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1964: Another Year of Interlude

If not much is known about Garabandal during 1963, even less is known about 1964.

The tenor of 1964 was very similar to the previous year. The visionaries continued without apparitions. At least, there are no reports of any, except for what later will be mentioned at the end of the year. In their place were the locutions, as is seen by what Maximina wrote to Dr. Ortiz in Santander in a letter dated March 9th:

«During the last days of February — I don't remember which day — Conchita had a locution. The Virgin gave her a message for some woman. I don't know what it was. She didn't tell me.»

Concerning the girl's advancing spirituality, we have testimony from Maximina, who wrote to the Pifarré family on February 4th:

«I have no doubt about this matter here, since I've heard things said by Conchita that I don't know how to explain — I can't even understand her conversation. The other day she told me that the only cross that she can have is not to love Jesus enough. She said that all the others, great as they may seem to us, have little importance. She told me this many times.»

In another letter to the same family, dated March 23rd, she remarks:

«Conchita continues having a locution every month. She is very fervent. Today she said that she wants the day to come for her to go to the convent. For she would like to go there now. If you could see how good this is . . . The world doesn't attract her at the present; although as is natural, she amuses herself, but always with the young children, and especially with my daughter and those of her age.»

The Return of Father Luis Andreu

Perhaps it was during the locution in February that once again was felt the presence of the departed Fr. Luis Andreu, the *first death of Garabandal*. On the 27th of that month Conchita wrote to his brother, Fr. Ramón:

«You asked me in your letter how we saw Fr. Luis at the Pines. We saw him looking up, saying, *Miracle!* His face was blanched and perspiring, yet at the same time, it had an expression of pleasure.⁽¹⁾ And the Virgin told us at the time that he was seeing her and the miracle that Our Lord was going to perform.

We have spoken with him about 10 or 11 times.

I have learned in a locution with the Virgin that I have to speak with him again.»

When did this new conversation between Conchita and the departed Jesuit occur? I cannot give a definite date. But perhaps it occurred more than once, since midway through the year the visionary wrote again concerning him, and mentioned astounding things in a letter addressed again to his brother, Fr. Ramón, dated August 2nd, 1964:

«On July 18th,⁽²⁾ I had a locution, and during the locution I was told that on the day after the *Miracle*, they would take your brother from his tomb and find his body incorrupt.»

Between Doubt and Hope

In the meantime, what was happening in the thoughts and feelings of the people? The witnesses who put together the book, *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*, say optimistically:

«All the evidence indicates that the entire year of 1964 was a period of secret meditation and personal retreat for the visionaries. For the people of the mountains and for the entire world alerted by the diffusion of the message, these twelve months were a halt for reflection and examination of conscience concerning one's responsibilities. Speaking humanly, one

1. Father Luis' trance — the only trance mentioned at Garabandal in which anyone besides the girls took part — occurred on the evening of August 8th, 1961. See Chapter VIII of Part One.

2. On this day the village celebrated its principal feast-day. Two years previously the miracle of the Host had occurred on this date.



“I believed when an ecstasy was in front of me.”

might say that during that year, heaven permitted the earth to catch its breath.»

The village was changing its appearance. The same book tells us:

«Land, houses, and even stables were being bought by Spaniards outside the village.⁽³⁾ The bricklayers were busy.

The interior of the church was remodeled⁽⁴⁾ . . . *Thanks to the generosity of an American*, people said.

And the attitude of the village changed along with the external changes.

Peace and harmony were only on the surface. Only the old women, with their wrinkled and withered faces still kept the benevolent look and smile of before. The seers' families were

seen with thinly disguised envy. With regard to the apparitions, discord reigned in place of yesterday's harmony.

Many wavered, finding the wait too long, since the celebrated Miracle didn't seem to be coming. The same men and women who had untiringly followed the four girls in their ecstasies, now showed themselves incapable, except for some silent old people and a few solid souls, to hold on to what they had so many times seen, heard and touched.

The people with an inordinate appetite for miraculous phenomena, had now fallen into spiritual blindness, a form of hardness of heart that could only amaze the visitor. If one were to ask them, *What about the apparitions?* they would answer, *Oh Señor! That was nothing.»*

A good example of this attitude was the statement made to Fr. Laffineur by Jacinta's mother, María: *«Yes, I believed when an ecstasy was in front of me; but when the ecstasy ended, I didn't believe any more . . . I will believe forever if the miracle happens.»* Admirable sentiment of faith!

3. Maximina's letter to the Pifarrés on June 7 says:

«They have bought so much land around here!»

4. «They have remodeled the church. The altar is beautiful.» (Maximina's letter of November 11)

Another example of the people's attitude was recorded in the book, *L'Etoile dans la Montagne*. The Spanish lawyer, who was the interpreter for the book's authors, was going down from Garabandal toward Cossío on a blistering day. On the way he met a woman of the village coming up in the scorching sun and stopped to talk with her:

— Well, Señora, how is it going?

— *It's hot, Señor.*

— Yes, it certainly is. But I mean in regard to the apparitions.

— *Oh!*

— Yes, what do they think at Garabandal?

— *Oh! They don't think anything.*

— Why not anything? I myself saw the ecstasies. And you?

— *Oh! The ecstasies! At the beginning they were true . . . but now!*

— True at the beginning, and not true now?

— *Yes, at the beginning they were true. I'll prove it to you.* (She mentioned to the lawyer something very personal that had occurred to her and her husband during one of Loli's ecstasies.) *Then it was the Virgin who appeared. Why doesn't she start appearing again?*

This conversation on the way from Cossío to Garabandal tells the story . . .

And one might wonder if the poor village people were really responsible for their ignorance because of the neglect in which they had been left by their



“She doesn't have locutions now.”

spiritual guides. But such a frame of mind deserved a lesson, and heaven gave it with its silence during the two long interludes of 1963 and 1964.

Even the *privileges* of the girls seemed to be completely interrupted during the middle of 1964. Maximina wrote to the Pifarrés on June 7th:

«**Conchita says that she doesn't have locutions now. I don't know if this is true, or if she wants to hide them, but she is happy as ever.**»

Throughout August the situation continued the same. Maximina wrote again on August 15th:

«**There is nothing new here at present.**»

The people from the village were constantly fluctuating between doubt and hope. Most of them had more doubt than hope.

It was the people from outside the village who kept the torch of Garabandal burning bright. We have many testimonies of this in Maximina's letters.

For his enthusiastic convictions in favor of the events, Fr. Luis López Retenaga distinguished himself. The village «**was a delight for him.**» He went up to Garabandal whenever he could, almost always accompanied by another priest friend, and stayed there whenever possible.

As to how the visitors acted during that year, we can gather from Maximina's lines on the feast of the Assumption:

«**Today on the feast day of our Lady there were many people in the village. I had a French woman in my home for over a month. She is very virtuous and doesn't cause me any trouble. The people are coming and they all seem to believe. Many priests have come too. An English priest stayed a whole month here; another from Llanes (Asturias), ten days; and also several French priests have come. Many French people came this year and they all seem to be very convinced about what is happening here.**»

Those who went up to the village knew that there had been an arrest in the apparitions and the phenomena; but they hoped, they went searching. What did they hope for? What were they searching for? Besides personal encounter with the world of the divine, they were certainly looking for a proper finale to all this that had promised so much . . . and had been so strangely interrupted . . .