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# A Year of Interlude

With the crisis that erupted in January of this year began the first of the long parentheses in the amazing unfolding of the Garabandal mystery.

The course of the apparitions abruptly stops, without the girls knowing the reason, without the Virgin giving them the least explanation, without even a word of farewell. As Conchita wrote on February 18th to María Herrero de Gallardo:

*«It has been some time since we have had an apparition . . . I don't know when She will return, because She didn't say goodbye; nor did She say anything to us.»*

All that had filled the village during months and months — over a year and a half — was thus strangely shut off, with only something very indefinite hanging in the air: the promise and the hope of a great final Miracle.

Certainly no one would have imagined that the affairs of Garabandal could last indefinitely. But to end like this? The long impressive display of phenomena did not match with such a poor conclusion. And problems were augmenting since, if it had been difficult to understand what was happening at the time it was going on, it was more difficult to understand what had happened when it was over.

## Long Weeks of Dismay

The crisis of January 1963 closed what might be called the *first phase of Garabandal*, an astounding and unforgettable phase, in which the Virgin appeared to want to live in the secluded village, associating day and night with the simple children, who were *her children*: the visionaries, the people who lived there, the innumerable pilgrims.

Now was to come an intermission — and a long one — that would last throughout 1963 and 1964. The girls and their supporters had to live almost exclusively from memories and hopes: memories of so many things that had been, hopes of many others that could still be.

And at the time, for many weeks, what reigned was dismay.

It was mentioned in the preceding chapter; but

there are additional points to add.

On February 13th Conchita wrote to Fr. de la Riva, the pastor of Barro:

**«I have just received your letter which I am now answering. It's true that the atmosphere today in the village is very different from what it was when you were here. Hardly anyone believes. My mother doesn't; neither does my aunt Maximina. Nor does the whole village . . . To me that doesn't matter, since I have seen Her. They aren't going to make me believe otherwise. Concerning the miracle, I'm like you — waiting for it . . .»**

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What she said about Maximina was correct;<sup>(1)</sup> but it seems that deep inside the good woman was recovering, because during these same dates she wrote a letter to the sister-in-law of Dr. Ortiz, Eloísa de la Roza:

**«Around here, as the apparitions aren't coming back, there's nothing in particular. I had come to doubt everything completely; but today I am once again convinced that there was something here . . .»**

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The crisis of disillusion involved the girls also, as has been mentioned; but they also recovered rapidly, judging from what Conchita wrote:

**Now Loli and Jacinta have come back to reality, to believing that they have seen the Most Holy Virgin.**

**Really, how could they not believe?**

This brought them back together with a new frame of mind and a better relationship. Maximina, in the letter just mentioned, writes:

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1. The letters to the Pifarré family eloquently reflect her sorrow and dismay:

**«Dear Asunción: Here I am, loaded down with troubles and problems.»** (January 11)

**«I received your letter, and writing you caused me tremendous sorrow, not being able to say what I feel . . . It seems to me that nothing here has been from God; I don't know what it is . . . I already told you in another letter what happened with Loli and Jacinta, that for a long time they didn't have an apparition. Well, now it's come about that Conchita for the past eight days isn't having apparitions either. Do you think the Virgin is going to part without saying anything? The apparition has gone, but they don't know if she will return. I don't believe anything. All this is nothing, and there's no one here who believes . . .»** (January 28)

# The Case of Mari Cruz

«You know, with all the trouble there was among the children, they are now very friendly. It can be seen that they seem to like each other very much. At the present time, they are running past where I am, very content and happy.»

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How long did the visionaries' recovery last? On March 7 when Conchita writes again to Fr. de la Riva, she begins by apologizing for her delay in answering him and then says:

«As I don't see the Virgin now, I don't know what to write. Some priests have been here, and on Friday a priest is supposed to come for confession.<sup>(2)</sup> I miss you very much. Do you still believe so much? I don't believe anything. How does that strike you? . . .»

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I have the impression that beginning in January 1963 the *doubts* and *denials* in Conchita, Mari Loli and Jacinta followed a strange line of discontinuity. They appeared and disappeared in a continuous succession of phases. No sooner had the dark and obscure days come, then other days arrived in which they believed they saw everything clearly. What was evident was that they were not, nor could they be, the same girls that they had been in Garabandal during the first stage, in the happy days of the two previous years.

Mari Cruz continued a path of separation and rejection very different from the others. In January, when the crisis of the other three girls came about, she hardened in her attitude and began to say openly that she had never seen anything, that the apparitions were a lie . . .

In her diary's final pages, Conchita writes:

**Mari Cruz still continues saying that she hasn't seen the Most Holy Virgin.**

As her attitude since then has been so obstinate and sustained, it is not surprising that this visionary has been particularly utilized by the enemies of Garabandal to discredit it.<sup>(3)</sup> We cannot then, ignore . . .

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2. We know that this was the Franciscan priest Félix Larazábal, since Conchita says in a letter to the daughter of Eloísa de la Roza Velarde on March 9th: «He was the one who was here when we were screaming on the feast of Corpus Christi.»

3. A Jesuit priest from a neighboring parish distinguished himself in this; he is now an ex-Jesuit and an ex-priest.

Many things have been said about the possible causes of her persistent negative attitude. But, in one way or another, they almost always end up pointing to an inner state of resentment or bitterness against the other visionaries or their families. This could be blamed on the odious distinctions that many of those who most frequented the village made between the girls. I am obliged to treat this distasteful topic; I do not want to spend too much time on it; I only want to bring out information that could clarify it. This information makes me think that the negative attitude of the visionary in question, rather than being the fruit of an interior animosity, was the result of heavy pressures put on her.

On April 6, 1963, Fr. Retenaga wrote in his second report to Bishop Beitia:

«Months before the confused situation that came about last January, there was already a rather general feeling that this girl had prevented the apparitions. And the reason is that every sign of heavenly origin cannot come to destroy the law, but to perfect it.<sup>(4)</sup> Because of this, the apparitions could not override the need for the girls to obey their parents.

A curious thing in this regard was told me by Loli's father, Ceferino: *On the occasions that I seriously told my daughter to go to bed without waiting for the hour scheduled for the apparition, the apparition didn't occur, although the girl had received calls. On the contrary, when I didn't really oblige her, since I was speaking in jest or only wanted to test her, then the apparition didn't fail . . .*

The village, in its simplicity, had an underlying religious attitude. In this environment, with regard to the case of Mari Cruz, I have heard opinions explaining what happened to the child as due to a lack of deep religion in her parents. They — without bad will, but lacking deep faith — had more or less unconsciously opposed the designs of God, perhaps to avoid the troubles that situations like those of Garabandal always bring with them.

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4. An allusion to what Jesus proclaimed at the start of his Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 5:17-18)



A visitor to the village wrote me last February 5th that Mari Cruz had denied that she had seen the Virgin; but — the visitor added — his attention had been strongly attracted to the fact that Mari Cruz, while denying, was constantly looking fixedly at her mother. When she disputed the ecstasies that she herself had witnessed, her mother interrupted to try to explain them as arising from illness . . .

During my last visit to the village, the *fiesta del gallo*<sup>(5)</sup> was going on, consisting of a special luncheon that the children from the village — boys for one part and the girls for another — had organized on the Sunday of the carnival.

I took advantage of the occasion to be with Mari Cruz, who — after some resistance — permitted me to talk with her. The marked nervousness of the girl contrasted noticeably with the naturalness and spontaneity with which Conchita, Loli, and Jacinta had previously spoken to me.

To the question whether she had seen the Most Holy Virgin, she responded nervously, *No it was a lie . . .*

— Could you now endure those ecstasies that you sometimes had up to two hours long, in which they pinched you, etc?

— *I don't know.*

— Were you ill, as your mother says?

— *No, Señor.*

— Why did you look so fixedly at your mother when I asked you if you had seen the Virgin?

— *I don't know.*

— Several times after the ecstasies, the pastor with other priests and doctors questioned the four of you separately, one after the other. All of you agreed exactly on the details that you gave concerning the Vision . . . How can you explain this, if now you say that you have never seen the Most Holy Virgin?

Response: complete silence.

— If you haven't seen the Virgin, as you say now, then the four of you had to agree to fake false ecstasies. And you must have practiced many times to do it as well as you did it, no?

— *No, Señor. We never did that.*

— Well, there is another thing: Were you afraid of going to jail for telling lies?



“I was telling a lie.”

The face of the girl contorted in a long nervous laugh. Finally she said: *Yes, Señor . . .* She hesitated again and concluded, with an obvious desire of getting out of this: *I was afraid because I was telling a lie, and they could have found us out.»*

Anyone who can read needs no help to perceive the underlying basis of this dialogue. The girl was trying to maintain a position that she did not feel, but which she was forced to hold. Once again she was *between the sword and the wall*: the wall was the facts that could not be put down or forgotten; the sword was strong pressure that forced her to go against everything that she felt.

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5. In that year it fell on February 24th.

At times Mari Cruz said that «*Fear forced her to fake ecstasies day after day . . .*» But anyone who knows Garabandal well, knows that this statement does not stand up against two irrefutable facts:

First, that she often went for weeks with *the desire of having an apparition* during the times that her companions were having them without her.

Secondly, that several times she was surprised in ecstasy in places where there was not a single spectator to incite her to fake an ecstasy.

Fr. Retenaga concluded:

«During my last sojourn in San Sebastián de Garabandal, my attention was forcefully called to the fact that Conchita, Loli and Jacinta confessed and then received Communion on those days, while Mari Cruz didn't confess or receive Communion.» Although this cannot be given too much importance, it can be an indication.

Not long after the interview with Mari Cruz, another episode occurred that was reported in *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*:

«One day in March, 1963, we found ourselves in a little store at the village, in company of a Spanish friend, a lawyer. After a while Mari Cruz came. She stopped at the entrance and gave us a look full of sadness. She was then 13 years old. Her face was pale, drawn . . . She repeated: *No, I have never seen the Virgin*. She did not make a motion and her monotonous voice seemed to be coming from another world.



“I have never seen the Virgin.”

Our Spanish friend, for a considerable time, besieged her with questions and comments

without success. He didn't draw anything out of her besides the *No, I have never seen the Virgin*, that she repeated endlessly, and always in the same tone.

Finally she left without saluting us, which is very unusual in the village of Garabandal, where the people always show themselves so courteous. Our friend, the lawyer, could not prevent himself from saying, *We have just seen a phantom; that was not Mari Cruz who spoke.*»

## New Phenomena: Locutions

The raging waves of the great disillusion that were dashing against Garabandal during the winter of 1963 reached also, as we have seen, the one who seemed the most secure of the four: Conchita. Not only with regard to the truth of what had occurred, but also with regard to the fulfillment of what she had predicted.

**I also doubted a little that the Miracle would come.**

**And one day, while in my room, doubting if the Miracle would really come, I head a voice that said:**

***Conchita, do not doubt that my Son will perform a Miracle.***

**I felt this inside; but as clear as if it came through my ears; or even clearer.**

**It was without words.**

**It left me a peace . . . A joy!**

**More than when I see Her.**

**And the first person to whom I told this was Plácido.<sup>(6)</sup>**

**And later he told it to the others.**

**They are called locutions.**

**And they could be called a voice of joy, a voice of happiness, a voice of peace.**

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6. Plácido Ruiloba, a businessman from the capital of Santander, whose name comes up many times in this story.



**“What happiness! With the Most Holy Virgin within me!”**

**And then, I didn't doubt anything again.  
But the days passed.  
And the voice didn't return.  
That made me suffer.**

**But I understand: how could God go  
on giving me such happiness so often,  
without meriting it?**

**The locutions did me much good.  
Much, very much.**

**Because it was as if the Most Holy  
Virgin were within me.**

**What happiness!**

**I prefer the locution more than the  
apparitions, since during the locution, I  
have her in my very self.**

**Oh! What happiness, with the Most  
Holy Virgin within me!**

**And what a shame, to be so bad!**

**But that is the world.**

These sentences were almost the last in Conchita's unfinished diary. They bring out new<sup>(7)</sup> phenomena that came to supplant and extend the apparitions. They differed from the apparitions not only in content, but also in frequency: the locutions occurred on few occasions.

The first locution — which Conchita mentions in her diary — took place at the beginning of Lent in March of 1963. There was a month lapse before another occurred.

**At the end of the month, again I heard  
that voice of interior happiness without  
words, in the church.**

The adolescent girl — having just had her 14th birthday — was at that time living a period of special fervor. In Maximina's letter of February 11th, it can be read:

**«Conchita, when she is home, (that is, not  
working in the fields) spends almost the whole  
day in church. In the morning she goes there to  
pray a rosary and some women go with her; in  
the afternoon she goes to spend most of the day  
there. She doesn't know what it is to get weary.**

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7. New in the affairs of Garabandal; but very ancient in the course of Catholic mysticism.

The other day I asked her, *What do you like most: to play or to be in the church?* And she said to me, *I like both things very much.»*<sup>(8)</sup>

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An interval of one month between locutions seemed to become routine,<sup>(9)</sup> since on November 28th of that same year, Conchita wrote to María Herrero de Gallardo:

**«You say that I should tell you things about the Virgin. What am I going to tell you, if I don't see her now? Only that I talk to her once each month. I still haven't spoken with her this month. Tomorrow or the day after, she will speak to me.»**

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María de Gallardo added a note that said: **«On the following day, November 29th, she had the locution that she was expecting.»**

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But we are indebted to Fr. Retenaga for the best information on the Garabandal locutions. Quoting from his third report, finished in September of 1963:

**«I traveled to Garabandal to aid the parish priest during the past Holy Week.<sup>(10)</sup> In Santander, I had already heard rumors that were circulating among the people concerning Conchita's and Loli's new and extraordinary phenomenon.**

**Julia González, Loli's mother, talked to me about a conversation she had in March with her daughter concerning the new phenomenon that Loli didn't know how to explain.**

**During Holy Week, the girls talked to me repeatedly about the *internal visions* that they appeared to be having. I was able to examine**

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8. A sincere and most human answer, which reveals how *normal* Conchita was. What 14 year old girl would not like to amuse herself, with the world just beginning to spread open before her? Merit is in knowing how to renounce at times the desire for pleasure out of higher motives, so as to attend to matters that are more important, although less pleasurable. Here again is seen the theological axiom that *grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it.*

9. This was affirmed by Maximina's letter of July 7 to Mrs. Asunción Pifarré:

**«I don't know if I've told you that Conchita and Loli have locutions — which is something like talking to the Virgin without seeing her . . . They told me that they feel a great joy when they have these locutions. I think that they have them once a month.»**

10. In that year it fell between the 7th and the 14th of April.



Conchita and Loli separately, and I came to the conclusion that this concerned *locutions*, as later I informed Bishop Beitia of Santander in a conversation with him on April 17th.



“I hear it without hearing.”

Conchita told me that the new phenomenon had already happened to her several times. On asking her to explain it better, she told me, *I hear something; yet I hear it without hearing.*

The new phenomenon began in March, when she had been suffering since the past January due to the absence of the Virgin. Assailed by many people's doubts, she also had begun to waver. And one day on her knees at home, with considerable anguish, she heard the Virgin say (without speaking): *Do not doubt that my Son will perform a miracle.* After that time her confidence with respect to the miracle <sup>(11)</sup> was evident in the unalterable peace that she now enjoys. She confessed to me that at the same time she heard *without hearing* other things for the good of her own soul and souls of others.

The mystics have described their difficulties in explaining the high spiritual communications that they receive from God. In Conchita and Loli the matter was complicated by their

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11. A letter that Conchita wrote to Father Odriozola in the early days of May ended this way:

«I am certain also that the Miracle will come, since the Virgin told me, and also the date of the Miracle, and in what it will consist . . . I am as certain that the Miracle will come as I am that two and two equal four.»

poor vocabulary. Their education was very limited, especially with regard to religion. During the time of the apparitions, they still asked what the word *council* meant; and several times they asked me about words that seemed very ordinary to all of us. Living without a resident priest in the village had made it difficult for their religious formation. Today, the minds of the girls are much more enlightened than previously; but they stumble with great difficulty in describing their interior experiences.

In my first investigation I noticed that Conchita didn't know that the same phenomenon had been given to Loli. (And likewise Loli didn't know about Conchita). But both, when separated, coincided with each other in their answers to me. Both insisted that neither their feelings nor their imagination had played any part in what had happened to them.

Not satisfied with the first examination, on returning from Garabandal to my quarters, I composed a list of questions and took advantage of Conchita's trip to Lourdes<sup>(12)</sup> to complete

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12. This trip, arranged by Fr. Retenaga, had its story. On May 9th Conchita wrote to Fr. José Ramón, the pastor of Barro:

«I still don't know if we are going to Lourdes. My mother thinks we won't go, since she prayed that if this were true, that we would go; and if it were a lie, we would stay. And she thinks that we won't go.»

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Seven days later, on May 16th, another letter was addressed to the same person:

«Yesterday I received your card, and I am responding to tell you that today I am leaving (for Rentería or San Sebastián to join there with the pilgrims from the diocese of Guipuzcoana) to go on Saturday to Lourdes.»

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We have the testimony of Father Retenaga on Conchita's attitude during her first visit to Lourdes:

«Among the 1,300 Spanish pilgrims who were wandering enthusiastically in the locale where the apparitions had taken place, amid the religious emotion aroused in them by being near the grotto during the baths for the sick, before the devotion felt during the Benediction of the sick with the Blessed Sacrament, before the striking spectacle of the candlelight procession, etc., I can assure you that Conchita, though 14 years old, was the person who gave me the greatest impression of equilibrium, prudence and calmness, with a piety based more on the tranquil security of faith and virtue than on passing fluctuation of emotion. If she were afflicted by any psychiatric illness, as had been said on occasion and repeated, could she have remained like that? Would she not have fallen inevitably into an *ecstasy*?»



**“My Son will perform a miracle.”**

my information. Later (in the month of July) I continued questioning her; and afterward, apart from her, I questioned Loli.»

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Following are the most interesting answers to Fr. Retenaga's questionnaire:

To the question as to whether the interior voices had been heard by their physical ears, the two girls responded definitely: «*No Señor.*»

Also they absolutely rejected any suggestion that it could have been their imagination or that they could have been dreaming. Opposing this latter idea, Conchita stated: «*It was during the day*», and Loli: «*It was when I was wide awake.*»

They denied likewise that they could have these interior voices when they wanted . . . «*Listen Lolita*» — Fr. Retenaga said — «*since Jesus is in the tabernacle and you receive Him every day, holding Him that way, you are able to hear His words whenever you want, isn't that right?*»

*Oh! No Señor. If I could hear His words whenever I wanted, I would be hearing them all the time.*»

Conchita said that her locutions always came when she was in prayer: sometimes in her home, but ordinarily in the church. Loli said the same thing, declaring that twice she heard them in her room unexpectedly; another time, while she was praying at the Cuadro in the calleja; and the rest of the time in the church, one of these times after receiving Holy Communion.

Most interesting was the response to Fr. Retenaga's question as to whether they would choose an apparition, a Communion, or a locution. «*Communion!*» They responded without hesitation.

«**Understand**» — noted Fr. Retenaga — «**the words of that answer, taking into account the state of happiness and the effects that followed for them from the apparitions and locutions, in contrast with the aridity and dryness that so often accompanied their Communions.**»

During their locutions, many things must have been discussed by the visionaries that we will never know. This is clear from some of the remarks made by Father Retenaga:

«One day Conchita told me that she gave a reply to a man who wasn't a Catholic; she also took another reply — which she was required to keep secret — to a young man who overtly didn't believe in God or in priests.<sup>(13)</sup> And with regard to herself, she had been told secrets concerning her actual life and her future, but she didn't specify what they were, since she lacked express permission from the Virgin.»

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But still more expressive was what happened to Loli:

«I had asked Loli to put some things in writing . . . I was speaking with her on the afternoon of July 25th when she told me that very morning she had wanted to write what I had asked her, and she was all set to begin. But a force from above held back her arm. At the same time, she was told in a locution: *Do not write anything for him right now.*»

I hid my astonishment and told her that it was natural for her not to write anything about it, since what she wanted to tell me had slipped her mind. She answered that she remembered everything perfectly, but that she wasn't able to write because of the force from above that held back her arm . . . And that she had many other things that she couldn't mention either.»

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From these incidents, it can be seen that we still do not know a considerable portion of what actually happened in Garabandal . . . Is that surprising? Everything there was of such extraordinary proportions, both in duration and in intensity.

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The Most Holy Virgin was the first to intervene in the *locutions* that extended throughout 1963; later Our Lord took part.

The locutions of the Virgin were imbued with her magnificent maternal attitude. In the locution of July 25th that was mentioned — the feast of St.

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13. Things like this were the basis for people to think that Conchita read consciences. On November 8th, 1966, Conchita mentioned to the Mother Superior of the school at Burgos:

«I think back many times to what happened in my village. There were those who came there because they believed that I read consciences. This made me laugh. How was I going to read consciences? The Virgin advised me about the things that I told some people at the time.»



“Change your ways.”

James the Apostle, Patron Saint of Spain — the Virgin called Loli's attention to an attitude of the girl that could well be defined as a fault of vanity. «*Change your ways*» — she said — «*and do not do it again.*» With regard to this, here is an interesting dialogue:

**FATHER RETENAGA** — «After that reprimand, were you hurt, like a child who is disciplined by his parents?

**LOLI** — *No, Señor.*

**FATHER RETENAGA** — Then, you didn't take it seriously?

**LOLI** — *No Señor. I can't explain it; but what I felt was a mixture of pain and consolation, or confidence, since there is no mother who is so understanding and good as the one we have in heaven, the Most Holy Virgin . . . »*

The locutions of Jesus had their own particular singularity. Conchita points this out in the last lines

of her diary:

**But I like even more to have Jesus within me . . .**

**— Jesus, who give me the cross to purify me,**

**— And also to see if with my crosses I can do something for the world.**

Two and a half years later (November 9th, 1966), she said to Sister María Nieves at her school in Burgos: «*The apparitions and locutions of the Virgin fill me with happiness; but the locutions of Jesus are even better . . . They seem to be something superior.*»

We have an illustration of these locutions, since one day Conchita wrote down in front of Father Retenaga, who was in Garabandal at the time, what she heard that very day<sup>(14)</sup> after having

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14. The version given here basically follows the text from Fr. Retenaga's letter; logical punctuations and separations were put in so that the contents can be better understood.

received Communion during the Mass he celebrated on July 10th, 1963:

(Though not part of *Conchita's Diary*, the girl wrote this shortly after her unfinished diary and its importance dictates the heavy print given to it here.)

**I was making my thanksgiving and praying for things. He answered me . . .**

**I asked Him to give me a cross since I was living without suffering — except the suffering of not having a cross.**

**And he answered: Yes. I will give you a cross.**

**And with much feeling, I went on praying . . .**

**And I said to Him, *Why is the Miracle coming? . . . to convert many people?***

**He answered, *To convert the whole world.***

**— Will Russia be converted?**

**— *It also will be converted; and so everyone will love Our Hearts.*<sup>(15)</sup>**

**— Will the chastisement come afterwards?**

**(He didn't answer me.)**

**— Why do you come to my poor heart, without my meriting it?**

**— *I certainly do not come for you; I come for everyone.***

**— When the Miracle comes, will it be as though I were the only one who saw the Virgin?**

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15. Here the word *hearts* is used for *persons*. Conchita translates in her common vocabulary what she had received intellectually in a locution; in ordinary common Spanish expression the *Sacred Heart of Jesus* is the same as *Jesus*, just as the *Immaculate Heart of Mary* is the same as *The Virgin Mary*.

What is meant in the text of the locution is that mankind will have a new and better attitude towards Jesus and Mary after the general conversion brought on by the Miracle.

**— He answered me, *By your sacrifices, your patience, I will allow you to intercede for the accomplishment of the Miracle.***

**And I said to Him: *Wouldn't it be better for me to be with all the others; or if not, that You don't use any of us to intercede?***

**— No.**

**— Will I go to heaven?**

**— *You should love much and pray to Our Hearts.***

**— When will You give me a cross?**

**(He didn't answer me.)**

**— What will I be?**

**(He didn't answer me; He only told me that everywhere that I would be, I would have much to suffer.)**

**— Am I going to die soon?**

**— *You have to stay on the earth to help the world.***

**— I am very small. I couldn't help in anything.**

**— *With your prayers and sufferings, you will help the world.*<sup>(16)</sup>**

**— When does one go to heaven? . . . when one dies?**

**— *One never dies.***

**( I thought that we didn't go to heaven until we were resurrected.)<sup>(17)</sup>**

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16. What Conchita says is useful for all persons of good will. All can and should do something . . . *Oh Mystery truly tremendous that is never sufficiently pondered!* — exclaimed Pius XII in his encyclical "Mystici Corporis"— *That the salvation of some souls depends upon the prayers and voluntary sacrifices of others.*

17. Death for the Christian is not the final end, but rather the passing from the present state into another very different state — which can be extremely marvelous or extremely horrible. The soul enters immediately into the new state; the body has to wait for the resurrection.

**I asked Him if St. Peter was at the gate of heaven to receive us; and He told me *No*.**<sup>(18)</sup>

**While I was in this conversation, in this prayer with God, I felt myself out of the world.**

**Jesus also told me that now His Heart should be loved.**

**Concerning priests . . .**

**He told me that I must pray much:**

● ***so that they would be holy and fulfill their duties;***

● ***so that they would make others better;***

● ***so that they would make Me known to those who do not know Me;***

● ***so that they would make Me loved by those who know Me and do not love Me.***

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This page from the history of the *locutions* in Garabandal is magnificent . . .

What material for reflection!

But if this page from Conchita's life is well known, not so well known is a page from Loli's, which is equally valuable and instructive, and gives us new insight into the mystical phenomena with which the two visionaries were favored in 1963.

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18. Conchita expresses ingeniously the common belief — mentioned in so many jokes — that St. Peter is the gate-keeper of heaven. This belief has no more basis than being the erroneous interpretation of the words spoken by Jesus to his apostle during the episode at Caesarea Philippi. (Matt. 16:19)

Reading the text of this locution shows well the truth of what Conchita said later to the Mother Superior in the school at Burgos:

***«The Lord is very serious, and when He speaks to me, He seems concerned for everyone. The Virgin, as if more for me . . .»***  
(Nov. 17, 1966)

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However the Virgin's style was not that different:  
***«When we spoke about things too personal, she didn't answer us; she was very concerned about the others.»***

(April 21, 1967)

It is reported in a letter to Fr. Retenaga, dated October 13th, 1963:

«Reverend Father Luis,

So that you see that I do what I promise, I am going to tell you a few things . . .

The Virgin has made me know when a priest is in sin. She has helped me to know that he needs many prayers and sacrifices.<sup>(19)</sup>

Also she has given me to understand *the Crucifixion in the Holy Mass*,<sup>(20)</sup> since I comprehend the humility, the sacrifice for the world.

She has also made me recognize *when a person needs prayers to be said for him*. And one time she told me about a person who didn't pray the rosary, and that person told me to write a note for him. And in it I wrote down that he should pray the rosary. And he then began to cry and said to me, *Who told you that I don't pray the rosary?* And later he wrote and told me that since that day he had not missed saying it.

Well, Father, at another time I will tell you more, because now I am writing from my bed, since tomorrow I have to gather hay in the pasture, which is a long way from the village, and I have to get up early . . .

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Today is another day and I am going to see if I have more time to write. Well, I spoke with the Virgin in a locution and asked her to give me a cross to *suffer for priests*. She told me to *bear everything with patience*<sup>(21)</sup> and to be most *humble*, which was what pleased God the most.

**And I said to her, *Am I going to die soon?***

**And she said to me, *No. You have to remain in the world to suffer. In whatever place you***

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19. There are numerous incidents demonstrating that Garabandal has always given preferential importance and solicitude for priests, antecedent to the greatest crisis in the priesthood that the Church has ever known.

20. Also in advance of the time when the primary meaning of the Catholic Mass, that of sacrifice — *the sacrifice of the Cross* — would be forgotten or lost by most people, the Virgin Mary would come to repeat this lesson.

21. The Curé d'Ars used to repeat: *One hour of patience is worth more before God than several days of penance.*

*are, you will suffer.*

And I said to her, *Let my parents believe!*<sup>(22)</sup>



“Suffer with patience.”

And she said to me, *They do not believe, so that you will have more to suffer. Suffer with patience.*

She also told me, *Pray the rosary every day.*

She told me, *Pray for priests, since there are some who need more sacrifices for them every day.*

And again I said to her, *Why don't my parents believe?*

And she said to me, *Because you have to suffer. You have much to suffer in this world.*

And I said to her, *What sacrifices should I make?*

She said to me, *You have to be more obedient.*

I told her that one time I was going down the

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22. It is known that Loli's parents, especially Ceferino, held the greatest doubt about the truth of what was happening to their daughter; and she found this to be a heavy cross.

road, and suddenly a man with long hair appeared to me in a long coat, and said to me, *I am hungry.* And as I was carrying my lunch in my hand, I gave it to him. And suddenly he disappeared, without my knowing how. And I was very frightened. And I said to her, *Who was that man?* And she smiled and didn't tell me.

I'm not writing more. Don't say that I don't write much.<sup>(23)</sup> Goodbye.

María Dolores Mazón»

This letter does not require learned commentaries, but it should be re-read.

It is evident that any similarity between the instruction that the Virgin gave her *children* at Garabandal and that which is now given to many children by our *new theologians*, is purely coincidental.

No wonder. Today what is stressed is the *importance of the individual*, while in the school of Mary, the main focus has always been on the ancient pattern of *giving oneself to God and denying one's very self.*

\* \* \*

It could be said that the phenomena of locutions filled 1963, Garabandal's third year. But there was something else that made a much more spectacular mark; an unequivocal prediction of immeasurable importance:

## Only Three Popes Remain!

In the early days of June, not only what is called the *Catholic world*, but the entire world was closely following what was happening in the pope's chamber at the Vatican.

There struggling in his last agony, was the one who had captured more swiftly and amply than

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23. This letter is exceptionally long. I have seen many letters written by the visionaries, and I can verify that almost all of them were very short.

anyone before, the admiration of almost everyone, and the love of a great many.

The final curtain was inexorably descending on Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the man called Pope John XXIII.

And the world was watching breathlessly for many days as he painfully died.

On June 3rd came the sudden notice that at last the flame had gone out. The Pope was dead.

As in so many other belfries throughout the world, the crude rustic bells in the church tower in Garabandal tolled for his death.

But beneath the clanging bells at Garabandal, a comment was made, very different from those made in other parts of the world.

\* \* \*

The sound from the belltower came to the little kitchen where the widow Aniceta González and her daughter Conchita were on that afternoon.

— *Listen; they are ringing the bells!* — the daughter exclaimed immediately.

— *It's for the Pope* — said the mother.

— *Certainly . . . Now only three remain.*

Surprised, Aniceta raised her head:

— *What are you saying?*

— *What I heard. That only three popes remain.*

— *And where did you pick that up?*

— *I didn't pick it up; the Virgin told it to me.*

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It would be helpful if Conchita would have explained to us when and how she heard this. But even lacking her explanation, we have sufficient reason to think that this occurred during the *locutions*, and presumably during the month of May, the month of Mary:

*In a locution*, since the apparitions had ceased since January, as described, and in their place were the locutions.

*During the month of May*, since these locutions were occurring at intervals approximately once per month, and during the locution in May she had talked about the Pope with his terminal illness.

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Aniceta, amazed by what she had heard, reacted logically:

— *Then, you mean that the end of the world is coming?*

— *The Virgin didn't tell me "the end of the world," but "the end of the times."*

— *Aren't they the same?*

— *I don't know.*<sup>(24)</sup>

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News of this amazing prediction soon spread out; it was not shouted aloud, but spoken quietly from person to person.

During those days Paquina de la Roza Velarde (Dr. Ortiz' wife) was in the village. One morning a funeral mass for the dead pope was to be said in the parish church, and the bells began to ring early in the morning. Paquina, Maximina, another woman and Conchita, after having prayed the rosary in the Calleja (How delightful were those rosaries in the silence and freshness of the morning!) made their way to the church. On their way they were speaking of the current news:

— *Perhaps with the pope's death, the Council*<sup>(25)</sup>

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24. Maximina, Conchita's aunt and godmother, was present on the scene, judging from her letter which I saw in the Pifarré collection, dated June 5:

«*On the day that the Holy Father died, when it was mentioned here that he died, I was with Conchita and she said: Oh, now only three more remain!*

*Slightly irritated, her mother spoke to her like this: What do you know?*

*And she answered with great conviction, Well, I know, since the Virgin told me this.*

*Her mother didn't like her to say things like this since, although it could be seen that she believed, you know she always had the fear that this wasn't true . . . »*

25. Vatican II, convoked and inaugurated by John XXIII, had only finished one session (October-December, 1962) during which it had taken a direction that certainly was not what its planners had intended. The Council had just begun, and it was expected to continue, but all this depended on what the new Pope would decide.



will end too, since . . .

**Conchita:** *Another pope will come and the Council will continue.*

— Well, I agree that another pope will come; but as for the Council . . . Perhaps the new pope won't think like John XXIII.

— *Another pope will come and the Council will continue.*

— You seem to be very certain of that; but I don't see it so certain. It could well happen otherwise.

— *I'm telling you, and I repeat: another pope will come and the Council will continue. And I also tell you that only three popes remain . . .*

Dr. Ortiz' wife quickly recovered from her surprise and responded to Conchita:

— Oh, you are saying that from the prophecy of St. Malachy . . .

— *St. Malachy? That's the first time I heard of that. The Virgin told me that after this Pope (John XXIII) there remain only three; and afterwards, the end of the times.*

— Do you mean the end of the world is coming?

— *The Virgin told me, "the end of the times."*

— That isn't the same?

— *I don't know.*

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This episode is historically accurate<sup>(26)</sup> and Conchita's statement cannot be taken for a simple, off-hand remark, since she subsequently repeated it very seriously in the same words.

One time she told it to the eminent professor Father Lucio Rodrigo<sup>(27)</sup> at the Pontifical University

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26. Conchita spoke again about the three Popes that remained and the end of the times. It happened in Maximina's house during the First Communion dinner of her son, Pepe Luis, to which Mrs. Ortiz was invited. Conchita repeated the same thing, without being able to give the explanations that the listeners' curiosity desired.

27. † March 30th, 1973. On his deathbed he declared that he had received an unequivocal sign from heaven about the truth of Garabandal.

in Comillas. This Father, on the occasion of a visit by Conchita and her mother,<sup>(28)</sup> asked the young girl if she had really said what had been attributed to her.

Conchita told him, *«Yes Father. It's true. The Virgin told me that after John XXIII only three popes remain, and this one, (Paul VI) is the first of those three.»*

In October of 1966, Conchita became a boarder in the college of the teaching sisters of the Immaculate Conception at Burgos. On November 1st, the Feast of All Saints, she talked confidentially with the director of the center, Mother Nieves García. Among other things, she said this, which the religious sister wrote down very carefully:

*«One day I said to the Virgin, 'Will the end of the world be during the time of these events?'*

*And she told me, 'No, the end of the times.'*

*After Paul VI, there will be only two more popes; and then the end of the times will come.»*

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28. For some time Aniceta and Conchita traveled regularly to the seminary at Comillas — taking advantage of the cars of friends and acquaintances — to have their confessions heard by this priest.



Fr. Rodrigo with Conchita, Aniceta, and Fr. de la Riva

Father Rodrigo wrote to Father Ramón on November 13th, 1965:

*«A fortnight ago on Tuesday, the pastor of Barro brought Aniceta and Conchita to me . . . While I was alone with Conchita, she confirmed that the Virgin had told her on the death of John XXIII that there remain only 3 Popes (counting the present) until the end of the times.»*

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In this letter there is another interesting thing:

*«She (Conchita) also told me: As the people were talking about trips to space, I asked the Virgin if there were persons living out there, and she told me: "Yes," but she didn't add anything more.»*

If it cannot be accepted that Conchita invented such a definite and compromising prediction, neither could it be held that the prophecy of St. Malachy suggested it to her. First, because she was completely unaware of it; and secondly, because this prophecy and her prediction do not agree.

This prophecy concerning the popes, that is so talked about today, came out in 1595. A Benedictine monk from Belgium, Arnold de Wion, published at the time a voluminous work under the title of *Ligum Vitae*. It was a type of general biography of the great personages in his order. In this work were listed a series of 111 divisions or titles in Latin, which he reported as coming from an Irish saint of the twelfth century: St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh. These divisions tended to correspond, one after the other, to the popes that came after Innocent II, who died in 1143.

The authenticity of this enormous prophecy has been discussed endlessly; authenticity in a double sense: in whether it can be truly attributed to the saint, and in whether it really was inspired from above. I doubt if the question will ever be resolved. But there is something that strikes the reader; the amazing accuracy with which many of the *titles* describe the popes to which they correspond.

According to the prophecy of St. Malachy, after John XXIII there still remain five more popes. There are five more titles after his, ending with the name of the last successor of St. Peter. Conchita, on the other hand, speaks of only three. The discrepancy could be only an apparent one if, as some think, a new schism arises in the church, with the elevation of anti-popes. To these could correspond some of these last titles that seem to be in series,<sup>(29)</sup> attributing some to the legitimate popes and others to the false, or anti-popes.

The title of the last pope is given in these words, which if they are true, are shocking in their poignant sobriety:

*In persecutione extrema Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae, sedebit Petrus Romanus, qui pascet oves in multis tribulationibus; quibus transactis, civitas septicollis diruetur, et Judex tremendus judicabit populum suum. Finis.*

29. The four divisions that follow John XXIII are:

Flos florum = Flower of flowers

De medietate lunae = Half of the moon.

De labore solis = From the work of the sun.

De gloria olivae = From the glory of the olive branch.

*"In the final persecution of the Holy Roman Church, Peter the Roman will reign, who will pasture his sheep among multiple tribulations. When these have passed, the city of the seven hills will be destroyed and the terrible judge will judge his people. Finis."*

Related to the succession of John XXIII and the possibility of the anti-popes is an episode which curiously is not mentioned either in Fr. Valentin's notes or in the reports of the best-known witnesses of Garabandal.

On the suggestion of the pastor from Barro, who had his part in the episode, I wrote to Margarita Huerta in Madrid, asking for details. She answered on June 18th, 1973:

**«Yes, I was in Garabandal during the visit of the false pope, Clement XV. But I can't remember the date; possibly it was during 1963, as you suggest, or perhaps in 1964; I do remember that it was during my summer vacation, between July and August.»**

(Concerning the year, there is no room for question. The November, 1972 issue of 'La Verité,' the magazine of Clement XV, contains an interview of the pseudo-pope with a reporter in which the pseudo-pope said, "I was in Garabandal on August 2nd, 1963"<sup>(30)</sup> (Just two months after the death of Pope John)

**«He rode into the village in a big limousine, accompanied by two young laymen of about 21 years of age, and another one over 30 years old who seemed to be married.»** According to Fr. de la Riva, those that accompanied him were wearing smart uniforms. **«He wore an impeccable white cassock, and a similar white skullcap on his head, a ring like bishops wear, and on his chest there was a large cross hanging from a long**

30. Surely this August 2 is a printer's error, and should be August 22nd. A letter from Conchita to Father Laffineur makes me think this way:

«San Sebastián de Garabandal

August 23, 1963

Just a few words to tell you that yesterday a car came to the village with a man accompanied by two others. He was dressed in white and carried a large cross on his chest, also a skullcap and a ring. He was French.

He came saying that he was the Pope chosen by God; that Paul VI was elected only by the cardinals. He also said that from the time he was 35 years old, he saw the Virgin and also God, Who was the one who told him to come here . . .»

chain. On seeing him, the people gathered around him immediately, thinking naturally that he was an important character. He gave his ring to kiss and all looked at him with the greatest respect.»

(Perhaps this reception was the basis for what he believed of himself . . . And what he told a reporter from Amsterdam, *“I was received as the true pope. I was taken by the people of the village to the places of the apparitions. It was a triumphal hosanna. As I didn’t know the visionaries or their messages, I felt really surprised by such enthusiasm.”* The poor man had to believe that God had spoken there in his favor . . . But his euphoria was not destined to last long.)

«As neither he nor his companions spoke anything but French, my friend and I began to act as intermediaries. He told me that he had come to visit Garabandal by command of the departed John XXIII, who had confided to him the mission of investigating the events occurring there . . . At the time, I succeeded in getting away from him for a few moments and I went to where Fr. José Ramón García de la Riva had separated himself from the crowd’s commotion. I relayed his declarations to the priest and he told me, *Go and ask him to show you the document that he brings from Rome.*

When I asked him for it, he answered me, *No. I don’t carry any document; John XXIII gave me the order verbally.*

I went to tell this to Fr. José Ramón and he said to me, *I don’t like the sound of this. Only God can know who this character is! Furthermore, I don’t want to know anything about this matter; I’m not looking for trouble. And he walked away.»*

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Amused, people came in increasing numbers to see the curious personage, and all thought that they were in front of an important figure of the Church. He then manifested his intention of celebrating Mass for everyone there up high at the Pines, since he carried a portable altar and *had permission to celebrate Mass in all places.* But Margarita Huerta dissuaded him, making him see that would not cause a good impression on the people, since everyone knew of the Bishop of Santander’s prohibitions . . . The man was somewhat dismayed, and

apologized for personally being unaware of such prohibitions, *although for him, they didn’t oblige in any way.*

Margarita could not know that, at the same time in separate conversation, two of his accomplices were telling her friend Fracasado that *he was the authentic Pope, the Pope “Flos florum” predicted by the prophet St. Malachy to follow John XXIII. And that it was he, Clement XV, and not the false Pope Paul VI, who should be obeyed.*

Frustrated with regard to saying mass, Clement XV expressed to Margarita another desire: to talk with the girls of the apparitions. Immediately someone went to find them, but the girls, for some reason (perhaps they had been alerted about this suspicious personality), did not want to come.

Clement XV was irritated, and so at the time Margarita tried to soothe over the situation:

«*Understand that the Bishop of Santander has prohibited priests and religious from coming here without written permission. And as you don’t carry any certificate, either your own or from Rome, the people have started to look at you with suspicion.*

The he asked me to find a house for him where he could eat and sleep. I took them to Tiva’s house and they invited me to eat with them; I accepted the invitation. Before ending, Clement XV still insisted on his desire of talking with the girls; he said to the oldest of those accompanying him, *Why don’t you go with this woman to Conchita’s house and tell her to come here? The man answered without even looking at him, I? Why should I go? In no way will I go. Clement XV remained without saying a word.»*

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Finally they went to sleep. And on the next day, very early in the morning, they got away from the village in their limousine.

This sudden *getaway* had its reason. On the previous afternoon, as soon as rumors about this character wanting to pass himself off as the real Pope had come to his ears, Fr. de la Riva went to Ceferino, the Mayor of the village, to tell him this person’s stay would bring many troubles and problems to everyone. Then Ceferino went up to Clement XV to make him know, that if he did not immediately get out of the village, he would be turned

over to the commandant of the civil Guard at Puente Nansa.

The warning had its effect. Clement XV dispensed with his pontifical air. Asking Ceferino not to do anything, he said they would leave right away, and would he permit them only to rest there that night.

\* \* \*

This is the actual history of the episode that Clement XV experienced at Garabandal, and that nine years later in Amsterdam he encapsulated before a reporter in the words we have just seen, *I was received like the true pope. I was taken by the people of the village to the places of the apparitions. It was a triumphal hosanna . . . I felt really surprised by such enthusiasm.*

How is such self-suggestion possible? Or perhaps it is not self-suggestion . . .

In another place in this book, Conchita's statement to the Mother at the college of Burgos on November 12th, 1966 was mentioned,

**«You know Father Collin? Now he is passing for a pope. He was in my village. He wanted to talk with me, but my mother didn't let him. Finally they threw him out of the village . . . Well, when I was in Rome, (January, 1966) they showed me a picture in a magazine on which I appeared next to him, and it was written there that he had been with me, and many other lies.»**

Obviously, Clement XV wanted to exploit the events of Garabandal to his advantage, just as he has always tried to make people believe that the famous Secret of Fatima was in his favor.<sup>(31)</sup>

\* \* \*

We have seen how Conchita repeated that she had heard that, after the last pope, there would not come the *end of the world*, but rather the *end of the times*. What is the difference?

This is a difficult question, which would require many pages for clarification. We will only make some brief considerations here, so that the matter will not be completely obscure.

If by *end of the world* is understood the annihilation of the cosmic world that we are acquainted with, we could well say that the end of the world will never come, since the world will not be

destroyed, but substantially changed. To speak therefore of the end of the world is to refer to that final point in history when the existence of man as he is at present will be changed into another form, very different and much better.

**And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth were gone . . . And death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away. And He that sat on the throne said: Behold I make all things new.** (Ap. 21: 1-5)

Such a substantial change would certainly comprise a tremendous display of upheaval and destruction; since for man, the worker of iniquity (Matt.13: 41), the change from the temporary state to the permanent will not be smooth.

**But the present heavens and earth, by the same word are kept in store, reserved for fire on the day of the judgment and perdition of ungodly men . . . But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burned up.** (11 Peter 3: 7-10)

To all this we refer when we speak of the end of the world. If the expression *end of the times* does not mean the same, then it would have to refer to *something prior to it and of exceptional importance*. What would this be? That is the question.

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31. But who is this individual?

His name is Michael Collin and he is a fallen-away, former Catholic priest from France.

In the interview just mentioned, he himself resuméd the most important times of his life: *I was baptized in Béchy where I was born. I was ordained a priest by Cardinal Liénart in Lillie. On April 28th, 1935, I was consecrated Bishop by Our Lord at Vaux-le-Metz; and finally, Pope, by God Himself in Sorrento, on October 7, 1950.*

If such direct interventions from heaven to promote him do not seem peculiar, certainly his pathway to being elected is, as he himself describes it:

*From my childhood, the Lord let me know that I had to help the world and save it.*

*And when I was 16 years old, He clearly confided to me the mission of "saving the world." When I made my First Communion, Jesus told me privately, "Miguel, you will be a priest one day; afterwards, bishop; finally, Pope."*

*From those years, the Lord appeared to me and also the Virgin. When I was still small, I thought that everyone saw them as I. When I didn't understand His words very well. He said to me, "Everything will become clear; we must hope."*

*And for a long time I doubted like this. But now that I have seen the Most Holy Virgin, clothed in black, shedding tears and asking me to accomplish my mission, I have put all my doubts aside. I will fight until the day on which God reigns on earth as in heaven . . .*

*In 1950, God himself consecrated me Pope in Sorrento. It was on October 7th, the feast of the Most Holy Rosary. From four until eight in the morning, I was in communication with Him . . . And I descended from St. Peter in a direct spiritual line, through Pius XII . . .*

*To save the world from an immense deluge, moral and material, and to make straight the Church, which is walking toward the abyss; here is the reason and purpose for my life. And so we have an answer to the secret of Fatima, which announced a "miraculous Pope" to bring this mission to an end.*

What got in the way to prevent him from doing this? Miguel-Clemente XV tells us point blank: *Paul VI, friend of Satan . . . On the death of John XXIII, he himself declared, "I don't want to be Pope; there is a French man who is already designated." He knew the secret of Fatima, since Pius XII had spoken to him about it. But later he preferred to be a usurper, and with his lamentable past . . .*

And so from Pope Clement's words, it is easy to understand our misfortune. And it will be much worse:

*The nations will be destroyed by an atomic war without precedent, if Clement XV does not officially take over the direction of the Church.*

Clement XV has spoken!

*TIME* certainly will not end until the finish of the present form of existence; an existence that is transitory, subject to succession and change; because of this, the end of time will coincide with the *end of the world*.

But "*the times*" may well not be the same thing as "*time*" . . .

Jesus, in His eschatological discourse,<sup>(32)</sup> according to the version of St. Luke (21: 24) said about the coming ruin of the Jewish city: **And they shall fall by the edge of the sword; and shall be led away captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the gentiles;<sup>(33)</sup> until the times of the nations be fulfilled.**

Thus the first chosen people, Israel, will remain dispersed and their capital, the Holy City, abandoned by God as in the grand captivity of Babylon. The gentiles who embrace the faith will then replace the unfaithful Jewish nation as the nation of God. Such a situation will last for a long time: *the times of the nations*. These *times* will be fulfilled when the time comes for Israel once again through a massive conversion to Christianity. The effects of such a conversion would have enormous significance, according to St. Paul:

**Have the Jews fallen forever, or have they just stumbled? Obviously they have not fallen forever. But by their fall, salvation has come to the gentiles . . . For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their reception be, but resurrection from the dead!**

(Romans 11: 11-15)

History then will take a spectacular turn, unforeseeable and bewildering. Truly there will be *new times*. Is this being heralded by Garabandal for the near future? Can the *end of the times*, which is predicted to follow John XXIII's third successor, be the *consummation of the times of the nations*,

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32. It is called this since it speaks of the last events, referring to the final consummation of man's history. The theological study that deals with the last things of the world has received the name of Eschatology (from the Greek word 'eschatos' meaning last).

33. For the Jews, the *gentiles* comprise all other peoples and nations that are not descendents of Abraham, the chosen one of God.

The Israelites, sons and heirs of the promise, constitute a nation completely separate; the other nations are the common masses. Because of this, the word *gentile*, rather than having a religious signification, indicates the condition of being part of the *masses*.

that will pave the way for Israel's great new epoch in the service of God and mankind?

I would be inclined to say yes,<sup>(34)</sup> if it were not for a serious difficulty: the prediction that the third successor of John XXIII would be the *last pope*. It is hard to understand how the Church could exist without a head or a ruler. If there were no head, would not Our Lord have to appear to us, to achieve by His second coming the work which began with His first? That would be the *Parousia*.<sup>(35)</sup>

Or would He proceed to the great consummation supposed by the Last Universal Judgment, in which case, the *end of the times* would be practically the same thing as the *end of the world*.

Or would He only change the present state of things in such a way as to prepare the final path for the great consummation. Perhaps St. Paul refers to this when he says:

**For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. And when all things shall be subdued under Him, then the Son Himself must be subject also to Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.**

(1 Cor. 15: 25-28)

There is also another possibility: in speaking of

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34. Perhaps the fact of presenting herself at Garabandal as Our Lady of Mount Carmel, apart from its theological and mystical meaning (see the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* by St. John of the Cross), has also a mysterious reference to the nearness of the eschatological times.

Mount Carmel has been closely associated with the devotion to the Virgin from the remotest times; but it is also closely associated with the history of Israel (in the decisive hours of the Alliance) and with the activities of the great prophet of the old testament, Elias.

By appearing under her ancient title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in these modern times of the world, does the Virgin want to indicate that she will take decisive action so that the mass conversion of the Jews — that has been waiting for almost two millennia now — will be accomplished, fulfilling that way the *times of the nations*?

Does she want to point out the imminence of the final times when, according to the Apocalypse (11:3-6) the man of Mount Carmel, Elias, will make his last acts as a preacher and witness of the Lord?

These are times in which I think I find a certain mimetic likeness between the sound of the word Garabandal and the sound of the Hebrew or Arab word for Carmel. It is almost as if there were two Carmels: one from the east, and one from the west, both chosen as locations for salvation by the presence of the Virgin.

35. *Parousia* is a biblical and theological term to designate the solemn manifestation of Christ at the end of time.

the three last popes, this could refer to their reigning in Rome like their predecessors. Only in this would they be the last, since perhaps there could later be some extra-Roman pontiffs. Can this possibility be excluded?

The more I think about it, the more I favor the last hypothesis.

The Catholic Church originated in Jerusalem where St. Peter had his seat. Following the falling away of Israel after the Jews put the Messiah to death and violently rejected his works, Saint Peter went to find a place among the *nations*, the gentile people, and his seat was established in Rome which was then the undeniable head of the gentile world.

The succession of Saint Peter was then perpetuated in the Bishop of Rome who was the *Pope* of the Church and the Head of the Episcopal College. From that time the same person was both Bishop of Rome and the *Head* of the Church.

But if Rome would perish or disappear, there would be no more bishops belonging to it. And if Jerusalem would become a converted Israel, a Christian one, a *Holy City* as had so often been predicted by the biblical prophecies, it would become the *city of the great King*. Here the *word of the Lord* would *save all peoples* and the successor of Saint Peter, the Vicar of Christ, would situate himself. The center of the Church would thus return to its origin.

Rome is called *Babylon* in passages of the New Testament (I Peter 5: 13) and there are many things in the 17th and 19th chapters of the Apocalypse about its destiny . . .

Concise and explicit is the final paragraph of the famous prophecy of Saint Malachy on the popes: *In the last persecution of the Holy Roman Church the throne will be held by Peter the Roman, who will tend his sheep in the midst of Tribulations. When these have passed, the City of the Seven Hills will be destroyed, and the terrible judge will judge his people.*

Mysteries! Mysteries! Mysteries!

But we should not ignore that Garabandal, from the days of 1963, has proclaimed that we are entering into decisive times, perhaps the last that will be marked by the arms of the great clock of history.

## With the Miracle in Sight

A magnificent opportunity, prior to the coming epoch of the final times, will be the Miracle that is being foretold more and more.

Fr. Retenaga, in composing his second report in April, 1963, resumés what he has heard on the topic like this:

«Conchita affirms:



- That she knew about the miracle since October, 1961.
- That the Virgin first told it to her alone; but that she told it to the other three later.
- That it will be on Thursday, at 8:30 in the evening, and will last about a quarter of an hour.
- That on that day there would be an ecclesiastical event, and the miracle would come after that event, on the same day.

● That she would announce the miracle to the world eight days in advance.

● That, besides those that were in the village, the Pope and Padre Pio<sup>(36)</sup> would see the miracle. The Virgin did not specifically say which Pope.

● That the sick who were there would be cured, including sinners, since according to the Virgin, they were her children too.»

\* \* \*

There is a tape recorded by Plácido Ruiloba in Garabandal on January 16th, 1963. He was questioning Conchita about a letter that the girl had written to the Bishop:

«— Did you write down the date of the miracle?

— No, since at the time I didn't know it.

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36. After Conchita's prediction, Padre Pio's death in September, 1968 caused great dismay among the Garabandalistas, since they all counted on the famous Capuchin from Pietrelcina being alive and present on the day of the Miracle. Many explanations have been given attempting to correlate Conchita's prediction with the fact of his death.

Now we have some reliable information on this matter.

Conchita was dismayed also by the notice of the death of Padre Pio, who was expected to «see the miracle». But several weeks after his death, as dusk settled at Garabandal on October 16, 1968, a telegram from Lourdes arrived, carrying the name of a woman in Rome whom Conchita knew. The telegram urged her to depart immediately by car to receive something on behalf of Padre Pio . . .

Fr. Combe, a French parish priest from Chazay d'Azergues in the diocese of Lyon and a great promoter of the cause of Garabandal, was in Garabandal that day. He and his inseparable collaborator B.L. Ellos took Conchita and Aniceta in their car and set out that night for Lourdes. There on the morning of October 17, Conchita received «on behalf of Padre Pio» a short written message and a large section of the veil that had covered Padre Pio's face after his death. Carrying these presents was the Italian Capuchin Fr. B. (surely Fr. P. Bernardino Cennamo). Fr. B. had been very close to Padre Pio and his secretary Fr. Pellegrino who had signed this message that Padre Pio spoke to him a month before his death. In the message appeared the date «August 22, 1968»

Conchita took advantage of this meeting to ask, «Why did the Virgin tell me that Padre Pio would see the Miracle?»

Father B: «Padre Pio saw it before his death. He himself told us.»

These and other details about the connection between Conchita and Padre Pio can be seen in the French leaflet *Conchita Parle du Padre Pio* that Fr. Combe published.

— Since when have you known it? Since the past week?

— No, since this week. I told the Bishop about what it was going to consist, and other things . . . But not the date.»<sup>(37)</sup>

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I admit that I do not know the exact meaning of Conchita's remark about not knowing the date. The reader can make his own judgment from another passage of the recorded conversation:

«And what does your brother Serafín say about this?



Serafín

— He says that if the Miracle is not sure, that I should clearly say the truth; that he will take me away from here and bring me wherever I want. But how could Serafín think like this since I told him the date yesterday?

— Well — responded Serafín who was present there — you didn't tell me anything like the date. You told me a thing, a happening, which if it occurs will let me know the Miracle is coming.»

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Serafín himself, after reading about this in the first edition of this book, gave me some clarifications when we were in his little hotel in May of 1976.

During the winter of 1963, (the time of the crisis discussed in Part Two, and prior to the denials of

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37. I found this information in one of Maximina's letters to the Piffaré family, dated December 15:

«Look, Asunción, don't tell this to anyone. But today Conchita came to my house and told me, Look, Aunt, don't tell this to my mother, but today the Angel told me the date of the Miracle. No one except she and her oldest brother know this.»

the other girls), he felt that as the eldest brother and the *man* of the house, he should take a stand concerning Conchita.

So one night while the family was in the kitchen of the house, he said to Conchita, *You will have to tell us once and for all what this is all about; we can't go on like this. And don't be afraid of what will happen . . . I'm ready to take you away from the village and bring you anywhere you want. If you want to go to school, we can arrange that too . . . But we have to know the truth. All these things about the apparitions: Are they true, or are they something that you made up?*

Conchita replied that it was true, that she had seen the Virgin, that it wasn't something that the girls made up, and that there was no reason to leave the village . . .

The matter remained that way during the night.

But the next day, while Serafín was in the kitchen and his sister upstairs, he heard her call him, *Serafín! Come up a minute.*

The man told me he felt as if his heart missed a beat as he thought, *There it is! She has finally made up her mind. She must have thought about this all night long and is going to tell me that it has all been a fraud.*

— *What do you want?* He asked her on arriving upstairs.

— *So that you can see that all this is true, the Virgin has told me to tell you this . . .*

And she talked to him about the Miracle, and explained in what it was going to consist. Later Conchita wrote it down briefly on the back of a holy card of the Child Jesus, which Serafín keeps concealed and which none of the family has seen. And she told him that it would occur when a definite event in the Church took place, and she also explained it to him. Only in this way does Serafín know the date of the miracle.

Later Serafín and I discussed the following excerpt from a leaflet written by Dr. Puncernau:

**«During one of my trips to the pastures, I was alone with Serafín and we were eating in the barn. After eating, I tried to draw him out since**

**it was said that he knew from Conchita when the Warning would be.**

**I drew the conclusion that if he knew, he didn't want to say. The only thing that I got definitely from him was that it would be preceded by a special happening in the Church. After many questions and answers, it seemed clear to me from his vague remarks that it would be something like a schism. That is the way I understood it.»**

— *And what do you say about Dr. Puncernau's opinion?* I asked Serafín.

— He is free to think what he wants. But I don't think I gave him reasons for such an opinion.

— *But will this happening actually be a schism in the Church?*

— I have nothing to say.

During that May of 1976, I spoke also with



Jacinta's mother, María. She told me that she had heard repeatedly from her daughter that affairs were going to go very bad for the Church, that the Eucharist would constantly be given less importance, that many priests would become worse and worse, and that wickedness would spread everywhere.

It can be noticed that Dr. Puncernau does not speak of the Miracle, but of the Warning. Is this a mistake? Perhaps not.



On a day in September of 1963, some French people were invited to eat dinner with Conchita in a house near the girl's home. She was devouring pastries with the healthy appetite of girls of her age. Someone jokingly asked her about the sacrifices and penance mentioned in the message. Conchita accepted the joke in good humor and laughed. But suddenly she became quiet and seemed to concentrate; her face lit up; and with her hands joined on her chest, she began to speak:

**«The Miracle will be on the feastday of a young martyr of the Eucharist, a boy who carried Communion to persecuted Christians. His companions, on seeing him pass by, wanted to force him to stay and take part in their games. Infuriated by his resistance, they ended up hurling stones at him until he was left almost dead. Later a Christian soldier came, who recognized him and carried him in his arms.**

**One of those present exclaimed: *Oh, that's St. Tarcisius!*»**

Conchita, without saying a word, as if she hadn't heard, turned back to her pastries.

After dinner ended and Conchita had left, those at the table exchanged their impressions. The oldest in the group concluded: *It seems that Conchita saw this scene in an ecstasy, but without understanding what martyr it was. I don't think she even knows his name.* (L'Etoile dans la Montagne)

Many think that this description of the *young martyr* adequately points out the day on which the Miracle will occur; and that it is only a matter of glancing at the calendar. However, since Conchita did not tell us the date clearly, she obviously seeks to keep it a secret. By industriously sifting through material and searching through files, we will not be able to discover it. The mystery will never be revealed by mere human ingenuity. The important thing is to know how to wait and be prepared.

## One More Apparition

The year 1963 closed at Garabandal with a new visit from the Mother of Heaven. Once again she allowed herself to be seen, but only by Conchita.

It occurred on December 8th, a grand day in Spain, where the feast of the Immaculate Conception is celebrated so solemnly. And it was a big day for Conchita, since it was her nameday.

Long before the first rays of dawn had broken over the icy mountains, a mysterious restlessness — or perhaps a holy inspiration — awoke the young girl. She rose and called her mother. Soon the two of them went out on the street leading to the church. Silence and darkness had settled over the village; nothing was moving, nothing could be heard. It was 5:30 in the morning.

Before the closed doors of the church, Conchita fell on her knees in ecstasy. The temperature was freezing, not conducive to arousing fervor; but the visionary was transported from her locale. Aniceta alone was there as a witness. She heard her daughter conversing with someone, but it was not possible to understand the dialogue at the time.

Later she learned some of what had happened, when Conchita decided to speak:

**«The Virgin began by congratulating me on my feastday. And after congratulating me, she said:**

**— *You will not be happy on earth, but you will be in heaven.***

**Afterward, she told me some things . . . She spoke to me about future happenings . . .**

**— *Can they be known?***

**— *No, she told me not to reveal them.*»<sup>(38)</sup>**

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It appears that the Virgin had been making these mysterious communications to Conchita for some time, according to Maximina's letter from the previous November 10th, in which she writes to Eloísa de la Roza:

**«Conchita told me about the last locution which she had 10 or 15 days ago — I don't remember exactly what day it was. She told me there was a locution about which she couldn't say anything to anyone, not even in confession. I asked her if it was something good, and she told me that the Virgin never says anything bad.»**

\* \* \*

And so amid prophecy, hidden secrets, and expectation, 1963, Garabandal's third year slipped away.

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38. *L'Etoile dans la Montagne.*



*upper left: Conchita at age three  
lower left: on day of First Communion  
upper right: at time apparitions began*

It had begun with a tremendous upheaval, discouraging many and purifying others.

Then came months of calm and suspense.

Its days closed with words encased in mystery.

But there were some words that are very clear for every one:

**You will not be happy on earth,  
but you will be in heaven.**