences.<sup>(14)</sup>

The priest from the seminary in San Sebastián, Father Luis López Retenaga, in his third report to Bishop Beitia, gave his impressions of what he perceived in the girls during the Holy Week of 1963:

**«In the face of the joke that was converted into the miracle that failed, they saw themselves**

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13. For example, it is known that the venerable Father Hoyos — the Spanish Jesuit associated with the apparitions and promises of the Sacred Heart of Jesus — sometime after the phenomenon had happened to him, fell into such doubts and scruples concerning the authenticity of his apparitions that he came to believe to his dismay that he was the greatest deceiver in the world, a sinner unworthy of pardon. And a similar thing happened to Bernadette Soubirous, the seer from Lourdes, during her convent life at Nevers; but the church certainly knew how to evaluate Bernadette's doubts or *negations*, elevating her to the supreme honor of the altars, after a long process according to ecclesiastical law.

I believe, referring to the masters of mystical theology, that it is not difficult to explain the *contradictions* of the seers at Garabandal, nor is it hard to understand what value should be attributed to them.

14. We can speak also of *pressures* that are not attributable to the action of the devil. In the beginning of April, Luis Navas was once again at Garabandal; he was upset by this new situation, so different from what he had experienced there on previous occasions. Trying to find an explanation, he began speaking to various people, and after being with Loli **«he drew»** — he said — **«the conclusion that Ceferino had put pressure on his daughter when the miracle did not come in September as he expected . . .»**

Actually, Ceferino was always one of the hardest to convince with regard to believing personally in the truth of the phenomena. Not that he did not understand them, nor that he could not explain them; but to believe in them was something different. In his case, as in the other families of the visionaries, could well be said what Jesus mentioned in his day: **A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, and among his own kindred, and in his own house.** (Mark 6:4)

**pressured by their families and many people (to admit that all had been a lie). This pressure was seen by them as an argument from authority, and they fell into real doubts concerning the origin of what had happened to them . . . Conchita, in the general uncertainty and trusting in the people as knowing more than she, in spite of her internal conviction of having seen a marvelous being, ended up declaring to the pastor also that all had been a lie, except the miracle of the Host . . .»**

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It is clear that these days of January were tremendously painful for the visionaries because of their own internal sufferings and the troubles and discords which developed in their families due to the general confusion.

Because they were not completely responsible for what they had said, the Virgin did not completely withdraw her favors: **And after we had said this, in a few days the Virgin appeared to us again.**

But the process had been set in motion and complications were developing internally and externally.

**And Ceferino, Loli's father, had told a commission of doctors to come; their names were Alejandro Gasca, Félix Gallego and Celestino Ortiz.<sup>(15)</sup>**

**And on the night that they came, they began to question Mari Cruz, Jacinta and Loli, and their parents about the reason that they were saying that they weren't seeing the Virgin . . .**

**And I don't know what they thought.**

**What I do know is that they said that I performed the miracle of the Host, And they explained it their way.**

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15. Dr. Alejandro Gasca was in practice at Santander; later he held an important post in the Health Department at Saragossa. Dr. Félix Gallego was practicing at Requejada Polanco near Torrelavega. As for Dr. Ortiz, he is already well known to the reader.

There are reasons to believe that in the answers that the three doctors received there came out strongly the **«long standing antagonism»** between the families of the visionaries that Fr. Luis López Retenaga mentioned in his report.

The major attack was, as usual, against Conchita. Some looked at her hostilely because they believed that she had inspired or was the one principally responsible for all this; others, because they resented her role as the leading figure.



**“The Virgin appeared to us again.”**



“controlled by the devil”

**Obviously they didn't know what they were saying at the time.**

**And they allowed themselves to be controlled by the devil.**

**And after that day, they didn't have any more apparitions.**

**I had apparitions on the same night, and until the 20th of January.**

**After that I didn't see her again.**

As can be seen, we are in an important period concerning Garabandal. After so many months of being enveloped in light, there comes a complete eclipse, perhaps final. And it seems that the girls and their families are not without fault. Now things can return to tranquility. Now there is nothing to occupy them: neither the miracle that they were awaiting with such impatience, nor the apparitions which they formerly had so surely. There was little except the memory of what had existed . . . And the message to be fulfilled.

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When did the complete cutting off of the ecstasies and apparitions occur?

The date for Conchita we know, since she herself mentions it in her diary; her last day was: **the 20th of January**. We can notice the peculiar fact that this was the feastday of Saint Sebastián the martyr, the patron of the village, from whose name the parish is titled. In that year it was on a Sunday.

For Jacinta and Loli, we only know for certain that it was slightly before that, as Conchita also tells us in the same place. Examining some letters from Maximina, which Doctor Ortiz gave me, I have come to the conclusion that the last day for them was between January 8th and 16th, since in a letter dated on the 8th of January she speaks normally of the apparitions and in another, dated on January 16th, she describes a *new situation*.

We read on January 8th:

«**The miracle, which apparently was going to be so soon, is taking a long time. But don't be worried since they think the same thing. They say that it won't be delayed. The date has still not passed. Now they go very often to the Pines. Every night Conchita comes down the entire hill and a good part of the path backwards on her knees; she always goes alone now. The other two go together, holding arms. Every**



“holding arms”



“an apparition every night”

night that they go, they come down backwards too. Loli, you know, has an apparition every night; but she only goes outside on the nights that the other girl goes out . . .»

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And she says on January 16th:

«You know everything that is happening . . . Conchita is the only one who sees the Virgin. That is certain; the others deny that they see her. This is so you will be informed . . .»

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We are also informed of the effects that were caused in the village by this unexpected turn of events. We have some information in Maximina's letters; the one from the 16th says:

«Here there are families who gloat over this affair being uncertain. You know, there is a lot of jealousy. And there are other families who believe more than ever. I say that she is my niece and I believe in her. The poor child could not lie. But I believe very little in the apparitions. Heavens! Doesn't it seem, if this doesn't happen, that it's going to be the ruin of many people? You can imagine how much trouble there is around here . . .»

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And another letter dated February 11th to the same recipient, Eloísa de la Roza Velarda, reads:

«Since the apparitions aren't seen anymore, there is nothing in particular around here. I



“Conchita is the only one who sees the Virgin.”





“She didn’t say goodbye.”

came to doubt everything completely; today I am once again convinced that there was something here . . . »

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During these days, Conchita wrote a postcard to María Herrero de Gallardo, which was received in Madrid on February 18th, and in it is said:

«You ask me if it's true that we don't have apparitions. Yes, it has been some time since we have had them . . . I don't know when the Virgin will appear to me again, since she didn't say goodbye, nor did she say anything to us. Here the people are very disappointed.»<sup>(16)</sup>

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And so then, 1962, the second year of Garabandal — so important, so filled with events — came

unexpectedly to the crisis of January, 1963.

If Garabandal seemed to be marked from the beginning by huge question marks, this abrupt shutting off of the proceedings — «*She didn't say goodbye, nor did she say anything to us.*» — leaves us hanging more than ever, with all conceivable answers up in the air.

But this painful finale cannot make us forget that 1962 was a year of wondrous marvels<sup>(17)</sup> whose marks remain in hundreds of persons who had the good fortune to see them, in many more who did not see them but who believe in them with all their heart.<sup>(18)</sup>

All these marvels had one single purpose: to awaken our attention toward the incomprehensible mystery of . . .

# Emmanuel: God with us

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16. Jacinta also stated that the Virgin stopped appearing to her in January of 1963, «*without saying goodbye or giving an explanation.*»

But of those visits, of which she now has only a vague recollection, there still remain wonderful memories.

In her visits, the Virgin had listened and talked with a marvelous delicateness and gentleness. The girls had never seen her with a severe look or the least sign of irritation. Whenever she came, after listening with smiling patience and intense interest, she used her turn to speak in instructing the girls, little by little, in the elements of the spiritual life. Jacinta remembers most of all, besides the instructions on prayer and the manner of praying, the things that she told them about the priesthood and priests. «*I believe that struck me the most and left in my mind such esteem and veneration for them that I'm not able to explain it.*»

17. There has come to us an astounding prediction.

On the night of December 19th to the 20th, Wednesday to Thursday, there was something very important, according to the notes of Mr. Clapes Maymó:

«Conchita had an ecstasy from 3:15 to 5:15. It began in her house. Mrs. Salisachs, Nati, her mother, and her brother Serafín were present. She went out from the house, went through the village, went up to the Cuadro and came down backwards, went into the cemetery, to the house of Mari Cruz . . .

During the ecstasy she was heard to say, *Mercedes* (Salisachs) *said that Saint Malachy had prophesied about the Popes and that only two are left . . .*

After the ecstasy, Conchita told us the Virgin's response: *After the present* (John the 23rd) *there were still three; after that there would be no more.*»

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18. Fr. Retenaga, in composing his first report on Garabandal in December of 1962, resumés the Christian scope of the phenomena:

«*What the girls ask of our world today in the name of the Virgin is «more prayer, more penance, more Eucharistic life.*»

This latter — *more Eucharistic life* — characterizes the second year at Garabandal, as the *Marian Epiphany* seemed to characterize the first year.

We have seen how the girls' visits to the Blessed Sacrament and the *Mystical Communions* increased. I do not know when the last Mystical Communion occurred; but I do know the last time Conchita was waiting for one. It was on the first Friday of January, 1963, as Maximina explained in her letter that day to Dr. Ortiz. After praying the rosary early in the morning at the *calleja*, as she did every day, Conchita and her relatives went down to the church to pray a Station to the Blessed Sacrament. In the courtyard, the girl had an apparition, and minutes later, began to cry.

«*We asked her*» — Maximina wrote — «*why she was crying, and she told us: Because the Angel didn't give me Communion.*»

— But today is First Friday and the pastor will come to say Mass in the village!

— *That's true. I forgot that. And the Angel didn't tell me anything . . .*

Here we have another little proof, since if she would have said that the Angel had given her Communion, we would have known right away that she was lying.»

The good woman is referring to something that was well known and repeated: the Angel only came to give Communion when there were no priests there who could give it.



# **PART THREE**

## *Marán Atha:* **The Lord Returns**

**1963-1965**