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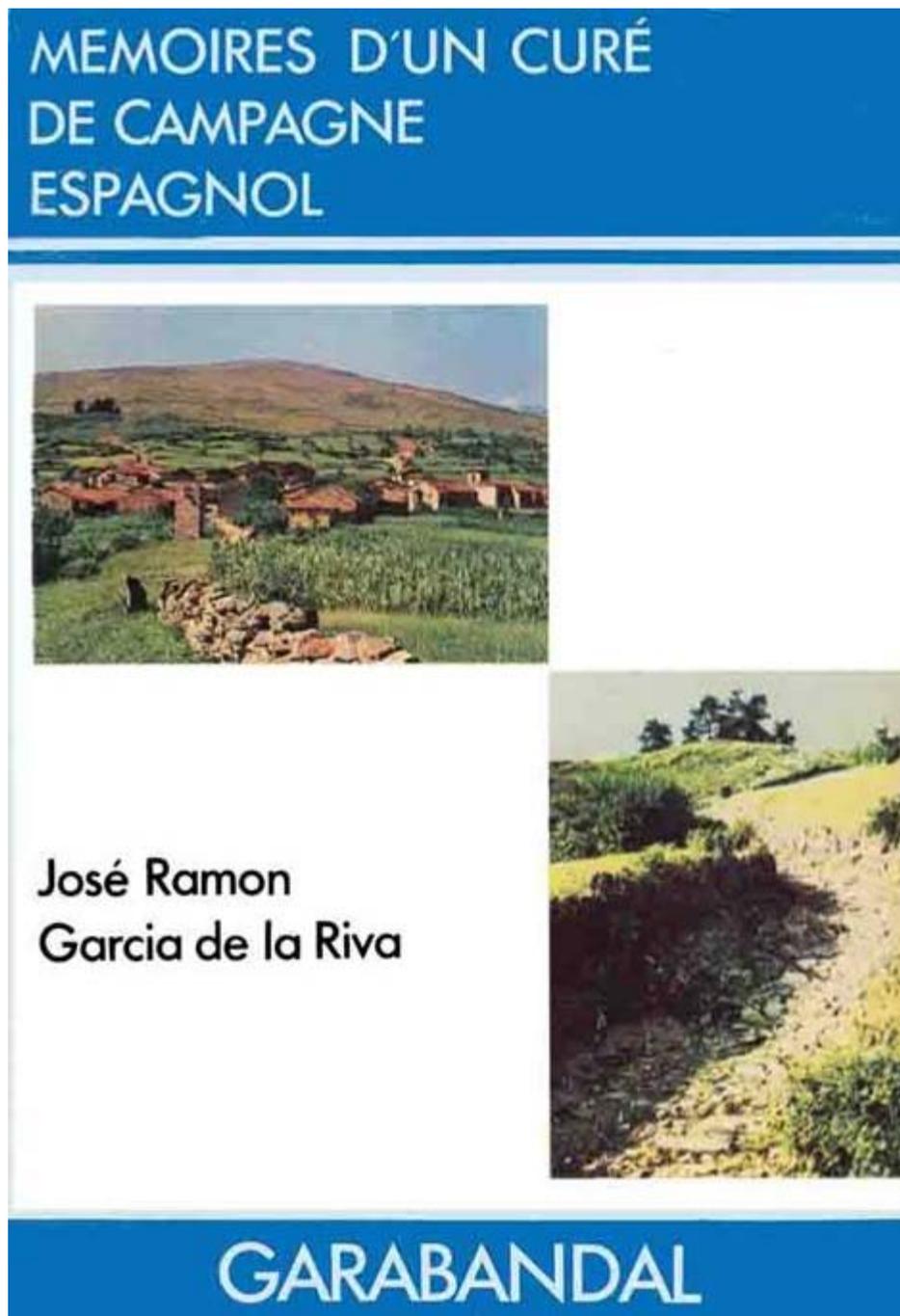
Memoirs of a Spanish Country Priest (Visits to Garabandal from 1961 to 1968)

FATHER JOSÉ RAMÓN GARCÍA DE LA RIVA

Translated from the French and Spanish

Recollections from approximately 200 Apparitions of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Michael the Archangel which I witnessed at San Sebastián de Garabandal

N.B. At the request of the Holy See, this book in its first edition in the French language, was sent by the author in May, 1971, to the Archbishop of Oviedo to be forwarded to the Nonciature at Madrid and from there to the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.



With all the love of a Spanish priest for his friends of the English language.

Also with the desire that the events of Garabandal be made known.

Signed, José R. de la Riva

Barro, June 18th, 1980

We thank Father José Ramón for the kind authorization he has given us,
signed on June 18th, 1980 (the anniversary of the first apparition of St. Michael)
to translate his book Memorias into English.

St. Joseph Foundation of Los Angeles

INTRODUCTION

Profession of Catholic faith

I make no pretense of substituting myself for our Holy Mother, the Catholic Church. Everything that I report here, I offer with filial submission to her judgment, and I submit myself in advance to her final decision.

Father José Ramón García de la Riva
Pastor of the parish of Our Lady of Sorrows
Barro (Llanes), Asturias, Spain

* * *

We state here that we have not found any reason for ecclesiastical censure with regard to condemning either the doctrine or the spiritual recommendations that have been promulgated because of the events of Garabandal in so far as they are directed to faithful Christians. On the contrary, they contain exhortations to prayer and sacrifice, to Eucharistic worship, to devotion to Our Lady under traditional praiseworthy forms, and to the holy fear of God offended by our sins. They simply repeat ordinary Church doctrine in these matters. We recognize the good faith and religious fervor of the persons who go up to San Sebastian de Garabandal, and who merit the greatest respect.

Santander, July 8, 1965

Eugenio,
Apostolic Bishop,
Administrator of Santander

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CHAPTER I

Opening Statements and the Contradictions

I am very familiar with the apparitions of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and St. Michael the Archangel in the small village of St. Sebastian de Garabandal, in the province and diocese of Santander.

I was a witness by eye, by ear also, of approximately 200 ecstasies. I heard the thoughts of the visionaries during the time of their tests, which followed the period of their absolute certainty. I have kept many letters that they wrote to me, especially at the beginning of the events. What I've seen, heard, and sometimes touched with my own hands, I now give public testimony with the humble and devout loyalty of a priest.

It is a well-known truth that God has His time and His affairs with men, even though in reality even when using them, God Himself does everything. At Garabandal, the work of God is clearly visible

if one gives attention above all to the totality of the events and the persons who are involved in them. The events follow one after the other; human beings reveal their true — character and allow us to observe their special roles. Everything and everyone involved accomplish a divine work in a manner complex and at the same time simple.

I might say that God acts, as in a marionette theatre, not to entertain, but to instruct and teach us. He directs the marionettes according to a plot He has designed, and He manipulates them according to His pleasure, depending on their submission. At times, or even frequently, men refuse to play their parts, obstruct or disturb the plot, with or without malice. Fortunately, it is always true that Providence writes straight with curved lines to portray the works of men and especially those of God.

These recollections encompass the eight years from 1961 to 1968. And so they embraced a period after 1966 — the period of the visionaries tests in regard to the truth of their apparitions. I am not going to speak at length about this, but I want to say some words here to show that God has not changed his way of writing the story of man.

In 1961, two months after the events started, the young girls in ecstasy said to the Virgin, whom they were seeing, to whom they were speaking: “How could we say one day that we have not seen you, since we are seeing you?” That was plain and logical.

Then would come the time of denials, or to be more accurate, the time of contradictions. It appears that even at the periods of their return to certainty, mysterious darkness still tortured them, in spite of their apparent peace. I have written “the time of contradictions” for at least as far as Conchita, Loli, and Jacinta are concerned — examining their answers carefully — there has never been a question of definite, absolute denial.

Who could understand this test without referring it to the mystery of Providence?

Especially if one considers what I am going to add by way of example, staying within the limits of my knowledge of the subject.

In the middle of the period of denials, or rather “contradictions” Conchita was staying in her school at Burgos and Loli in her school at Balmori, my district. Father Morelos, a priest who was Mexican and therefore spoke their language, presented to each one a picture of our Lady of Garabandal painted by an artist from his country named Octavio. Separated the one from the other by many kilometers, their response was identical. “This picture does not look like the One we saw. Our Lady does not have a crown resting on her head like this one, but a diadem of 12 stars forming a circle behind her head, starting at the bottom of her ears. She did not have her head bowed. Her hair fell on her shoulders. She did not have a waistband. On her right wrist, she carried a scapular in the form of a maniple; the bands of this were longer than those of your picture. On one side there was a mountain; on the other side a cross.”

I was present at the conversation in Balmori. When she finished, I asked the visionary a question: “Did you see her, yes or no?” She blushed and with a smile that was both embarrassed and exquisite, she answered as usual, “Well! At least that is who we say we have seen!”

That was in 1967.

One year later, on the evening of August 18, 1968, I was in Garabandal. I read a letter dated on that day which Conchita had written to a woman from Santander, in which she gave her opinion about a picture of the Virgin painted by a foreign artist. “No,” she said. “I don’t like the Infant Jesus at all. He does not resemble Him in anything. His eyes were dark brown in color. His face was not so round. His arms were more outstretched and pointing downwards.”

With regard to the Virgin, she noted: “I like her better than the one painted at Barcelona. Her face is more human and true to life, although one can never paint the Virgin the way she really is.”

At that time, if I would have asked Conchita the same question as Loli in Balmori, would I have received the same answer? It is quite possible.

I leave these matters to whomever (in the face of the apparent contradictions of the visionaries) would want to make an extensive study of the events of Garabandal.

In addition, with the sole purpose of filling in spaces in the other reports and writings, I am going to recount simply, by pen, what I have seen, what I have heard, what I have been able to testify to, having observed these things during my numerous and frequent trips to the village.

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CHAPTER II

Sacerdotal Obedience

It appears important for me to present the moral justification of my trips to Garabandal, in spite of “Notas” forbidding it and repeated warnings from the Bishop of Santander.

On August 23, 1961 I wrote to the Apostolic Administrator of the diocese which is not mine, Bishop Doroteo Fernandez of the Diocese of Garabandal itself, at a time when there was still no “Nota” on this matter. In loyalty I wanted to make him aware of my feelings about those who were said to be members of the Diocesan Commission, which I had just met in the village at the time of my first visit. (I will speak later about this meeting, which I consider very important.)

In essence, I said two things to Bishop Fernandez:

1. That I could not commend this Commission.
2. That in my opinion it should be changed.

Shortly after the first “Nota” from Santander, dated August 26, 1961, I wrote two other letters: one to my own bishop, the Archbishop of Oviedo, my diocese, Monsignor Segundo Sierra Mendez, the other to the Apostolic Administrator of Santander just mentioned. I requested from each of them permission to

make a 10 day retreat: “at a place that appeared to me to be very suitable for recollection, namely Garabandal itself.” At the same time, I expressed clearly the desire to be able to study the ecstasies carefully and on location.

My own archbishop did not answer. On the contrary, Bishop Doroteo did answer to acknowledge receipt of my previous letter of August 23.

He wrote me the following: 1. “You are aware through the press that the presence of priests is not desirable at Garabandal. As a consequence, I cannot give you written authorization.” 2. “The prohibition made in the “Nota” (of August 26, 1961) is not formal.” 3. “I thank you for your letter of August 23 and the evaluation that it gives me on the Commission.”

Concealed in a way, the words appeared clear to me: They gave me a way out, an exit, and I understood that I could use the opportunities that I had at hand.

Besides the occasions that presented themselves sporadically, but rather frequently, I went up to the village each summer for 10-15 days.

Prior to going, I would write the bishop then in charge at Santander, to notify him of my plans and to list the dates. I would add, each time, “Excellency, if you forbid me, let me know. If you permit me, it is not necessary to inform me.” I never received a negative response.

One year, not having time to write Bishop Beotia in adequate time, I called him directly by telephone.

“You can go up to Garabandal as often as you want,” he answered me, “But understand clearly that you, the priests that go up there frequently, should refrain from giving public testimony on these events.”

During the reign of Bishop Puchol, (may he rest in peace), I did not think it opportune to ask permission. I went up the road from Cosío to the village, but I did not enter the village itself. I did not cross the boundaries until after that “Nota” of March 17, 1967 which everyone knows about.

Did not the “Nota” say that everything could be explained naturally, that everything was only “an innocent game of children”? It affirmed that “nothing at all” had happened at Garabandal. Since it was like this, the prohibition obviously lacked all jurisdictional basis.

After that, I went up frequently to the place, even to the present time.

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CHAPTER III

August 22nd, 1961

My first visit to Garabandal was the consequence of a casual conversation with the Cure of San Claudio at Leon, Father Manuel Anton. He was taking his vacation at Barro where I had recently taken charge of the parish. He spoke to me about events which were taking place in a diocese near to Santander, 57 kilometers from my place. He told me that apparitions had started on the previous June 18, less than two months before my arrival at Barro on the following August 10. I questioned him briefly and the interview aroused my curiosity.

I set out with my father on a motorcycle on August 22, led on, I admit, by curiosity. As we were coming from Barro it was necessary to go up and descend until reaching Cosío, and from there climb 600 meters higher by a very bad road. At the last turn on this difficult climb Garabandal appeared, a little village of 270 people, humble, very plain, isolated to itself, but charming. In front of us, above the houses, about 200 meters higher, was a grove of 9 pine trees on the first ramp of the mountains. On the horizon at the left was Pena Sagra; we were on the foothills of the Picos de Europa.

My first question was not long in coming. "When will the apparitions take place?" Someone answered me, "Father, these strange happenings begin at nightfall. After the recitation of the rosary in the church, the children usually fall into ecstasy under the church portico."

We had to stay longer than we thought since the motorcycle which had brought the two of us, worn down after Cosío, did not want to go on. My father, who had an appointment with his doctor on the following day at Oviedo, therefore left alone by taxi. I learned later of happenings on the trip that were truly providential.

While waiting for the rosary, I familiarized myself with the winding and rocky little alleys, talking with a priest from Burgos and observing the visionaries from afar. "Three of them are 12 years of age," my companion said, "The fourth is 11; but all of them appear to have the education of 7 year old children from our cities."

The first one that I encountered was Loli. She was running around a jeep parked in front of the door of the house where she lived. Afterwards Mari Cruz and Conchita, who were accustomed to go out together. Jacinta, I did not see until the evening while in ecstasy.

I took some photographs of Mari Cruz and Loli which I carefully keep with many others. Around the neck they wore rosaries and chains with medals. Some one informed me, "During their ecstasies they give them to the Vision to kiss. They belong to persons gathered in the village, brought there by curiosity or simple faith."

"At the beginning," someone added, "They presented — for the Vision to kiss — little stones which they had picked up from the streets and which they later gave to those around them. You won't see them present these little stones anymore, for the visionaries have now gone on to religious articles."

At nightfall, on this August 22, 1961, I returned to the church near the altar of the Blessed Sacrament in the sanctuary.

It seemed simple and welcoming to me, this small church of the mountain, dedicated to St.

Sebastian, whose feast the parishioners had obtained permission to celebrate in the summer, following a solemn procession, on the 18th of July.

In the middle of the retable, above and behind the tabernacle, is the statue of the glorious martyr, commander of the Praetorian Guard of the Emperor Diocletien. On each side on a pedestal is a large statue: the one is the Sacred Heart of Jesus; the other is the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

At the entry to the church, at the right, is the altar of the Immaculate Conception. The Virgin wears a white robe and a blue mantle, which has led someone to say that this statue influenced the girls before the apparitions began. This proves that whoever said it was completely unaware of how our Lady of Mount Carmel was dressed when she appeared to St. Simon Stock in 1251, more than 700 years ago. On the other side of the church, the gospel side, there is another altar with a statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. This time — to refute completely the argument — clothed all in brown. In a dark chapel in the back of the church, behind grates, is the baptismal font.

There is a choir loft, filled with men on Sundays. The entrance is on the left side of the church. A massive tower, with bells sounding in all directions, is climbed from outside by an attached stone stairway under an overhang on the right side of the entrance. Under the portico roof is a stone bench where the pastor at the time, Father Valentín Marichalar, had the habit of sitting with his parishioners to chat a little before the services.

Now I return to my first entrance into the church. I deliberately chose the first step in the sanctuary on the left side of the altar, reflecting, “If this is from God, it is here I will see the most important things.” To a woman who had come up to the village for the first time like myself, I told my feelings. And that is what happened.

I prayed with devotion and implored Our Lord to soon clarify the meaning of these events. It was not to be that way on that 22nd of August, 1961. His judgments are different from those of men, and especially my own, because He knows in advance the best way to act and the hour to be awaited. We have already mentioned that He alone can write straight with curved lines.

On that day, as if by chance, in Garabandal were five priests from Asturias of my archdiocese of Llanes and a canon from our cathedral of Oviedo. With them was a Jesuit priest who several months later was to become one of my best friends: Father Ramón Maria Andreu Rodamillans.

The holy rosary was recited, led by Father Andreu, since he was a Jesuit religious. Before beginning he spoke some words from the foot of the altar. “These happenings are worthy of attention,” he said, “Here is a field of study for theologians, mystics, psychologists, psychiatrists, medical doctors.” However he did not speak in public of *the supernatural*. Contrary to what was falsely reported, the word was never used.

The rosary finished and the people having left the church, muffled noises could be heard outside and a voice that was repeating, “The children are already in ecstasy.”

The pastor, Father Valentín, came up to me to ask me to close the church in order to prevent the spectators from re-entering when the children came back. “It is not possible,” he explained, “To repeat

what happened on the previous days. There was such a crowd that the people climbed up on the pulpit, on top of the pews, breaking everything. They seemed to have little respect for the holy place where they were.”

I was not enthusiastic about doing what he told me, for I felt that it was impossible to control such a numerous and curious crowd. I told him so frankly. He retorted sharply, “But they’ll respect your decision better than mine. Do it.”

Arriving in ecstasy at the church, Mari Cruz tripped over the doorway and fell inside near the altar of the Immaculate Conception. The other three, also in ecstasy, fell on top of her, and formed with her a human sculptural tableau of admirable elegance. I am not able to describe it because of its incredible harmony and inexpressible splendor. Nor could I describe my astonishment. In spite of the sudden fall and the unexpected position that resulted, the girls’ clothes remained in their walking position, and their dresses covered even their knees. To the splendor and harmony of the picture was added the most exquisite Christian modesty.

Getting up without assistance and gracefulness, raised up as if by an interior force, the children left the church and made their way through the village still in ecstasy.

On my part, I returned to the altar slowly, having only one concern: to pray interiorly to the Blessed Sacrament and ask Him with insistence to enlighten the Bishop of Santander and those who were charged with studying such activities.

Several times the children returned to the church two by two: Conchita and Mari Cruz; Jacinta and Loli. They came to place themselves close to me on the first step of the altar. I had only to turn my head slightly, to see perfectly the unfolding of these phenomenon, mystical at first glance. They prayed with fervor and with a hushed voice in front of the tabernacle. All their appearance was of admirable beauty, the head tilted backwards, the face transparent, as if lit up from the interior by a light which would have been dazzling had it not been tempered by a beautiful softness.

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CHAPTER IV

Continuation of August 22nd, 1961

The Diocesan Commission

On this night of August 22nd, 1961, several members of the Diocesan Commission had gone up to Garabandal, completely incognito. I was not aware of them, and it was only later that I learned their names. There were at least two clergy, a doctor anesthetist — not a psychiatrist as has been said mockingly — and an amateur photographer.

We are going to see them “operate,” I might say, and hear them also. And I do not hesitate to express my opinion, in stating clearly that it is absolutely objective since it was mine at the time of the facts, although I was completely unaware of the identity and especially the character of those involved.

They came into the church at the same time that the children were in ecstasy in front of the crowd.

One of them, a layman, (I was to learn that he was a doctor of anesthesiology, Dr. Pinal) without further ado, said in a very loud voice:

— “So, the comedy is continuing?”

At that very moment, kneeling in front of me, Dr. Celestino Ortiz, a distinguished pediatrician from Santander who had followed the matter from the beginning, was taking Conchita’s pulse. He wanted to see if the seer’s running through the village had changed the heartbeat more than at other times. Without raising his head, and continuing his important examination, Dr. Ortiz responded tartly:

— “If there’s a comedian here, it has to be you. The sanctuary of a church is not the place to speak like this, and still less in public.”

His work finished, Dr. Ortiz got up and the two doctors recognized each other.

— “Oh, it’s you Piñal?”

— “Ortiz, we must discuss some things in the sacristy.”

— “In the sacristy, agreed. There you can tell me what you think is proper.”

And the two doctors left the sanctuary.

And so on that day the medical study of the ecstasies by the doctor of the Commission ended. As I see it, I am inclined to think that the scientific work was finished before it began... How different from the professional conscientiousness of Dr. Ortiz, a prominent pediatrician, who I had just seen on his knees next to Conchita, whispering:

— “There are no more pulses than in the normal state.”

Now I understand the trust that everyone gives to his medical observations and his conclusions with regard to the apparitions.

Let us proceed, very objectively also, to the attitude of the two priests of whom, may I be allowed to insist, I knew neither the names nor the functions.

The first went up to the sanctuary. His back turned to the Blessed Sacrament, the visionaries at his feet in ecstasy, facing the crowd, in a loud voice, he resolved the problem in a definitive manner:

— “Whatever happens, I don’t believe in this.”

The second, also in the sanctuary, was speaking with a layman and telling him:

— “I have taught philosophy for five years and theology for ten!”

Undoubtedly he wished to convince the person with whom he was speaking that he had the knowledge necessary to be entitled to express his agreement with the incredible words of his comrade and colleague of the Commission. To myself I thought, “What kind of philosophy? What kind of

theology? Had he also been by chance a professor, for example, in ascetic and mystic theology, the only one competent on that evening?"

The second priest retired and his companion greeted me with these words:

— "I am the photographer."

"Professional?"

— "No, not professional, amateur."

My heart jumped since I use a camera and know something about it.

— "Oh, your camera's automatic, with a flash and loaded with color film?"

— "Yes," he answered.

— "Look then. You are going to miss a gorgeous picture! Look at Jacinta and Loli on their knees on the altar step. What grace, what an extraordinary pose!"

— "Father, I have finished my work, I've taken the pictures that are necessary."

— "Really!"

— "Certainly."

If I would have known then that this was the photographer from the Commission, perhaps I would have lost the interior composure that the circumstances required. Why? Because I would have had the same conviction that I have today. The Commission should have been accompanied by a professional photographer to take all the pictures that were important, useful, from all possible angles. How else could the study be objective, honest, and complete?

Today I am glad to have been unaware on that evening of the identity and the mission of the four persons who remain present in my memory, as if I were still in the sanctuary of the church at Garabandal.

What did I think at the time?

— Was the layman from Santander proclaiming the comedy a doctor?

And Ortiz then?

— The abrupt and closed judgment of the first priest?

It was inconceivable. It smacked of prejudice and the ridiculous.

— The second priest?

Was he conceited or worse?

— The photographer?

He surely did not know his trade or like it.

— My conclusion?

I was not in agreement, and I held my own personal opinion.

I stayed in the church until 11 o'clock, in front of the Blessed Sacrament. I prayed, I reflected, and I also listened very attentively from my place to all that I could hear. This was not difficult, since everything was said in a loud voice and nothing appeared to be secret.

It was then that I understood perfectly, for example, pronouncements from the mouth of one of the two priests:

— “We are going to close the church to this cult.”

— “We will give Father Valentín a month’s vacation. Since he is so upset now, he will gladly accept.”

— “We will give the Jesuit priest, (*Father Ramón Andreu*) the order to leave.”

— “We will forbid priests to come up to the village.”

— “And if this comes from God, it will make its own way.”

“Really!” I said to myself, “This is a fine way of proceeding and acting, when studying such important events! Is Pilate being resurrected? In any case, this is a new Praetorium and once again the washing of hands...”

During this time, the Bishop of Santander, would have thought his delegates were working at Garabandal as true men of the church, as true doctors, and as a real photographer should work with professional and religious conscientiousness. The various “Notas” have been dictated, relying on these disputable foundations, and I have every reason to believe no other more serious, more solid efforts have been made. The visionaries have told me many times:

— “The Commission came up here very seldom; it never concerned itself with us. It questioned only some persons from the village chosen from those who didn’t believe in the apparitions or doubted them.”

I did not think that these gentlemen were concerned with me personally. I was wrong. Exactly at 11 PM, Father Valentín came up to me:

— “The Commission has ordered me to tell you that it is time for you to leave the church.”

A slight consolation, nevertheless: at the door, two policemen, placed there to keep order in case

they were needed, greeted me with a friendly smile.

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CHAPTER V

August 23rd, 1961

Pastor for a Day at Garabandal

The next morning, while leaving the portico after celebrating Mass, I saw Father Valentín about 30 meters away, conversing near a small bridge that, at that time, crossed over a narrow creek. The dear pastor left Father Ramón Andreu and immediately came up to me.

— “By order of the Commission, you must leave the village.”

— “I know that already.” I responded calmly, “And I also know that you and Father Ramón have to leave, too.”

— “No?”

— “Yes. I heard it yesterday night from the mouth of one of your two confreres. Personally, I really regret having to leave, because I had the intention of staying a little longer here. I must say that I really like this place.”

Then Father Valentín rejoined Father Ramón and the two spoke for a few seconds. He returned to me:

— “Listen. We’ve considered something else. I consider it a duty to leave to make a report to the bishop about the events of these last days. Today you will take my place as pastor. Here is the key to the church of Garabandal.”

I was not only very happy to be able to stay another day longer, but before the trust of this priest, who did not know me, I felt a great peace come over my sacerdotal heart. Other impressions both very strong and very gentle — unforgettable — penetrated my soul.

Father Ramón — we also did not know each other — came near. I took the occasion to tell him:

— “Father, I’m disposed to writing directly to the Apostolic Administrator, Bishop Doroteo.”

— “Why?”

— “To inform him of the very poor impression that this Commission has made on me.”

— “I myself was in the church last night with five or six priests from outside the diocese. We saw and heard everything. We talked about the attitude of the Commission after its departure, and even while it was acting. You are right; follow your idea. It appears good to me.”

As I said previously, on returning to Barro, I did what I had planned.

I repeat again: this day of August 23rd, spent as an interim pastor in Garabandal, remains unforgettable for me.

At nightfall, Father Ramón took me aside:

— “Father Valentín is not coming up from Cosío today. However, he brought back from Santander a decision from the bishop: the church door should be kept closed during the children’s ecstasies. No more ecstasies in the church from now on. What are you going to do?”

— “I will obey.”

And so, without expecting it, it was I, a priest from the archdiocese of Oviedo, who for the first and last time closed the door of the house of God to the young girls in ecstasy. Yes, I had to forbid them never to enter when they were seeing the Virgin, the Mother of the Jesus really present in the Tabernacle. This also was part of my unforgettable memories.

Permit me to relate something which seems particularly important. Not only was I an eyewitness, but I participated actively in an event that I can recall as if it were yesterday.

It was still the 23rd of August, 1961. After the recitation of the rosary, as was the custom, the girls fell into ecstasy under the portico. Two by two, they went through the village. In accordance with the decision from Santander, I locked the door behind me, remaining in place, waiting for what would happen. After some time, Loli and Jacinta, in ecstasy, returned to the church to enter it and pray as usual. Suddenly, apparently due to a compelling command received from someone, they stopped — abruptly, I might say — in front of me.

I was then in front of the locked door, my back turned toward it. Loli and Jacinta were in front of me, five meters away, at the entry to the outside portico. They were completely unaware, by human knowledge, of what I had done, since it was known only by the Apostolic Administrator or the Diocese Commission who had given the order, Father Valentín, Father Ramón Andreu and I myself.

Loli began speaking very distinctly and furthermore, not in a the low voice, very low, that the visionaries always had in speaking to their Vision:

— “Why is the church closed to us? . . . But we are not coming to do anything bad . . . Well! If it is not open to us, we will not enter it any more . . .”

Convinced that they certainly would not hear me, since I was not participating in their ecstasy, I responded nevertheless:

— “You are right my children, but it is necessary to obey . . .”

Loli and Jacinta, still in ecstasy, made a half turn in a docile manner, and I heard one of the persons who accompanied them:

— “Father, you are doing your duty.”

Everyone could observe that from that August 23, 1961, the seers, when they were in ecstasy, never again entered the church, strictly obeying the order from Santander, not knowing whether it came from Bishop Doroteo or the Commission alone. When their ecstatic journey brought them to the church, they went around the walls with those who were accompanying them while singing the Salve Regina or reciting their very stirring rosary. There was a time when they fell violently on their knees, risking breaking them on the threshold of the closed door. Then occurred the exquisite ceremony of the exchange of kisses with the Virgin and the end of the group ecstasy.

Then after this interdiction, Conchita and Loli, in ecstasy, never received Holy Communion in the church from the hand of the angel. He gave It to them under the portico.

I stayed another day, the third, at Garabandal. The hours didn't just pass; I felt they flew.

After that Garabandal has always revived my spirits. At that time it was most unexpected and sudden as lightening in the sky.

Also after that I used all the opportunities that presented themselves to go up again to that cherished little village where I have passed, where I still pass, the best days of my priestly life.

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CHAPTER VI

The Children in the Normal State

I have studied closely, and at great length, the four children in their normal state, and I possess numerous and interesting motion pictures and photographs. My conclusions are definite: This affair does not in any way involve young girls who are sick or showing abnormal symptoms. I say this in all honesty, referring the reader to various doctors who have performed their profession on the site with impartiality.

I can speak with knowledge of their behavior at home, at the harvest, in the pastures, in the village, during play, on the way to school, at the church, at other places. My camera and my glance followed or caught them everywhere.

They play, run, jump, laugh, like the other young girls of the village. They love innocent jokes, especially Conchita, resembling in that way her mother Aniceta in her youth. However, two things make them markedly different: their retirement at church, even when they pray as rapidly as all the other people; and remarkable modesty. They wear skirts for their age, but always sit with striking reserve. One can never reproach them for the least indiscretion with regard to feminine purity. In this matter, their modesty was pushed to the extreme. They were molded to such virtue by the Virgin herself. It is sufficient to recall the ecstasies to remember how — in postures sometimes surprising to the observers not forewarned — they concerned themselves with the proper placement of their clothes.

The attentions and even the preferences that were shown to her three companions, and especially

to Conchita, whom she liked so much to be with, caused — it seems — much harm to Mari Cruz. These gave her an inferiority complex and frustration which still remains. The gifts were for the others and especially for Conchita whom she liked very much. Did not the two of them line up two abreast from the start of the apparitions?

Why did the visitors always act this way with regard to Mari Cruz? Because she had less apparitions than the others? Because she had no more after September 11, 1962, as she still admits now at certain times. For other motives also? One day it will be known.

In any case, I repeat without hesitation: In their day-to-day life, the visionaries were simple, obedient, charitable — especially Mari Cruz who has remained that way — hardworking, humble, pure, worthy of example. If they acquired faults that they did not have at the start, the visitors are responsible; that's my conviction.

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CHAPTER VII

The Ecstasies Seen from the Exterior

I've witnessed numerous ecstasies: 200 or more. There were the four girls together, three at a time, two at a time, or one alone. The ecstatic walk was normal or was accomplished with great speed. The went forward or backward. Through the village, in all the little streets, often in the "Calleja" which ascended up to the Pines; they climbed up to the Pines or descended down from them.

I point out here the extreme astonishment of those who were witnesses of this descent from the Pines. They never took a good path.

It is known that there are no good paths for going down. Nevertheless, there are some that are better than others, although they all are bad. The little shepherds and their sheep know them well.

The visionaries descended by paths that no human, no animal would have taken, even goats. A person in good faith cannot pretend that these descents can be explained — in a natural way — especially when they were made backwards, even backwards on their knees. Especially if they were regarded in their posture — let us say uncomfortable — the figure straight and head bent backwards, the eyes fixed on their vision.

Who can dispute this "abnormal" and definitely real happening that can be studied and should be studied?

If an adversary of good faith exists, I propose to him to perform himself "the exercise" on the terrain, in the same way, under the same conditions, especially during the dark night, in the snow and on the ice. Not only one time, but almost every day, as at the time of the apparitions.

During the course of these ecstasies, in all the locations, I heard the children talk with their Vision. In a hushed voice, intimate at times, but intelligible. These conversations were perfect in the sense that it could be perfectly known that they were responding to questions from the Virgin or the Angel; or that they were asking them themselves. In the latter case, the young girls were never afraid of annoying Our Lady of Mount Carmel or St. Michael — they listened to the beloved voice with the most rapt attention.

It was evident to everyone that this was a dialogue perfectly coordinated, for the accurate convenience of the interlocutors of Heaven and earth.

On the visionaries' side, their conversations were the most varied.

They talked about everything when their turn came. From the things that they did, to those that they had heard spoken about. They recounted what was happening in the village, at their homes, in the fields, in the pastures. They requested cures, conversions, miracles. "So that the people believe us," they were heard to say. They confided to the Virgin messages written by the spectators and gave back responses to them in a clear voice in public or privately. Sometimes it was necessary to wait a more or less long time for them to obtain permission from Our Lady of Mount Carmel to repeat what they had heard at the time the questions were presented.

I have seen the little girls give rosaries, crucifixes, medals, scapulars, holy cards for the Vision to kiss.

One day in front of me at Conchita's house, Loli put on the right hand of a woman the wedding ring that at the request of the woman herself, as was the custom, she had first presented to the lips of the Virgin. Then advised by the Virgin, I saw her remove the ring from that finger and put it on the ring finger of the other hand. The spectators thought the child had made a mistake. Not so. Filled with wonder and all in tears of joy, the person involved stated, "The Virgin knows well that in the region of Valencia where I came from, the wedding ring is worn on the left hand, contrary to the Spanish custom."

Loli did not stop there. She told the wife the name of her husband, whose name was completely unknown to Loli prior to hearing it from the lips of Her who revealed it. This happened at Conchita's home, and not at Loli's, on the 12th of September, 1961, in my presence.

The entry into the ecstasies was always made in the same manner. The head was brusquely thrown backwards and did not return to its normal position until after the Apparition had left. They fell on their knees instantaneously. There was such force in their fall to the ground on the sharp or flat stones, that their kneecaps cracked as if they were broken. Spectators, and especially the mothers of the seers, were struck with fear. They entered into ecstasy as if they were struck by lightning — the word is not too strong. When they came out of it, also suddenly, they had neither a wrenched neck, nor a sore back, nor a broken bone. Not in the least fatigued, they smiled sweetly at the spectators.

The conversation with their Vision began while standing still or while marching. If they were caught up into ecstasy in their homes, they almost always went out into the village. They passed through

the little streets, went around the church, went down to the cemetery, went up to the Pines, knocked at the villagers' doors at all hours, greeted the sick — eventually also the well — knelt in front of the pictures of the departed while praying for them.

The ecstasies would seize them everywhere: at home, under the church portico, at the Cuadro, at the Pines, at the home of another visionary. It was the same when they returned to the normal state.

The ecstasies lasted from five minutes to one or several hours. There was one of seven hours.

It was marvelous to see the ease with which a young girl in ecstasy lifted up, without the least effort, one of her companions who was also in ecstasy. She would do it with a single hand, raising her companion above her shoulders, to have her kiss the Virgin when she was higher than usual. But, experimenting in the normal state, we have noticed that they were not able to lift another one up to half her height, even when using both hands at the cost of great effort.

When together in a group, they were aware that the others were walking, but each one thought that she herself was remaining immobile without taking part in the common walk.

If one of them was in ecstasy, she was seen by the others, even if they were not in the same place.

When two seers came from different places during their ecstasy, they showed their joy on meeting together, sometimes holding the other's arm to follow the same path together. At other times, the meeting passed, each one followed her own path.

One would see sometimes a group of persons accompanying a single visionary and praying behind her, while another group did the same following another visionary.

During the ecstasies, the girls recited the Rosary very slowly, very piously. These moving prayers have been recorded on a tape recorder. Those who have had the occasion to hear them have been as surprised as favorably impressed.

The girls recited these rosaries while going to the Pines or the cemetery, while making a circle around the church, while visiting the houses, or while traversing the little streets.

If during the ecstasies, one of the girls lost a shoe or slipper, another of the girls would have to put the shoe back on, whether or not this other one was in ecstasy. If one of us tried to do it, the child would take the shoe off immediately.

At the beginning, the ecstasies took place at the Cuadro, that is to say, at the square, on the path that led to the Pines. The Cuadro was the name given to the place of the apparitions in the Calleja because the young people of the village had fenced it off in the form of a square, made from tree trunks to isolate the visionaries to protect them from the crowd.

On August 8, 1961, the ecstatic marches began. On that day, according to Father R. P. Royo-Marín O.P., who was present, the little girls seemed to have wings on their feet while making their way to the church.

At the beginning, the doctors and the priests made numerous experiments to test if the children were really in ecstasy; if, for example, they were sensitive to pain: burnings, pin pricks, etc.. They were never able to make them manifest any sensation of pain. Later, to avoid abuses, the young people surrounded and protected the children with their arms. As Ceferino, the father of Loli, said: “For the tests, that’s enough for now.”

While in ecstasy, they revealed the names of certain spectators. They knew and made known the exact number of priests who were in the village at the time. One day they disclosed that there was one more priest than was seen. The person concerned was convinced, admitting that he had dressed as a layman for the occasion. For myself, one day Loli revealed my name and surnames, adding that my parish was dedicated to the Virgin.

To other persons, the girls revealed facts from their past, without omitting certain secrets of conscience.

Generally the end of the ecstasies occurred in the following manner. As one could surmise from their gestures — the girls told about it later — the visionaries kissed the Holy Virgin on both cheeks. Then they made their extraordinary sign of the cross. They bowed their heads slightly and returned to the normal state, smiling gently. No other manifestation, or other unusual gesture. Immediately calm and always smiling, they answered the questions of the persons surrounding them.

Regardless of the length of the ecstasy — there were some very long ones that I am going to mention — the young girls always had the impression they only lasted a brief moment — “un poquitín” — as they repeated.

One could hear them say at the end to the Virgin, “Do not leave yet. Stay. Un poquitín más.” (a little bit longer)

Sometimes Conchita went even farther. I only noticed this at her home. She made the sign of the cross intentionally wrong. She restarted several times while smiling. Finally, she made the sign of the cross correctly and the Virgin left.

Truly, as Father Luis Andreu repeated before dying: “We have a very good mother in Heaven. We should not fear the supernatural. The children have taught us how we should comport ourselves toward her, having a child-like confidence in her.”

The end of the ecstasies was very beautiful. Even when one has seen it, one cannot describe it

exactly.

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CHAPTER VIII

The Nature of the Ecstasies

I have some letters from Conchita making illusion to a question that I had her ask the Virgin on the subject of the nature of the ecstasies at Garabandal.

She knew absolutely nothing of this question — and that was my entire wish. It will be seen that she was not alone in this matter. I am going to try to explain this clearly.

I adopted a terminology of my own invention, making use of a case that could be called classic. I only wanted that she would help me to resolve the problems I was posing to myself in using words that I was employing according to my personal conception of things. Neither Conchita nor any other person would be able to discover this.

Then I said to Conchita only these words:

— “Ask the Virgin if it is perfect or imperfect.”

She answered, “What do you want to say?”

— “Simply what these words mean.”

According to my opinion, but without pre-judging the decision of the Church in this matter, ecstasies of a supernatural divine type were taking place at Garabandal. Therefore, speaking then to Conchita, I used the words ‘perfect’ and ‘imperfect’ in making an abstraction of the supernaturality of the divine order of the events.

Furthermore, at that moment, I thought that the ecstasies that I was calling ‘perfect’ had to leave traces of pain with the ecstatic person.

I was considering on my part as ‘imperfect,’ the ecstasy that took place with or without total loss of the senses, and in both cases did not leave any trace of fatigue or illness in the bodies of the girls.

Then it was this ‘imperfect’ — according to the vocabulary that I had designed myself — that I would verify. Conchita should then respond on the part of the Virgin, “It is ‘imperfect.’”

Granted:

In the first place the ecstasies lasted an hour, sometimes several hours. Obviously the positions taken by the seers could not be maintained for such a length of time even by vigorous persons in the normal state, How could it be possible for children — healthy certainly — but still so young? Furthermore, on leaving the ecstasies they had an extraordinary freshness and were more vibrant than

they had appeared before. Far from being exhausted, they went back to work, as if nothing had happened.

Although sleeping soundly at times, they ordinarily slept very little. Because some ecstasies lasted a long time and were repeated often; because most of them took place at night; because the children in order to see the Virgin, and also in the spirit of sacrifice, remained in the kitchens, sleeping completely dressed, leaning against the wall. Because those who were not in ecstasy even during the night accompanied their companions who were in ecstasy. On the contrary, on certain occasions, the eyelids closed, although for the most part, this was not observed. Usually their hands were perfectly rigid. At other times one could make their fingers move, before becoming immediately rigid. The ankles and the feet always had their normal play. As for the hands and face, sometimes they were warm, at other times they were not.

Due to my personal conception of things, and my terminology (which was at the least unusual) the two cases that I am going to describe gave me something to ponder and left me perplexed.

I will express myself in another way. If one wills, here is the same question like that employed in the words 'perfect' and 'imperfect.' The ecstasies were they of a major or minor level according to the supernatural order? Being understood that for me those of a major were identical to 'perfect' which would lead the ecstatic into painful residuals and leave them with vestiges of fatigue and illnesses (things they never showed).

One day Conchita wrote me: "The Virgin did not answer me on the subject of 'perfect' and 'imperfect.' She will tell me later."

Another letter followed: "The other day, without my asking her, the Virgin told me concerning the matter of 'perfect' or 'imperfect,' it was 'perfect.'"

On my return to Garabandal in the kitchen in front of Aniceta, I thought of the courtesy of Our Lady who answered on her own initiative, and I said:

— "Then, Conchita, the Virgin has really said it was 'perfect'?"

— "Yes. The Virgin told me on the subject of 'perfect' and 'imperfect,' it was 'perfect.'"

— "Good, Conchita. But this answer completely demolishes my idea because I had thought it was imperfect."

Aniceta intervened instantly:

— "Conchita, didn't I tell you that you should say 'imperfect'?"

This was the answer of the child of 12 and a half years:

"I don't know what this subject of perfect and imperfect is about. What I know is that the Virgin

told me ‘perfect.’”

It remained then for me to secretly correct my conception of things and my made-up terminology by accepting the lesson of mystical theology the Virgin had given me. To admire also the absolute loyalty and exemplary firmness of Conchita, who without understanding either my thought or my terminology had remained — in spite of her mother Aniceta — a very faithful messenger of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

I had previously mentioned that the children slept in the kitchen with their clothes on, so as not to miss the company of the Virgin. They were well aware that, after having said that she would come at night, if they were in bed, she would respect their sleep. And they ardently wanted to see her.

They knew also that after having said that she would come during the night, regardless of this, the Virgin wanted them to obey their parents if they ordered them to go to bed.

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CHAPTER IX

Noteworthy Ecstasies

Jacinta Points Out the Priest's Presence

Among the people who went up one day with us to Garabandal was a Military Air Force Chaplain. He was wearing only the insignias of his rank of Captain and he asked the priests present not to tell the girls that he was also a priest. His desire was carefully respected.

That night Jacinta fell into ecstasy and the pastor, Father Valentín, as was his custom, asked her how many priests were present. The girl gave the correct number of those in cassocks and added, “And one of those who go by plane. This is his name.”

Returning home with us at 4 o'clock in the morning, the chaplain could not stop telling me of his astonishment and emotions.

Conchita and the Dedicated Photo

One day, during the month of September, 1961, I was in the grocery store of Primitiva González. Through the window that overlooked the street, I could distinguish Conchita in a group of people. I went over to the crowd and told the girl, when she was finished with the visitors, to come into the kitchen. She rejoined me right away.

I had in my hand 5 or 6 photographs of the girls that I had taken on my first trip to Garabandal on the preceding August 22, 1961.

— “Conchita, do you know these children?”

— “Yes,” she answered teasing, “They are some girls from Cosío.”

— “Since it is of you, you can keep them. And you can give one to Mari Cruz since she also is in the photograph.”

— “Thank you, Father.”

Then becoming suddenly excited, she excused herself, saying, “I have to go.”

And she disappeared. (At the time I still was unaware of the “calls.”)

Then I remembered that one of the pictures that I had given her was dedicated and addressed to a priest from Burgos whom I had accompanied to Garabandal on the previous August 22nd.

I asked the daughter of Primativa, if there was a way to send her child to find Conchita, in order to ask her to give back the dedicated picture in exchange for another one. But Conchita was already in ecstasy. Her mother had tried to take the 5 or 6 pictures from her hand and was able to take all except the one Conchita held in the same hand throughout the duration of the ecstasy.

When I learned that Conchita was in ecstasy, I went to find her in order to take some pictures. It was 5:30 in the afternoon. Not having a flash unit on my camera, I had no pictures of an ecstasy — at that time, those occurred during the night when I was in the village. I took some photos and when the film was used up, I sought a place in the shade to change rolls. When this was done, the visionary had returned to the normal state.

Someone came up to me.

— “Conchita is looking for you. The Virgin has given her a message for you.”

— “Where is she?”

She could not answer me.

I went then to her house and there I saw her surrounded by some of my parishioners who had accompanied me on that day. Leaving the crowd immediately, she came up to me.

— “Father, the Virgin told me to give you back this picture, since you gave it to me by mistake.”

My jaw dropped, not knowing what to answer her. Then I got a hold of myself.

— “I think that is just what I wanted to tell you myself.”

I gave her a gift of a similar picture that was not dedicated. And Conchita departed to go back to the crowd she had left.

Loli Photographs the Virgin

Here is an account of a photograph of which I was likewise an eyewitness. Permit me to recount

the details for without knowing them some readers might be puzzled.

On the 12th of September, 1961, I was present in Conchita's house during a very long ecstasy of Loli and Jacinta, lasting from midnight until four in the morning.

It is already known that among the spectators many were the men and women who gave the children (before the arrival of the Virgin) religious articles to be presented when the time came for them to be kissed by Her lips. I myself had confided all that I had at hand to be kissed and to this day I cannot explain what motivated me to give my camera to Conchita during the ecstasies of Loli and Jacinta.

(Notice that Conchita herself was not in the ecstatic state, and I repeat that one could not communicate with the visionaries in ecstasy unless it was through one of them who was not.)

Loli received the camera although Conchita did not tell her what it was.

Immediately, without hesitating, Loli placed the camera before her eyes and it was heard:

— “I am going to take your picture.”

Then there was reflection.

— “What a funny apparatus. I don't see you.”

But right away, as if she had received instruction from the Vision:

— “Oh, I have to push a button?” (The camera was in its case)

She searched for the latch with her fingers and opened the case.

— “Now I see you good.”

It could be seen that she had received instructions again, since she stated,

— “Oh I have to push another button?”

(My camera was a pocket Kodak with a bellows. The bellows had to be pulled out to use the camera.)

She pushed the button, pulled out the bellows, and again brought the camera to eye level.

Everything was done without haste, very calmly. Her head held backwards, Loli kept her eyes fixed on the Vision, never looking at what her hands were doing. It was obvious that she was following mysterious instructions.

She spoke:

— “Oh, I must wind the spool?”

Her fingers searched on the right side, at the bottom of the camera for the film advance lever, and

wound the film, unaware, obviously — for she knew absolutely nothing about cameras — that without this operation, there would be a double exposure.

After that came the instruction to lower the device in order to operate the camera. She did this, but not immediately. It can be seen that if all these operations were done correctly, she should have taken some time.

Everything finished, without forgetting to snap the shutter, she restarted the series of actions necessary to take two more pictures. This time, it was with greater dexterity and without receiving new instructions. Loli operated the camera rapidly, as if she knew it perfectly, like one accustomed to its use.

I did not pay much attention to these photos taken by Loli. It was sometime later that I sent the film to be developed. My first impression was, as would be expected, that there would not be a positive result. And that for two main reasons. First of all, Loli had taken the pictures inside Conchita's house without a flash, with standard film, by the light of the small bulb that illuminated the kitchen. Besides, cameras are made only for filming things or persons naturally visible.

When the film was returned, I sent the pictures by letter to Loli, writing in jest, "Since you have taken the photographs yourself, when you see the Virgin, ask her why they didn't come out better, since I see nothing there."

Three months later, Loli admitted to me that she had never remembered to talk to the Virgin about the photos. Finally she did so. Here is what she stated:

— "The Virgin assured me that she was well-photographed and she showed me where she was on the picture. When I asked her why she could not be seen better, she answered, "Because, even if the picture had come out perfectly, they would still not believe."

In regard to these pictures, I know a person who later made an experiment. In a pile of holy cards, she slipped in the one they had the custom of calling "The Virgin's Photograph." Obviously Loli knew nothing about it. She went into ecstasy, taking it together with the other articles, placed on the table by the spectators. She started to present the holy cards for the Virgin to kiss.

Coming, without knowing it, to "The Virgin's Photograph," she was seen to hesitate. The she spoke:

— "Oh it's the picture where you found yourself?"

In my opinion, this story of the photograph has a special interest of technical character, one might say.

Before the episode in Conchita's kitchen, Loli was absolutely incapable of using any camera, especially mine. And eight days after the brilliant result in that kitchen, she became absolutely incapable of repeating it in her normal state. I verified this myself at her home, in the presence of her father, Ceferino, by placing my camera in Loli's hands. She no longer knew anything at all about it.

An experience of a technical character. Yes. On instructions from the Virgin.

The young girl — she was 12½ years old — had done everything exactly as she had to do it. The first time, with the length of time necessary to execute the instructions received; afterward she had worked with the rapidity of a professional.

Five operations in total: taking the camera out of the case, advancing the film, extending the bellows, cocking the shutter, and releasing the shutter.

Why had I handed my camera on that night to Conchita so that she could give it to Loli? I still do not know, I have said. On the other hand, I remember as if it were yesterday that on the very same night, Loli revealed to the spectators my complete identity. First of all, my last name, following that my first name, then my second name, while indicating that it comprised three words. She even added that my parish church was dedicated to Mary.

All of this was absolutely accurate. On that day in September, 1961, Loli could not talk about me that way through human knowledge.

Conchita and the Glass of Milk

One day Conchita was eating near the elevated kitchen fireplace on a small stool where she usually sat.

Suddenly Loli came inside in ecstasy and said to her:

— “Conchita, the Virgin says you should finish quickly, since she is going to come to see you.”

Conchita sped up her motions a little, and then as she lifted her glass of milk, to everyone’s surprise, she fell into ecstasy, the glass of milk in her hand. She came down slowly from the fireplace, and at the doorway of the house, she started running swiftly toward the church. She stopped abruptly in front of the portico. There they were able to take the celebrated glass of milk from her hand. To everyone’s surprise, not a drop had been lost.

I was present at this ecstasy in the kitchen, but I did not leave to follow the child to the church.

Loli Forces my Hand

After August, 1961 the children started to carry a crucifix with them.

From the first ‘call’ they went to their homes to get it and they hid it in their clothes. At the third ‘call’, the ecstasy very near, they put it in their hands. The ecstasy having begun, their first gesture was to offer it to the Virgin to kiss. Sometimes they themselves kissed it and then presented it to the lips of the spectators, not always to everyone. Furthermore it happened that they made the sign of the cross on one or another.

We were in Conchita’s kitchen and Loli was in ecstasy. Outside the open window, she held out a crucifix to be kissed by the persons who were outside of Anecita’s house. The owner of the crucifix, a woman, was with us in the kitchen. For her — it would not be understandable otherwise — it was a veritable relic, and above all she was afraid of losing it.

— “My crucifix. My crucifix,” she repeated like a spoiled child.

Conchita, who was not in ecstasy, got upset.

— “What an impertinent woman! Give it to her one and for all.” And coming up to Loli, she carefully took the crucifix from her. Finally satisfied, the woman went away with her treasure.

Loli herself remained without a crucifix, facing the open window, her hands together on her chest, in front of those who were looking in from outside.

A few seconds later, she was heard to say:

— “Conchita, the Virgin says to ask something from Father.”

At that time I was the only priest present in the kitchen, near the entry door, my hands in my pockets.

My interior reaction was immediate, and I thought secretly;

— “Loli, if you yourself do not ask me for it, I will not give it to you. I require this proof from you. I am waiting for you.”

Here are some details which appear useful to comprehend what happened. I did not have the custom of carrying a crucifix on my person. By chance, on that day I had one in the right hand pocket of my cassock and I was holding it tightly clenched in my hand. It would be seen what was going to happen. In any case I waited as long as it was necessary, looking from afar at the visionary who had her back turned to all of us.

Had not Conchita heard or understood Loli’s question? Perhaps, since she did not ask anything from me.

Then Loli, still in ecstasy, turned herself half way around, came toward me and stopped in front of me. With an amazing motion of her right arm, with a astonishing suppleness and an unbelievable agility, she introduced her right hand into the right hand pocket of my cassock. She reached my hand firmly closed on my crucifix, opened it in spite of me, leaving my hand in my pocket and withdrawing the crucifix from its hiding place.

Another important detail: the opening to this pocket allows me to affirm that with my hand placed where it was, it was not humanly possible to introduce another hand, even as small as hers.

When I recall the scene, I believe the cinema has never filmed anything that could be compared to the superhuman beauty of Loli’s movements on that occasion. That beauty and superhuman strength of the child amazed me so that with my hand unclenched and my crucifix gone — overcome — I told her, “Take it. Take it. That’s enough proof for me.”

One last remark. At times the hands of the seers did not have their normal temperature. At the moment when Loli, in a naturally inexplicable way, put her hand into the pocket of my cassock, the temperature was normal.

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CHAPTER X

The Angels at Garabandal

We find the first mention of an angel at Garabandal is Conchita's diary when she tells it to us with a marvelous description: (June 18, 1961)

Suddenly a very beautiful figure appeared to me, shining brilliantly, without hurting my eyes.

Concerning June 24, 1961, Conchita wrote:

We never heard him speak.

That day we saw a banner underneath him. On the first line was written:

— It is necessary etc . . . And on the last line there were Roman numerals.

Then on July 1:

I come to announce to you a visit by the Virgin under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, who will appear to you tomorrow, Sunday.

Very happy, we told him, "Let her come right away!"

He smiled, and we said to him, "What is the meaning of the inscription?"

"The Virgin will tell you."

That day he talked to us about many things.

He recalled that on the first day Jacinta, Loli and Mari Cruz were about to call my mother, thinking I was having an attack . . .

He stayed two hours with us, and to us that seemed two seconds.

Then he told us, "I will return tomorrow with the Virgin." And he left . . .

Here is the description that Conchita made of the Angel:

He was dressed in a long flowing tunic without a belt. His wings were rather long, very lovely, pink in color. His face was neither long nor round; his nose was handsome; his eyes dark; and the face tan. His hands were fine with short nails: his feet weren't seen.

On July 2, a new mention of an angel. Another angel accompanies the Virgin, but the girls did not know who it was.

Sunday, July 2nd came. It was 6 o'clock in the evening. We were going to the Calleja to recite the rosary.

We had not arrived when the Virgin appeared to us.

Two Angels accompanied her. One was St. Michael; the other we did not know. He was dressed like St. Michael. They looked like twins.

On the right side of the Angel, at the same height as the Virgin, there was an eye of great size; it looked like the Eye of God.

We know very little about the second Angel. He only appeared one time during the first visit of the Virgin; no other mention was to be made. (In the summer of 1976 Jacinta told Father Eusebio García de Pesquera that the second angel was St. Gabriel.)

We know from Conchita herself, that the other angel was St. Michael. He appeared as an ambassador for the Virgin and later as a catechist for the visionaries, particularly for those things that related to the reception of Holy Communion, as we shall see later.

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CHAPTER XI

The Mystical Communion

In the beginning of the apparitions, the Angel (it was always St. Michael the Archangel) undertook by himself to prepare the children for receiving Holy Communion.

Quoting again from Conchita's Diary:

From the beginning of the apparitions the Angel gave us hosts that were not consecrated. We had already eaten and still he gave them to us, for they were not consecrated. This was to teach us to receive Communion well.

One day, he asked that we return at an early hour to the Pines, fasting, and to bring a young girl with us. We brought a young girl and did what he asked.

When we arrived at the Pines, the Angel appeared. He held a ciborium which seemed to be gold and he said to us: "I am going to give you Communion. The Hosts are consecrated."

"Recite the 'Confiteor.'" We recited it, then he gave us Communion and told us to make thanksgiving to God. He then had us recite with him 'Anima Christi' which we did.

After this prayer he told us: "I will come tomorrow to give you Communion." Then he left.

When we told this to the people some did not believe, especially the priests, because they

said that an Angel can not consecrate.

When we saw the Angel again, we repeated what the people told us and he answered us that he took consecrated Hosts from the tabernacles of the earth. But some persons continued to doubt in spite of these explanations.

The Angel gave us Communion like this for a long time.

Later, it appeared that Conchita and Loli received Communion alone: Conchita at the Pines, at the Cuadro, under the porch roof of the church; Loli at the same places, except at the Pines. At least, I think so, because I was not aware that Loli had received Communion at the Pines from the moment that the two visionaries alone continued to receive Communion from the hands of the Angel.

Each time it was a “Mystical Communion” which means that beside Conchita and Loli, (also the two others previously) no one was able to see the Host Itself.

One could see perfectly and hear the rest. They made the Sign of the Cross, recited the ‘I Confess to God’ (Confiteor), spoke a little with the Angel, stuck out the tongue, closed the mouth, moved the jaws, swallowed, and recited the prayer of thanksgiving of St. Ignatius, ‘*Anima Christi.*’

The Communion ended, they came out of the ecstasy which did not last more than 10 minutes.

I’ve seen many of Loli’s mystical Communions, but only one of Conchita’s. I’ve taken many photographs. All were under the portico of the church, except for Conchita. I asked her, I remember, to request the Angel that the ecstasy take place at a place on the portico where I could take a pretty snapshot. Unfortunately, it took place where I expected the worst. The child fell on her knees, leaning on the door of the church, and in order to obtain the picture that I now possess, I had to climb the stairway which leads to the tower. I found myself in the shade with a blinding sun in front of me. It was the same every time with Loli. I had to work always against an intense light.

I asked the children how the Angel could give them Hosts really consecrated, since he could not consecrate them himself. They posed the the question to him and he answered that he took the Hosts from the Tabernacles of the earth.

I myself observed that the Angel did not give Communion if the curate Father Valentín, or a priest duly delegated to be a parish minister at Garabandal, was present and performing his duties. That is the conclusion of a study that I completed.

It is that which authorizes the response one could make to the following question: “How is it possible that the Angel played a role in a ministry not proper to him, which is not his own?”

He fulfilled this duty as an extraordinary minister when it was not possible for the ordinary minister to do it himself; never on another occasion.

Similar to Fátima, an Angel was delegated at Garabandal to carry and distribute Holy Communion, using Hosts consecrated by priests on earth.

The Virgin Mary, though she is the Immaculate Conception, Mother of God, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, Queen of Heaven, Mediatrix of All Grace, Co-Redemptrix, Absolute Perfection, Conqueror of Satan, was not present at the Last Supper, being faithful to Scripture in what the Apostle said was the role of a woman.

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The Calls, Prediction and Accomplishment of the Miracle

On July 2, 1962, I went up to Garabandal, intending to stay four days. That's what I did, not returning to Barro until the evening of July 5th.

On the afternoon of July 2, I was with the visionaries at the Pines. They were playing around the trees and I was seated near to them, very content to observe their joyousness. They were playing with all their hearts, as normal in that as they were in everything else, at school, in the church, in their work in the fields, at home, in everything.

Their joyousness at that time was equal to that which they felt, but tried to hide, when they had their famous "calls" about which I should say a few words before proceeding further.

The "calls" were mystical announcements which were felt in the interior of the girls. In order not to show them exteriorly, so that those around them would not be suspicious, they tried to hide them, to disguise the mysterious effects which they caused in them. But those who had some experience in the ecstasies because of going frequently to Garabandal, understood perfectly what was happening. They were not unaware that there were three "calls," nor that at the last one, the ecstasy was imminent, almost immediate. It is certain also that sometimes the children specially confided in chosen persons, even advising them of the time. "I've had a call"; or again, "The second call has come."

One can easily see this type of joyous excitement, the happiness of the "calls" on an 8 millimeter film of the early apparitions, at a time when few recognized these "mystical premonitions". On it can be seen the two Andreu brothers, the Jesuit priests. It appears to have been taken on the day, or rather the evening of the morning of the death of one of the two, Father Luis. There are many copies of this film throughout the world. In spite of their efforts to hide it, the interior joy of the young girls reflects externally. Though they were not yet in ecstasy, their exterior appearance foreshadowed it since they looked altogether different than in their normal life.

I'm returning now to the scene up above at the Pines, after this digression which is only the half of it because the joyfulness of the children was similar to that of the "calls."

Suddenly, Conchita left the group, came up to me and without an introduction spoke unexpectedly:

— "Father, I am going to tell you in what the Miracle of the Angel consists!"

Certainly curious, but refusing to show my feelings, I responded:

— “Conchita, if it is a secret, you shouldn’t reveal it to me...”

Then I saw her return to the other three girls, as if to consult them.

— “Shouldn’t he be told?”

All three, without leaving the place where they were playing, (the area that was called the Virgin’s Pine) agreed.

— “Yes, someone should tell him.”

Then I got up and said to them:

— “All right. But you are going to talk individually. Come here one at a time.”

Conchita spoke first, then her companions. One after the other. They all told me the same thing.

— “They are going to see the ‘Host.’”

In other words: “Up until now, when the Angel gives us Communion, no one ever sees the Host on the tongue. At that time, it won’t be that way. They will see It.”

Without anyone telling me that only Conchita would be the object of this favor, or giving me the exact date, (although no one yet knew what comprised this “milagruco” — little miracle — as Conchita said) without expecting it in the least, I was informed of the secret of the four seers. I knew that a day would come when the spectators would see with their eyes a consecrated Host on the tongue receiving It.

This happened on July 2, 1962, in the afternoon at the Pines. At that time Conchita herself did not yet know the exact date. She didn’t tell me anything more, although I had to leave Garabandal on the July 5 to arrive that evening at my parish in Barro. Although I was the first one to be advised of the nature of the miracle of the “Host” I did not know more about it and I was not able to be at the rendezvous of the Angel on the night of the 18th to 19th of that month.

Coming down from the Pines, Loli revealed the news about the nature of the miracle to her father, Ceferino. Conchita heard about it and was very irritated.

— “Now,” she said to her mother in their kitchen, “There certainly won’t be a Miracle because Loli has told it to her father...”

The “milagruco” (little miracle), in spite of Conchita’s disappointment at the time, happened anyhow. Reading the report in her Diary:

When the 18th of July came, the village was filled with people. Everyone wanted to see the miracle. That day was the village feastday. A dance was taking place near my house, but in two neighboring houses, groups of people were reciting the rosary.

Some people, during this time, tried to stop the dance. They said if the dance continued, there would not be a miracle. One of those who wanted to stop the dance, Ignacio Rubio, asked me if I wanted the dance stopped. I answered him.

— “With the dance or without the dance, the miracle will take place.”

Then there was no further discussion on the subject of the dance.

The evening having come, people were restless because it was getting late. On the contrary, I was not afraid since the Virgin and the Angel had said that the miracle would take place; for never had the Virgin or the Angel announced something to me that did not happen exactly.

At 10 o'clock at night, I already had a call. At midnight, another call. Then at 2 o'clock in the morning, the Angel appeared to me in my room at home. At the time I was in the company of my mother, my brother Aniceto, my uncle Elias, my cousin Luciuca, and a young girl from Aguilar del Campo, María del Carmen Fontaneda.

And the Angel was with me for a while. And he told me, as on other occasions: “Pray the ‘I Confess’ and think of Whom you are going to receive.” And I did this and afterwards he gave me Communion.

And after giving me Communion, he told me to recite the ‘Anima Christi’. And to make my thanksgiving, and to hold out my tongue with the Sacred Host until he left and the Virgin would come. And I did it like this.

And when the Virgin came, she told me, “They all still do not believe.” And she told me to pray the rosary, and I prayed it.

This was a “big” miracle. There were numerous eyewitnesses on that memorable night. A dozen of them gave their names and their addresses, offering to be called to give their testimonies. It sufficed to interview on this matter for example, Father Valentín or Dr. Ortiz from Santander. In reality, among those who had “really seen,” there was not a person at that time who would affirm the contrary.

Conchita had written to the Bishop to tell him that he should be present in the village on that day, also the Abbot Odriozola, one of the members of the Commission. Neither the one nor the other responded to the invitation and the delegate who replaced them did not see the miracle with his eyes because of the mob that prevented him.

Who would be surprised? God, alone, can make the conditions. Those who were called to the miracle by name were not present. Those who ought to have been there were absent: the door of the Bishop was closed to the light . . .

Also, after this extraordinary “event” some ecclesiastics spread the news that everything was a fraud, and the most absurd explanations were spread abroad everywhere . . .

We defy anyone to contradict the qualified eyewitnesses of the Miracle of the Host. They were there at the place, they “saw with their eyes,” they made their reports, they are ready to be burned alive to testify to the truth of the “event”.

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CHAPTER XIII

Conchita’s Mystical Communion at the Pines

One day in the month of August, 1962, Father Valentín, who was staying in the valley at Cosío, gave permission for Father Luis Retenaga, from Renteria, another basque priest like myself, and me to celebrate mass in the village church, but on the express condition that all the doors would be closed, locked to those who were outside.

Father Retenaga celebrated the first mass; I the second; and I was serving for that of my fellow basque priest.

Praying to the Virgin, I asked her one request:

— “Our Lady, if we are not able to give Communion to Conchita, let the Angel give It to her. Permit us to have this proof that the Mystical Communions are truly authentic. You know as I that the children really desire to receive Communion, but because of their occupations, it does not always happen.”

After a while, I noticed that some people were talking outside the church. By the noise and the talk that they made, it was obvious that their number was increasing. They tried to enter, knocking at the door, then they stayed where they were, talking under the portico.

I appealed a second time to the Virgin.

— “Mother, let it be possible for me to leave this church in order to advise Conchita that she has an opportunity to receive Communion after the last mass.”

That said, I began to pray with devotion three Hail Mary’s . . . Did I have time to complete the last? I don’t remember, but I perceived clearly that the noise outside had stopped as if by magic... I went to the door, bent down and looked through the keyhole. I saw no one. I opened the door cautiously, cast a glance at the stone seat attached to the wall. There was no one moving. Without hesitating I ran down the path that went toward Mari Cruz’ house, to take the alley leading to Conchita’s home. There was no one around. Everything happened as I had wanted. I arrived still running at Anecita’s house. She was preparing the basket for the donkey who would take Conchita to the mountain with the lunch for her brothers.

— “Aniceta, Aniceta, where is Conchita?”

She raised her head, looked at me sternly, and answered in a rather sharp way:

— “You priests, you are going to spoil my daughter. I don’t know how long a time she has been at the Pines with some others like you. Now she should be taking lunch to her brothers who need to eat now.”

— “I’m coming to tell Conchita that if she wants to receive Communion, we can give It to her now...”

I did not have time to finish the sentence...

— “Receive Communion! Receive Communion! Duty comes before devotion! One thing matters! It is more important for her to bring dinner to her brothers, who must be waiting impatiently...!”

At that very moment, Conchita arrived. She was accompanied by three ecclesiastics, who being seen against the sun, seemed to me to be Carmelite priests.

Anita sternly scolded her child.

Humbly, her head down, the child attempted to talk:

— “The Angel gave me Communion.”

— “The Angel, the Angel,” murmured Aniceta, very upset. “All right, go now, it is your brothers’ lunch time.”

Why did Aniceta look at me immediately? Who could say? In any case, I had to disguise my feelings, for I could not hide my joy. I was too elated to thank the Virgin right then for giving me these two proofs which I had requested from her on the subject of the authenticity of the Mystical Communion; for hearing me so swiftly and in a manner so unexpected.

It remained for Aniceta and myself to sit down to hear the new arrivals. They had but one desire, to recount what had just happened at the Pines.

— “Aniceta, you’re wrong. We are not priests, but hospital Brothers of St. John of God. Never could we have hoped for something more extraordinary than that which happened to us. Listen to this.

— “We came yesterday from Celorio de Llanes to make the spiritual exercises which were beginning this evening at 9:30. As we had time, we decided to go up to Garabandal. We were four, but at the last minute, one of us dropped out. A car brought us from Celorio to Cosío where we went up by Jeep. Not being acquainted with your village, we soon climbed up to the Pines. Then we saw a young girl, accompanied by very small children. We wanted to share our lunch with her, but she said:

— ‘No, the Angel is going to give me Communion.’

“It was noon. We had not recovered from our astonishment at such a response, when before us, as if struck by lightning, she fell on her knees in ecstasy, her head sharply thrust backwards. We had a film camera, but we didn’t know very well how to use it. However, one of us did what he could. We then

witnessed the complete unfolding of a Mystical Communion, something which we had never seen before.

“During her ecstasy, the young girl lifted up our scapulars and presented them, one by one, to the Apparition. At the same time, she said the exact names of the one who was wearing it. Imagine the indescribable impressions that we felt.

“After that, she told us:

— ‘I have received messages for each one of you. But I do not yet have permission to reveal them to you. In the next apparition, I will ask the Virgin.’”

Then I remarked, “Brothers, how fortunate you have been. You have seen in the day that which at night you would have viewed with difficulty. Ordinarily, the apparitions take place in the dark, after the recitation of the rosary in the church at nightfall. We only have flashlights for illumination. Besides we get pushed around because there is a big crowd and all the spectators want to see. You can go away very happy, since you carry your pictures in your film camera. Consider this also: if you would have waited until night, you would not have arrived in time to begin your retreat at Celorio de Llanes.”

The good hospital Brothers of St. John of God were fully in accord with me. They promised to send me some copies of their photographs.

They said goodbye, asking Aniceta to remind Conchita to send them their messages. However, they deliberately refused to give their personal addresses. I mention this fact which appears important, for the messages transmitted later by the visionary arrived nevertheless at their destination. As for the photos, they did not forget to send them to me. I keep them with great care.

Many things happened to me that day in a short time. The brothers left and Aniceta questioned me in her kitchen. I concluded . . .

— “Anecita, you know I could not be present at the Miracle of the Host on the night of July 18 to 19. Today on the subject of the reality of the Mystical Communion, the Virgin gave me such proofs that I’ll keep a more profound impression than if I had seen the Miracle.”

— “Father, you amaze me.”

— “Anecita, it’s true.”

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CHAPTER XIV

The Signs Requested Are Granted

Many persons, interiorly, mentally, asked God for proof of the authenticity of the apparitions of Our Lady of Garabandal. Answers were given to them by the visionaries during or after the ecstasies.

In August of 1962, I was spending some days at the village. One night, while leaving the church

after the Rosary, I learned that Jacinta was already in ecstasy and walking through the village. I would have, I should have joined her. Instead of that, I accompanied her mother María to her home for . . . dinner. We were eating when the door opened.

— “Jacinta is coming to present for the Virgin’s kiss the articles which were put on the little table in her room.”

“Hurry, María,” I said, “Clean off the table so that no one sees that I’m busy eating.” And my plate quickly disappeared into the child’s room.

Just in time, for she entered the kitchen in ecstasy. She fell on her knees in front of me, placed the crucifix on my lips, went into her room, presented for the Virgin’s kiss everything that she had made ready, and still in ecstasy, returned to the village.

Needless to say, I was not especially proud of myself.

After eating, I said goodbye to Maria and her guests so as to go to the house of Maximina, Conchita’s aunt and godmother, where I had to sleep.

There was a seminarian there, I think from Bilbao.

— “Do you know,” I asked him, “If one of the girls will have an apparition during the night?”

— “Yes, Loli predicted that the Virgin would come at 3 o’clock in the morning.”

It would not be hard to imagine my secret chagrin in thinking that the Virgin could have held me accountable for not having followed the apparition after the Rosary, especially Jacinta’s. Then I rebuked myself mentally, saying to myself: “I will go to the one this morning with Loli; that will serve as a sacrifice.” Before going to sleep, I pleaded fervently to Our Lady:

— “Would you give me a sign that you are not angry with me?”

I lay down and slept like a log.

Without wishing to excuse myself, the stay at Garabandal had exhausted me tremendously. It was necessary to go down to Cosío to say Mass, climb back up to the village each morning. Then I would find out the place where the girls were and I would rejoin them in order to participate in the labors in the fields. This had little similarity to my usual parish work at Barro.

In spite of my deep sleep, I heard someone running to the house where I was sleeping. It was Nandín, Loli’s brother. He banged on the door, shouting.

— “Maximina, Maximina! Open up quickly. Loli is coming!”

I turned on the light. I sat up in my bed and looked at my watch.

— “A quarter to four. What a shame. Loli is in ecstasy about an hour and I . . . I’m sleeping!”

At that moment, someone knocked on the door of my room. I pulled back the blanket and answered, “Come in.”

With a hard shove, the door opened with a bang, and Loli in ecstasy was there in the doorway.

The floor of my room was lower than that of the hallway by about 15 centimeters (6 inches). From the doorway, Loli fell down on her knees into the room. Even with the hard fall, she did not lose her balance. Still on her knees, I saw her go toward the wall facing my bed, under a large picture of Maximina and her husband, dead for several years. There she knelt. I didn’t understand it, for I was still unaware that the visionaries, on entering a house, did what I was just seeing — they prayed for the departed of the household.

That done, Loli turned around, still on her knees, came up to my bed. With the crucifix that she held in her hand, she made a Sign of the Cross on the pillow and gave it to me to kiss...and she smiled. Making a half turn and still on her knees, she went back to the door. Finally, coming to the doorway, she got up and went out of the room.

Coming to myself, I thought:

— “Here the Virgin is visiting the children and I . . . I’m in bed!”

Jumping up, I got out of bed, got dressed and went out in a hurry in the direction of the church — not without stopping at the home of Loli, whom I saw still in ecstasy, this time in her kitchen.

An incredible thing. She was talking to the Virgin about exactly what had happened that evening at Jacinta’s house, what Jacinta had told her between the two ecstasies. Then I heard her say to the Vision, who must have told her about my arrival.

— “He is here. Oh then that’s too much! Don’t leave here before him. I am so ashamed that he heard what I was saying about him.”

For some time, she continued on the same subject, discussing it with the Virgin. Then she made the sign of the cross; the apparition was ended.

Loli then looked at me, very ashamed of herself, her face blushed; she lowered her head.

— “See here Loli, look at me. You don’t have to blush for having told our Lady what happened yesterday during Jacinta’s ecstasy.”

— “You’re not going to scold me?”

— “Of course not.”

— “Thank you.”

I did not immediately understand that the prayer I said in Maximina’s room had been generously

heard, for the girl was immediately questioned.

— “Why didn’t the Virgin come at the hour set by her; we noticed a 45-minute delay.”

— “Because she wished to show this way her displeasure with remarks of some women who ridiculed the apparitions last night. She was angry because, before the ecstasy, they asked me if she painted her nails, if she wore a necklace, a bracelet, etc...”

On the following day, Ceferino, took me aside:

— “Yesterday morning, Father, as soon as she went into ecstasy, Loli went immediately — running — to Maximina’s house where you were sleeping.”

Finally, I saw the light. My confident prayer and my repentance had been heard; I had received the sign requested with trust.

Before ending this chapter, I want to add that the same thing happened another time at Maximina’s house again at 10 minutes before 4 o’clock in the morning.

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CHAPTER XV

Hierognosis

Several episodes of hierognosis (unexplainable recognition of religious relics or persons) happened in front of me at Garabandal. Without question, the visionaries recognized persons consecrated to God. They also knew the number of priests present in the village.

In her diary, Conchita points out a Dominican who was there incognito. During her ecstasy, she spoke of him and they heard her call him “dominicou.” Later she warned him on behalf of the Virgin that he should wear his habit . . . “So beautiful!”

Also, the girls recognized whether an object had or had not been kissed by the Virgin. While in ecstasy, always. A hundred proofs of this could be given. I can personally verify that, even in the normal state, Conchita knew this.

An example:

— “Conchita, during the next apparition, would you offer this rosary for the Virgin’s kiss?”

— “But it’s already been done.”

Since I was sure that she had never seen it, I insisted.

— “Be nice, do me a favor. Offer it during the apparition.”

— “But why do you want her to redo it, since it has already been done?” she answered smiling.

In my opinion, the kissed objects emanated perfume that could be perceived at times.

Later, many other people were equally favored by perfume from the kissed objects.

In 1961, before it was talked about, I noticed a strong, unrecognized fragrance when entering my room at Barro. At the same time, without knowing why, thinking about Garabandal, I looked around my room, sniffing here and there to discover the source of this perfume, so unexpected in my house. For years, I was never able to perceive it again.

But I found it a second time in Garabandal, at Loli's house. With this difference: at the village I noticed it for a long minute; while at my house it only lasted a second.

It was June 18, 1965, the day of the Angel's message to Conchita. I was speaking to Loli at the door of her kitchen. An old man came up to us. Having poor vision, looking against the sunlight, I took him for a beggar and I was getting ready to give him an alms.

He started to speak softly in French and I understood he was looking for Father Laffineur, who had just passed by. While speaking, he took from a plastic case holy cards, which must have been those that Conchita had dedicated for him. He took them out slowly and as he did, I smelled my perfume from 1961, which I have never again perceived since the 18th of June, 1965.

When the good Frenchman left, I questioned Loli:

— “Did you smell something, too?”

— “No, Father, nothing.”

— “Look, don't deny it, since that fragrance was very characteristic.”

— Loli repeated with a smile that she had not sensed anything.

Publishers note:

Sister Lucy said St Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, was present at the last public apparition at Fatima. It would be fitting for St. Joseph to be present mysteriously at the last public apparition at Garabandal.

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CHAPTER XVI

The Priests and the Visionaries

I have noticed and can testify that the girls had a great respect and actual admiration for the priesthood.

Generally, when they were in ecstasy in the houses, they knelt in front of the priests in order to

hold the holy crucifix to their lips.

Sometimes they carried this politeness even further.

It was on July 3, 1962 . . .

After the recitation of the rosary, the four young girls were together in ecstasy. We went up to the Pines and made some walks around them. This was done in total darkness, by flashlight. Now I have poor vision. At the time of coming back down again to the village, I stayed behind the last person in order to walk undisturbed, clinging to the stones and high bushes. I was not concerned that the girls and their numerous following were getting far away from me. Certainly I would not be the first one down, but I knew that I would finish by actually arriving there.

Abruptly, the entire procession stopped, permitting me to rejoin it. Then it started up again, going away from me again. It stopped. I came up to it a second time. Soon the procedure began again and there was a third stop.

As I was rejoining the group, I saw people coming toward me. Thinking that the four visionaries were going up again to the Pines, I stepped aside to let them pass.

Not at all. The visionaries were coming to find me . . .

— “Father,” Ceferino said to me then, “They want you to kiss the crucifix.”

I heard a woman who confirmed this, since she had heard these things well:

— “Oh, the girls are waiting for a priest . . . ”

The girls never failed to show an attitude of respect, reverence, politeness, and preference for the priesthood.

Even more, one or another priest was at times heard by the girls during an ecstasy.

Ordinarily, in similar cases, the girls did not speak with persons around them. The girls did not hear the people speaking to them. They only heard their companions and only spoke with them, even if these were not in ecstasy. The latter were given the task of speaking to the girls in ecstasy if that was necessary or useful to the spectators.

Nevertheless, on several occasions, the girls responded directly to the questions and thoughts of Father Valentín. And this happened once to me.

It was in Conchita’s kitchen, on the day of the episode with Loli’s crucifix. Loli in ecstasy in the kitchen, went to the window to present the cross to be kissed. As she passed in front of me, I said to her,

— “And not to me?”

Lightening struck. Since she could not have appeared more amazed. She turned around swiftly, laughed loudly, And answered my request.

The visionaries obeyed the priests willingly and directly. Better than that, while smiling.

I was at Jacinta's house. Loli and her sister, Amaliuca, had returned an envelope to me containing 2 postcards that I did not have the time to look at. I knew only that they had been dedicated and I intended to have them kissed by the Virgin . . . to have a relic.

Mari Cruz was at my side in the normal state. I used the opportunity to send her to meet Jacinta, who was in the village in ecstasy;

— “Tell her that she should come home to present my holy cards for the Virgin's kiss.”

Jacinta did not wait. She came into the kitchen, fell on her knees, made her way toward me, still on her knees. She gave me her crucifix to kiss. She got up, took one of the two cards in her hand, raised it up high, as the visionaries had the custom of doing when they held some object to the Virgin's lips. I saw her drop her arm. She raised it up again, dropped it down again, and for a third time made the same gesture.

— “She doesn't kiss this one,” she whispered.

She offered the second and the Virgin kissed it.

Surprised by this, I finally looked at the two cards and understood immediately. The first, (this may have belonged to Loli's sister Amaliuca) was not religious, while the other one was a picture of St. Pascal Baylon. I gave these two cards to Father Morelos, a Mexican priest, so that he would have the joy of possessing at least a souvenir from the Virgin of Garabandal.

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CHAPTER XVII

Returning the Kissed Articles

The girls frequently returned rosaries, medals and chains, crucifixes, holy cards, etc. to their owners during the ecstasies. They also put wedding rings on married people, on the proper finger.

One day, I left a white metal crucifix on the little table where Loli had placed the articles to give to the Virgin. Since she was not able to observe this, she searched all day to find the owner. On this subject, she questioned one of my friends from Cataluña, who could not answer her since she hThat evening, I was sitting in Conchita's kitchen. Once again, Loli came in ecstasy, accompanied by her father and other visitors. She knelt down on the floor and held out her crucifix to kiss. She came toward me and she did the same, using the crucifix that she held in her hand. She remained in front of me, trying to give me something else.

Because of my poor vision and being more attentive to her face than her hands, I didn't notice her intention. I didn't n“Father,” Ceferino said to me then, “She's giving you another crucifix.”

It was the metal crucifix that I left in her home that morning without being seen by anyone. The young woman from Cataluña, astonished likewise, cried out in speaking to Loli, as if the girl could hear her:

— “Oh, see then to whom the cross belongs that has concerned her so much all day!”s concerned her so much all day!”

That was one of the most moving moments of my life.

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CHAPTER XVIII

Feigned Ecstasies

It appears to me that what might be called the “faked ecstasies” deserves a special chapter.

Conchita mentions these ‘ecstasies’ in her diary and it is good to cite extensively what she wrote:

At times the three of us wanted to be together. As our parents didn’t allow us to be out of the house at night, sometimes when we went outside after the rosary — having already had two calls — we looked upwards as if we were seeing the Virgin.

And so we went together down the street with our parents and the people. And later, the Virgin came and we were together. We always ended up seeing the Virgin.

We never faked the entire ecstasy.

We are coming to a definite fact that I would like to point out.

We are in 1961 when I think no one would have suspected such actions. One day, I remember it well, I was in a state of consternation. I had the impression that Jacinta and Loli had pretended to be in ecstasy — during a part at least — although during the day the other ecstasies had been real.

Here is how I became aware of this. While the children were running very fast, a youth with a good sense of humor, through his jokes was making everyone laugh, including the visionaries!

I noticed another unusual thing. He and I sometimes were talking in a loud voice. If he said, “They should turn to the right.” And I advised them to turn to the left, the girls would always listen to my advice. My companion was amazed. He could not have been aware of how I was hurt by what I was observing. He even said to me, “How did you guess that?” I wanted to say to him, “If you would pay more attention, you would understand.” But I kept quiet, waiting for the right time to come.

It did not take long.

This “ecstasy” finished, the two visionaries and I were at Mari Cruz’ home.

She was sitting on her bed with a cold. Her mother Pilar was at the foot of the bed. Loli and Jacinta were sitting on the bed; Jacinta on my left, Loli on my right. Taking a place in front of them and looking into their eyes, when they least expected it, I told them point blank:

— “Today you faked the last ecstasy!”

Instantly becoming red as a beet, hiding her face in her hands, her elbows on her knees, Loli exclaimed:

— “Oh! What a thing!”

Jacinta started crying:

— “I’m going to tell my mama that you don’t believe that we are seeing the Virgin.”

“It isn’t that,” I said to them. “Yes, I believe that you are seeing the Virgin; but right now you have pretended to be in ecstasy . . . Because of your age, that doesn’t have too much importance, since you aren’t aware of the harm that you can cause.

“But suppose that some day a theologian or an important doctor would come here to study the events. And if he would see you — as I have just seen you — pretending an ecstasy, and if he could not come to see you later, no one could affirm that there were real ecstasies here, for a person could not be convinced of the opposite of what he would have seen with his eyes!

“I could have been fooled today, but I don’t think so. I know this time you have been faking. And it is not necessary to be a fox to recognize it.”

Mari Cruz’ mother also scolded them for their conduct and quickly left her daughter’s room.

Three months later I was with Loli and I knew that during the interval one could sometimes still recognize one or another simulation.

— “Then, Loli, have you been faking with Jacinta?”

— “Do you know what Jacinta said when you left Mari Cruz’ house?”

— “No.”

— “What a rascal! How he caught us!”

I mentioned at the start of the chapter that Conchita informed us about the faked ecstasies in her diary.

She gave me other reasons or explanations on this subject; here are some of them:

— “During one of the pretended ecstasies, God punished me. While coming down from the Pines, I had a terrible fall. I thought I was going to die of pain. I don’t think I could have suffered more by dying. I hid the pain and no one noticed it. After that fall the Virgin came for real. I was really fallen into ecstasy.”

— “Father, we only pretended an ecstasy before persons we knew and residents of the village.”

— “We only did it if we knew for certain that the Virgin was going to come later.”

— “We only did it a half hour before the apparition. The Virgin would punish us by coming later than the hour set, and she would always reproach us severely for our conduct.”

— “She knew that if we sometimes pretended, it was because of the irresistible desire we had for the joy of seeing her.”

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CHAPTER XIX

Levitations

I know of many cases of levitation that took place at Garabandal.

One case was photographed, and its copy on slides has been spread throughout the entire world. It is interesting to note that the photographer noticed the actual phenomenon only after the film was developed.

Another levitation took place at the very small bridge — now gone — which was in front of the church. On that day, the brook that it crossed was full. The four girls, in ecstasy, were holding arms. The bridge was not wide enough to permit the passage of the four girls abreast, which is what they did nevertheless; one or two of them consequently had to pass outside of the bridge on the water, without, however getting their feet wet.

Another time I was in Conchita’s kitchen, with 2 priests, a young Mexican, the well known commander of the Civil Police at Puentenansa, Dr. Celestino Ortiz from Santander, and Aniceta.

In ecstasy, Conchita had an obvious levitation, properly observed. She was stretched out on the ground, her whole length, her arms a little extended from her body, the palms of her hands pointing upwards.

We saw her rise up to the height of about ten centimeters (4 inches) while holding the same stretched-out position. After that she made three movements of balancing, from front to back and from back to front, as if to show us that she was really separated from the ground.

After a minute and a half — we checked the time — she started to descend very slowly, her body always completely and modestly stretched out until she came down to the ground.

We all signed a report of this extraordinary fact and we gave it to Father Valentín for him to send it to the Bishop of Santander.

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CHAPTER XX

The Most Holy Virgin at Garabandal

This chapter has exceptional importance since it concerns the Most Holy Virgin, the Envoy of Christ in this village specially cherished by God.

I will limit myself to excerpting some quotations from Conchita’s Diary — the manuscript — that

relate with marvelous simplicity all that we can know of Our Mother of Heaven at Garabandal.

It was on the first of July, the eve of her first apparition, that Conchita tells us for the first time of the Virgin. That day the Angel said:

“I come to announce to you a visit by the Virgin under the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, who will appear to you tomorrow, Sunday . . .”

“I will return tomorrow with the Virgin . . .”

The Virgin appeared to us with an Angel on each side.

That day, we talked much with the Virgin and she talked with us. We told her everything. We told her that we walked to the pastures, that we were tanned, that we gathered the hay into stacks.

And she laughed.

We said the rosary while looking at her. And she prayed with us in order to teach us to pray well.

When we had finished the rosary, she said she was leaving.

And we told her to stay a little while, since she had been there only a very short time.

And she laughed, and told us she would return on Monday.

When she left, we were sad.

That is how Sunday, July 2, ended.

A very happy day, because we saw the Virgin for the first time.

For we are always with her, whenever we want to be.

Conchita then gives us an admirable description of the Virgin.

The Virgin comes in a white cloak, a blue mantle, a crown of little golden stars.

The feet are not seen; the hands are open and there is a scapular on the right one: the scapular is brown.

Her hair is long, a dark chestnut brown color, wavy, parted in the middle;

The face somewhat elongated;

The nose also somewhat long, and fine;

The mouth, very beautiful with lips a little full;

The color of her face tan, much lighter than that of the angel, different.

The voice very beautiful, a voice very unusual.

I don't know how to explain it.

There is no other woman who resembles the Virgin, either in the voice or in anything.

Sometimes she carries the Baby in her arms.

He is very small, like a newborn baby, with a round face the same color as the Virgin's.

He has a very small mouth, and hair slightly long.

He is dressed in something like a blue tunic.

Conchita recounts with simplicity the apparition of the Virgin and the Child Jesus that took place on the next day, July 3, 1961. The girls played with the Child, but the Virgin did not let them hold Him.

As soon as we arrived at the Cuadro, the Virgin appeared to us with the Child Jesus.

But the angels did not come.

She came with a broad smile, and the Child was smiling too.

And the first thing we said was, "Where is St. Michael and the other Angel?"

And she smiled even more.

The people and our parents who were there gave us articles so that we might present them to be kissed.

And she kissed them all.

And since we liked to make up games for the Child Jesus, we picked up pebbles.

And I put them in my braids, Loli put them in her sleeves, and Jacinta gave them to Him.

He did not take them; He only smiled.

And she said many things to us.

But she didn't allow us to tell these things.

The apparition started at 7:30 and ended at 8 o'clock. Then she said, "Stay in God and in me also."

That made us sad.

We said, “Adios!”

The last thing she said,

— “Tomorrow you will see me again.”

The 4th of July came . . .

The Virgin was smiling as usual.

And the first thing that she said was,

— “Do you know the meaning of the writing the Angel carried beneath him?”

We spoke out together, “No, we don’t know.”

Then she said to us,

— “It gives a message that I am going to explain to you so that you can tell it to the people on the 18th of October.”

And she told it to us.

On the following day she told us she would explain it later.

Later she explained what the message meant and how we had to say it.

She indicated to us that we had to say it at the door of the church.

And that on October 18th we should tell it to Fr. Valentín, so that he could say it at the Pines at 10:30 at night.

The Virgin told us to do it this way.

On August 17, 1961, something took place which we are going to mention, which shows us the Virgin’s kindness for her four angelic little girls. Conchita wrote:

On the next day and at the same time as the previous day, the Most Holy Virgin appeared to the four of us.

And for several minutes she was smiling very much.

And she didn’t say anything to us.

After a few minutes, darkness came upon us, and we heard a voice call us.

Then Mari Cruz said, “Tell us who you are; if you don’t we will go home.”

While we were hearing the voice, it was very dark.

And we didn't see the Virgin.

But afterwards she came.

And it became very light.

And she said to us, "Don't be afraid."

And she spoke to us for a while.

And that night was the first night that she kissed us, one by one.

And then she left.

In the last part of Chapter VII, I mentioned how the little girls kissed the Virgin tenderly on each cheek at the end of the ecstasies. The Virgin never stopped being a mother in showing signs of maternal affection.

It is in this passage that I just quoted that Conchita mentioned the Virgin's first kiss to the young girls in ecstasy.

Conchita continues.

The next day, (August 18th) almost at the same hour, the Virgin appeared to us again. The first thing that she told us was to recite the rosary.

Since we had never led it, she told us: "I'm going to lead it and you answer."

She prayed very slowly.

Coming to the "Salve," she told us to sing it, and we sang it.

When we finished the rosary she kissed us, and before leaving she said, "I will come back tomorrow."

The following day, (August 19th), as she had foretold, she came and she told us the same thing as on the previous day, "Recite the rosary."

And we began the rosary.

And that night we went to the places where the Virgin had appeared to us at the beginning.

And after our ecstasy the people said that we had gone up to the Pines, and that we had gone from pine to pine on our knees, praying.

Conchita then reveals to us an important detail.

Up to then, in all the ecstasies, we have been the four together. Jacinta, Mari Cruz, Mary

Loli, and myself.

But then we started to have ecstasies separately, each one in her home.

And so the Most Holy Virgin called us even though we were not together but separated. But we always saw the Most Holy Virgin in ecstasy.

Another sign of maternal tenderness to note:

And during that ecstasy, while we were seeing the Virgin, Mari Cruz, who had seen an apparition earlier, was in bed.

And we told the Virgin that she should tell us a song to sing to Mari Cruz.

We would compose some words, and the Virgin would aid us with others.

The songs were the following:

**Get up Mari Cruz!
Here comes the good Virgin
With a basket of flowers
For her little child.**

**Mari Cruz, Mari Cruz!
How sad you make us.
Pray hard to the Virgin,
So that she will return to you.**

**Mari Cruz, Mari Cruz!
Do you smell the lilies?
The Virgin has brought them for you,
So that you will be better.**

That night the Most Holy Virgin stayed with us from nine in the evening until 7 o'clock in the morning.

That night, we played Los Tios (hide and seek) with the Virgin. Two of us hid and the other two searched.

The Most Holy Virgin commanded the four: Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz and myself to recite the rosary at the Cuadro.

We went some days at 6 o'clock in the morning; and some days later.

Jacinta and Mari Cruz went at 7 o'clock in the morning.

Loli did not have an hour fixed.

As Mari Cruz did not get up so early, she decided it was better to go at 8 o'clock.

Jacinta went at 6 o'clock, accompanied by her mother and people from the village who always accompanied us.

During Holy Week, I was ordered to go at 5 o'clock in the morning, which I did, since the Most Holy Virgin wants us always to do penance.

It might be mentioned here — to emphasize Conchita's remarks — that when the children were asked why the Virgin came at such late hours, they answered that the Virgin told them that it was at that time most of the sins of the world were committed and that they should do penance . . . And for them it was a penance, and not the smallest, to stay up until the Virgin came to visit them, late in the night, or very early in the morning. They performed this penance because the Virgin wanted it and also because they wanted to see her again.

They stayed awake then, or else they slept on a chair or stool, leaning against a wall or a table, but out of bed. Unless, of course, their parents had decided otherwise, since the Virgin had told them that they ought to obey their parents above all.

From the beginning of the apparitions, the Virgin adapted herself to the children to capture their attention and gain their confidence, achieving her planned purpose that way. A mother does not stop being a mother when she plays with her young children; that is even one of her duties.

Some of the priests and faithful saw reasons in this to deny the supernatural character of the actual happenings.

Afterwards, the Virgin concerned herself with their spiritual life, teaching them the life of grace, and certain virtues, always adapting her instruction to their level of understanding.

The Virgin always performed the role of a priest in regard to “extraordinary” instruction when the priest did not perform his ministry or could not perform it. She watched maternally over the spiritual life of her young children.

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CHAPTER XXI

The Girls' Penances

“It is necessary to do much penance...”

(First message of October 18, 1961)

“The Most Holy Virgin wants us always to do penance.”

(Conchita’s Diary)

Here is a chapter which will forever remain incomplete. Who can completely describe all the little girls’ penances? We well know that they were performed, that they were many, but how many? Of what type? Many remain forgotten, hidden to mortal view. God alone knows the number and the details...

I want to relate here the history of a “cilice” (a wire girdle with sharp metallic points to irritate the skin) of which Conchita was the heroine, and of which I was the eyewitness.

This was a part of the story of Garabandal that was totally spontaneous. Conchita, in her love for the Most Holy Virgin, inspired by a desire to follow her counsels, went on to perform this type of penance to the point of blood.

In the summer of 1962, I was passing some time in Garabandal, and I was lodged with Maximina, the aunt and godmother of Conchita.

In the morning I got up and went to the bathroom. Maximina thought that I had left for church and went into my room to clean it. On the night table, I had placed a cilice — made up of metallic points — which is worn around the waist. Maximina had never seen or held in her hand such an object, but she had heard it spoken about. She was somewhat surprised. About the same time, Conchita came to the house of her aunt, who said to her, “Look Conchita, this is what one must do to become a saint...”

I was unaware of all this conversation. I finished washing, returned to my room, and then left to accompany Conchita to the pastures. I used to accompany the girls — one day one, another day another, and the members of their families — to help them as I could, in the gathering of hay.

That day, I had to go with Conchita to a place called “Piedrajita” located about 5 kilometers northeast of Garabandal. Over a small bridge we crossed the Vendul river and began the ascent to the Piedrajita. Conchita carried on her shoulders a wicker basket as the mountain people are accustomed to use in the valley of Pas (province of Santander). She was carrying lunch for all those who worked in the fields that day.

To me it seemed somewhat ungentlemanly to permit a 13-year-old girl to carry 20 to 25 kilos of food and dinnerware, so I asked her to hand me the basket. She was about to give it to me without any discussion, when she laughed and said to me:

— “No, you can hurt your waist...”

At that time I didn’t know the reason for this remark, but Conchita’s words got me thinking. We took some rest on the way, for the pasture was rather far away and the sun was beginning to be felt. I don’t remember any more the exact words of our conversation; but I know that Conchita tried very skillfully during the course of it to lead me to the subject which interested her. Thus she was talking to me about certain priests who performed penance by wearing around their waists types of belts made of iron wire with protruding sharp points, doing this for mortification. She said to me then:

— “You want to carry the basket?”

Gladly I answered affirmatively, but she:

— “No, you will hurt your waist.”

I knew then that she was aware of something and I asked her:

— “Who told you about it? The Angel, the Virgin, or your aunt Maximina?”

Very surprised, she answered, “My aunt Maximina told me.”

Then she recounted to me how she had learned about it, as I have previously described. Then she asked me in a very confidential way to give her the cilice. But I told her that I would bring her a new one on my next trip to Garabandal. She insisted on having the same one that she had seen. On returning to the village, I gave it to her and she was very happy.

On the first trip I made after that to Garabandal, I brought several new cilices with me. My intention was to take back the one Conchita wore, to keep it as a souvenir, but it was not easy to obtain. Conchita showed a very unusual intuition and it turned out to be very difficult to fool her.

I asked her to make an exchange of the new cilice for the one which she was wearing, but she responded that she preferred the former one. Then I made the remark that it was desirable, for reasons of hygiene, that she have a new one. She told me that she cleaned it every day with alcohol...

I was about to admit myself defeated, and I did not know what more to say to achieve my aim, when she decided suddenly to give me the cilice without more problems.

From this cilice, there only remain a few fragments, which I conserve carefully. The remainder has been distributed in France for souvenirs.

I am certain that Mary Loli also used the cilice that I gave her. Jacinta’s mother forbid her to wear one. I did not give any to Mari Cruz since she was younger, smaller, and in less robust health.

I pointed out to Conchita that these penances were not the best, that interior penances were preferable. Nevertheless, she afflicted herself often with this type of mortification in her desire to obey the Most Holy Virgin because She “wants us always to do penance” as Conchita reports in her diary.

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CHAPTER XXII

Light in the Darkness

(Conchita’s spiritual martyrdom)

The penances of Conchita — even though she was still a child — were not limited to mere external acts . . . Conchita passed through the test of the “Dark Night” — as St. John of the Cross describes it — a test of true anguish which had, as a consoling balm, the sweet presence of the Virgin herself, as we shall see shortly.

In the year 1962, at the Piedrajita that I have just mentioned, I had the occasion to share the terrible spiritual test that Conchita was undergoing. She confided to me then the true martyrdom that was tormenting her virginal soul.

Expressionless, without raising her eyes from the ground, as we mowed the dry hay, the child revealed her affliction little by little.

— “I have profound doubts concerning the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist,” she told me. In addition, “I often ask myself how God could exist for all eternity . . . These and many other doubts are for me a real martyrdom.”

Persons who read this and have some experience in these things know that those souls, who are undergoing such a moral martyrdom, are incapable of understanding the reasons that one can give them to lead them out of the darkness into the light. One can only suffer with them, and await the day the Lord has reserved for the fall of the veil that darkens the peace of the soul. One day the storm will calm; the Lord will do everything.

On that same day Conchita revealed to me that the Virgin was aware of her doubts. During her visits, her first words were: “Conchita, how are your doubts?” This gave her consolation and peace, which only lasted as long as the Virgin was with her.

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CHAPTER XXIII

Mari Cruz

Here I would like to make particular mention of Mari Cruz, since the opinions about her have not always been very fair.

She has suffered very much. She is very obedient and very virtuous. Outside of the ecstasies, her modesty conferred upon her special attractiveness; all the more, during the ecstasies did she have a special charm. She was very humble. In July, 1969, Conchita was still telling me that she was very good, extremely good . . . “Oh yes, very good!”

For my part, I can state that what could be said of her kindness and Christian charity only reflects partially the truth. And what could be said of her moral suffering, since even in her name she carries the cross!

She was as childlike as she was withdrawn. And how gentle, humble, courteous! Extremely courteous. She was especially obedient to her mother Pilar, whom she had to obey more than once with tears in her eyes. Was she not observed sometimes, through obedience, prevented from seeing the Virgin? The Virgin had advised the young girls to obey their parents and their ecclesiastical superiors before obeying She Herself.

Let us mention this particular episode. If the parents told their children to go to bed, even though the Virgin had announced her visit for an early hour in the morning, the child would ask for permission to stay up. However if this was refused, she cried, but went to bed. The desire to see the Virgin was

great, but the child obeyed and offered up the sacrifice.

If at the time foretold by the Virgin the child was in bed, but awake, the Virgin came to her and the girl fell into ecstasy. Sometimes she stayed in bed in ecstasy, or else, still in ecstasy, she got up, got dressed, went out into the village, conversing with the Virgin or reciting the rosary.

If, at the time foretold the girl was asleep, the Virgin respected her sleep and did not wake her up.

On numerous occasions, Mari Cruz was not able to attend the rendezvous set by the Virgin because of obedience to her mother. The father of the family stayed in the pastures and the mother was alone to watch over her daughter. She acted thus to preserve the health of her daughter, who worked in the fields according to her strength.

With regard to the religious spirit of the Mari Cruz' family, a fair judgment should be made in order not to fall into inconsiderate exaggeration. That would actually be lack of charity and also lack of justice.

It cannot be said that it was a family that seldom practiced; let us say that it was above all a poor family where it was necessary to work much in order to support the household.

It was a practicing family, no less. The father, being ill, could not come down from the pastures because of his state of health; instead he used the hours of work to the maximum, since there was no abundance of workers in the family.

But if he happened to come down to the village on Sunday, he was seen at Mass, also were his wife and daughter.

These opinions are not mine, they come from Aniceta, Conchita's mother, but I willingly second her point of view.

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CHAPTER XXIV

Eucharistic Sign

One day in August of 1962, having finished Mass, I went out from Cosío to Garabandal. I was carrying on my person the Blessed Sacrament in a way that was not visible. My intention was to obtain proof that Satan had no part in the events which were taking place in the village.

Mentally, I petitioned the Virgin, "If these events were supernatural and of divine origin, that when the girls would fall into ecstasy on that day, they would not make any sign of adoration, although they would know that they were before the Blessed Sacrament. Likewise, that they would not show toward me any sign of predilection, such as making me kiss the crucifix, genuflecting, or any other sign of reverence."

I made this reflection. "If the devil is taking part in this affair and the girls pass in ecstasy in front

of me carrying the Blessed Sacrament, that without doubt he would make some particular gesture that would manifest his presence.” For if Satan flees before the cross or holy water, how much more would he flee before the Blessed Sacrament?

On that day, Conchita had an ecstasy and I noticed something abnormal on her face when she passed by several times close to me. Everything happened as on other occasions, except that she had none of the usual gestures of reverence for me that she ordinarily had for priests. In the course of her ecstasy, she did not give me the crucifix to kiss, though she did give it for other persons.

This matter might be added to other experiences that have been made by other persons more experienced and more knowledgeable than I.

I think that no one would dare to qualify as diabolic that which other very qualified persons have studied so thoroughly and so many times. These events were manifest to everyone for a long time, a very long time.

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CHAPTER XXV

Conclusion

1. Reflexions

For a long time Garabandal has made its way among those who believe that it is a direct intervention of God. The diffusion of the message and the facts that support them is world-wide. All this, in spite of the blind and obstinate opposition from a Commission that, charged with a very serious matter, commits the unpardonable levity of not giving to it the importance that it deserves. Because of understanding nothing about it — and it is the Commission’s own fault — it has judged superficially and with a disturbing outspokenness, that the apparitions were not objectively supernatural. Their spokesman, Bishop Puchol, has even ventured to call it an innocent “game of children . . .”

I think back to the letter that Padre Pio wrote to the visionaries in 1961:

— “When they believe, it will be too late . . .”

Furthermore, it would happen that the visionaries would come to doubt, contradict each other, and they themselves would deny.

Actually, I had the incredible opportunity to witness certain ecstasies in which the Virgin predicted to the girls in 1961 these future events that were so painful to them. I heard with my own ears their response to this startling warning from their Vision.

— “How can we say that we haven’t seen you, since we are seeing you at this very moment?”

— Yes, that would happen.

We Catholics, do we not feel ourselves corrupted by an absurd spirit of ‘false humanism’ that we dare to call Christian?

Some believe that our position in favor of the historical facts at Garabandal is destroyed when they affirm — what none of us dispute — on the contrary, accept — that Public Revelation has ended, that Jesus Christ has said the last words necessary for salvation. Yes, that is their attitude at the present time, when they brazenly choose to accept from Public Revelation what is convenient for them, and reject the rest!

The locution of Jesus to Conchita at Pamplona on February 13, 1966 might be recalled: **“Yo lo hare todo.”** (I will do everything.)

One could foresee the failure of those members of the Commission on that celebrated night in August, 1961 which I have reported accurately since I saw and heard it myself in the village church. Today the failure and misunderstanding of the “learned” are clear to me.

2. First Message

Conchita has repeated many times that the most important thing is to accomplish the messages of our Lady of Mount Carmel. Allow me to repeat them.

(Message of October 18, 1961)

It is necessary to make many sacrifices, perform much penance.

It is necessary to visit the Blessed Sacrament (mucho).

But first of all we must be very good.

And if we do not do this, a punishment will come upon us.

The cup is already filling up.

And if we do not change, a very great punishment will come upon us.

These words were pronounced by the Virgin before the start of Vatican II, at a time when already much more value was given to the “human” than the supernatural.

On October 18, 1961, the spectators were disappointed and returned home discouraged. Actually they had expected to see at Garabandal a miracle, which the visionaries had never predicted. For that day, they had only spoken of the public revelation of a message directed by the Virgin to her children on earth. Was not that enough?

The Miracle? It will come on a day determined by God, and only a few persons on earth know the

exact date.

And the Message itself? It is there for us to accomplish in the soonest and best way possible.

Certainly it does not tell us anything that we do not already know. But do we not need to be reminded of the evangelical truths?

The test? Does the world practice the ancient faith? And we ourselves, even though we believe in Garabandal, what are we doing?

There can be nothing new here beside what was there at Fatima and Lourdes and the other apparitions.

Has not Public Revelation been completed? We know that as well as our adversaries. We only ask that whatever one does, one should remember it in all circumstances.

Sometimes one hears it said, “Garabandal. It is finished! Actum est!”

But “Roma non locuta” (Rome has not spoken) must be understood in response to this erroneous and fallacious statement.

A poorly informed bishop can err. A congregation such as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith does not err. When the latter speaks, it will be to say, “Yes. Yes.” or “No. No.”

3. Second Message

Now let us go on to the second message. This is the one from June 18, 1965, which is certainly, in my opinion, a message of the “last warnings.”

Predicted by Conchita 6 months in advance, she wrote it down on June 19 and signed it with the pen that I have in front of me on my work table. I cannot express the gratitude due to her for this inestimable gift.

The message that the Most Holy Virgin has given to the world through the intercession of the Angel St. Michael.

The Angel said:

As my message of October 18 has not been complied with and has not been made known to the world, I am telling you that this is the last.

Before the cup was filling up; now it is overflowing.

The priests: Many are on the road to perdition, and with them they are taking many more souls.

The Eucharist: It is being given less and less importance.

With your own efforts you should avoid the wrath of the Good God.

If you ask pardon with a sincere heart, He will forgive you.

I, your Mother, through the intercession of the Archangel St. Michael, want to tell you to amend your lives.

You are in the last warnings!

I love you very much, and do not want your condemnation.

Ask us sincerely, and we will give you what you ask.

You should sacrifice yourself more.

Think of the passion of Jesus.

Conchita González June 18, 1965

4. The Hour of God

I do not know the reason, but I had the good fortune to stay awake and remain until the end in Conchita's kitchen on the night of October 10-11, 1962. Though all my companions succumbed to sleep or retired, I was able to realize my plan to see at what time in the morning on October 11, 1962, Conchita's ecstasy would begin.

On the previous evening, on October 10, a "Nota" had appeared in the Spanish press from the Bishop of Santander, Dr. Beitia Aldazabal. He had signed it on the preceding October 7, Feast of the Holy Rosary.

Conchita went into ecstasy exactly at 8 in the morning on that October 11. At the same time the radio blared out the ringing of the bells at St. Peter's basilica as in Rome began the procession of thousands of bishops from all parts of the world there present, headed by the Roman Pontiff John XXIII. The bells resounded throughout the universe. The ecstasy in which I was one of the few witnesses lasted some 10 minutes...

I heard the conversation — at least part of it — that the young girl had with her Vision.

Without waiting to be questioned, Conchita talked to us first.

— "I asked the Virgin why the bishop published yesterday a Nota on Garabandal."

— "And what did she answer?"

— "She didn't answer, she just smiled . . ."

I don't know if this matter has been published. But for my part, I find it very striking.

If the Virgin of Garabandal smiled at the hour of the opening of the Council, it is because she knows well the hour of Providence, which has not yet come, but which will come... the hour of God and her hour...

Father J. R. G. de la Riva.

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CHAPTER XXVI

Conchita's Locution on July 20, 1963

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 it to you.

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.

— 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 all.

— When the Miracle comes, will it be as if I were the only one who had seen the Virgin?

— 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.**

— **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.)

I asked Him if St. Peter was at the gate of heaven to receive us; and He told me No.

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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CHAPTER XXVII

Locution of Conchita at Pamplona

(February 13, 1966)

(Six days after entry into the convent of the Discalced Carmelites)

On Sunday, February 13th, at the time of thanksgiving to God after having received Communion, I received at the same time a great joy and an even greater sorrow and a disillusion.

I heard the voice of Christ, Who said this to me:

— **Conchita, you have come here to the convent to prepare yourself to be My spouse and**

you say you want to follow Me.

— Do you not say, Conchita, that you want to accomplish My will?

— Although now you want to accomplish your own.

— Will it be that way all your life?

— I have chosen you in the world, so that you stay there, facing the numerous difficulties you will have because of Me.

— All this I want for your own sanctification and that you offer it for the salvation of the world.

— You should speak to the world about Mary.

— Do you remember what I told you? That wherever you are, you will find the cross and suffering. Now I am telling you this again.

— Conchita, did you feel the call to be My spouse? No, because I have not called you.

I asked Him, “How does one feel Your call to be a religious?”

He told me, “Do not concern yourself about that; you will never feel it.”

I asked him, “Then, Jesus, do You not love me?”

He answered, “Conchita you ask Me that? Who has redeemed you? Fulfill My will and you will find My love.”

— Look at yourself closely.

— Think more of others.

— Do not be disturbed by temptation. If you are faithful, with My love you will conquer many temptations.

— Be intelligent with what I tell you. Intelligent spiritually. Do not close the eyes of your soul. Do not let anyone deceive you. Love humility, simplicity.

— Never think what you have done is much. Think of what you have to do and what you ought to do, not to gain heaven, but that the world may accomplish my Divine Will, that all souls prepare themselves.

— Whoever holds his soul disposed to hear Me will know what My Will is.

— I want to tell you, Conchita, that before the miracle you will suffer much. Few will believe you. Your own family will think that you have deceived them. All this I want for you — I’ve already said it — for your sanctification, and that the world accomplish the message.

— I want to warn you that the rest of your life will be a continual suffering.

— **Do not be disturbed. In suffering am I and Mary, whom you love so much.**

— **I asked Him if Rome also would not believe me. He did not answer, but He said to me, “Don’t worry if they believe or if they don’t believe.”**

— **I will do everything, but I will also give you suffering. Whoever suffers for Me, I am with him.**

Conchita González

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