

CONCHITA'S DIARY

Part One



Conchita at the age of 13 when she started the *Diary*. The medals are those given to her by people so that she may present them to be kissed by Our Lady, one of the special features of the Garabandal apparitions.

Conchita's Diary

Conchita's Diary is given in its entirety. There are several reasons for this. It is the only account of the Garabandal event by any of the four girls involved. Also, it presents what historians call "internal evidence" in favor of the veracity of the events described. Indeed, it has a clear ring of authenticity to it. The truthfulness and sincerity of the thirteen-year-old child who wrote it comes through in the very manner in which the story is presented and written. The choice of facts, the sobriety with which they are described, the very simple and unemotional manner in which they are presented, are all very convincing.

The publication of the complete *Diary* will not reveal any new or startling information. The entire document has already been published in Spanish and in French and the facts it contains are quite well known. But it will give the English speaking world something it has not had before, namely, the impact that comes from the complete document in consecutive form. It will also help these same people to situate many facts and bits of information, already known to them, in their proper context. These often take on a new, or at least a fuller, meaning when viewed in this way.

The word *Diary* is not the most accurate word for describing this document. Conchita began writing it in 1962, apparently in September, well over a year after the first apparition, which took place on June 18, 1961. In the first part of the document, she does attempt to reconstruct and follow the chronological sequence of events, frequently giving dates and even the days of the week on which the events occurred. But about half way through, she abandons this format in favor of a logical or topical grouping of

events and ideas. She becomes more concerned with the heart of the matter than with its historical framework. This speaks well for the quality of her mind. Conchita is perceptive and intelligent and these important traits pierce through even this short document written at a tender age.

The original *Diary* is a handwritten document of sixty-five pages, a photostat of which the author obtained quite providentially in 1968.

The spelling, punctuation and syntax are very poor, and words are occasionally scratched out and corrected. The *Diary* was evidently written by a child with rather primitive schooling.

Conchita finished writing the *Diary* in the summer of 1963. Her untutored account of the Garabandal happenings really covers only the first phase of the events that took place in that remote Spanish village. However, this first phase which went from June 18, 1961, to January 20, 1963, was the most significant one. Not only did almost all of the some 2,000 apparitions take place during that period, but the most important events happened then also. This is so true that, if the *Diary* were the only source of our information on Garabandal, we would be lacking very few of the essential elements of the story. About the only thing of any consequence that Conchita does not mention is the warning. She learned of this only after she had finished writing the *Diary*.

An Angel to Prepare the Way

• San Sebastián de Garabandal 1962

María Concepción González — 13 years old

In this book I am going to relate my apparitions and my daily life.¹ •

Sunday, June 18 *Unexpected Visit of Saint Michael the Archangel*

• The greatest event of my life occurred at San Sebastián [de Garabandal] on June 18, 1961. It happened in the following manner.

It was a Sunday. All the girls were playing in the square. Suddenly Mari Cruz and I decided to get some apples and we started off directly for the place without telling anyone that we were going to take some apples.

When the girls noticed that we were going off, just the two of us, they asked us where we were going.

"Over there," we answered. And we kept on going, making plans on how to take the apples.

Once we got there, we began gathering them. Just when we were having a great time, we saw Loli, Jacinta and another girl, [Ginia], who had come looking for us.

Seeing us take apples, Jacinta cried out: "Why Conchita, you're taking apples!"

"Keep quiet," I said. "The schoolmaster's wife will hear you and she'll tell my mother."

¹ *Conchita's Diary* is written without clear separations. To guide the reader, dates and headings as well as chapter divisions have been added. Two devices have been used to help identify Conchita's words: smaller type enclosed between black dots. Anything else is an addition to her text.

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And I hid myself in a potato patch while Mari Cruz started to run across the field.

"Don't run, Mari Cruz," Loli exclaimed. "We saw you and we'll tell the owner."

Then Mari Cruz returned to me and we came out of our hiding place to join the others.

As we were speaking, the girl, [Ginia], who came with Jacinta and Loli, was called away and that left only the four of us. After talking it over, all four of us went back to get some apples.

Just when we were having the most fun, we heard the voice of the schoolmaster who, seeing the branches move so much, thought it was the sheep and said to his wife:

"Concesa, go to the garden. The sheep are roving about among the apple trees."

On hearing him say this, we burst out laughing. When we had packed our pockets with apples, we ran off to eat them more quietly in the road, or rather in the *calleja*.

As we were enjoying ourselves, eating the apples, we heard a violent noise like thunder and we cried out together: "It seems to be thundering."

This happened at half-past eight at night.

When we had finished the apples, I said: "What a shame. Now that we have taken apples that did not belong to us, the devil will be happy and our poor guardian angel will be sad."

Then we began to pick up stones and to throw them with all our strength to the left side, where the devil was said to be.² When we had become tired from throwing stones and our consciences felt better, we started to play marbles with stones.

Suddenly, there appeared to me a very beautiful figure that shone brilliantly but did not hurt my eyes at all. When the other three girls, Jacinta, Loli, and Mari Cruz, saw me in this state of ecstasy, they thought that I was having a fit, because I kept saying, with my hands clasped: "Ay! Ay! Oh! Oh!" They were about to call my mother when they found themselves in the same state as I, and cried out together: "Ay! Oh! The angel!"

² They thought that the guardian angel was at everyone's right and the devil at the left.

There was a short silence among the four of us. Then, all of a sudden the angel disappeared and we returned to normal. Greatly frightened, we ran toward the church. As we passed the dance that was going on in the village, a girl named Pili González said to us:

"You look pale and scared! Where have you been?"

"Taking apples," we replied, very much ashamed to admit the truth.

"And this is why you are like that?", she inquired.

"It is because we have seen an angel," we answered together.

"Is it true?", she said.

"Yes, Yes," came our reply.

Then we continued on in the direction of the church. The youngster immediately told others what she had heard.

When we arrived at the door of the church, we changed our mind and went around to the rear to cry. We ran into some little girls who were playing there and when they saw us, they asked:

"Why are you crying?"

"Because we saw an angel," we replied.

They ran off to tell this to the schoolmistress [Doña Serafina Gomez]. When we had stopped crying, we returned to the door of the church and went in. At that same moment, the schoolmistress arrived in a very frightened state and immediately asked us:

"My dear children, is it true that you have seen an angel?"

"Yes, *Señora*, Yes," we replied.

"This could be your imagination," she remarked.

"No, *Señora*, No. We really saw him," we insisted.

Then she said: "Well, let's go and say a station in thanksgiving to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament."³

When we finished saying the station, we went to our homes. It was nine o'clock at night.

My mother had told me that she wanted me home while it was still light and it was already dark. So when I arrived home, she said to me:

³ Conchita has said that the "station" consists of "seven 'Our Fathers,' seven 'Hail Marys,' seven 'Glory Bes,' the 'Creed' and also an 'Our Father' for our Holy Father, the Pope."

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"Haven't I told you that you should get home while it is still daylight?"

Very much upset by these two things, for having seen such a beautiful figure and having arrived home late, I didn't dare enter the kitchen. Dejected, I leaned up against the door post and said to my mother:

"I've seen an angel."

"In addition to coming home late, you come and tell me things like that!", she said.

"But I did see an angel!", I insisted.

She repeated the same thing, but with more hesitation concerning my having seen the angel.

It was nine-thirty. We didn't say anything more about the matter that evening. The rest of the time was spent in the usual manner without talking about anything at all. •

COMMENT The four girls around whom the Garabandal event would revolve are Conchita (María Concepción) González, Loli (María Dolores) Mazón, Jacinta González and Mari Cruz (María Cruz) González. Although three of them have identical family names, none of the girls are closely related. The first three girls are twelve years old and the other only eleven.⁴ However, doctors have affirmed that, because of the backward mountain environment, their mental and psychological development is several years behind their physical age.

The starting point of the Garabandal story is the square in front of the village church of San Sebastian. It is there that the girls were playing when Conchita and Mari Cruz conceived the idea of pilfering some apples. It is a fitting starting point, since the church will become the focal point of many of the happenings and the major thrust of the message will be toward the Eucharist and the priesthood.

The fact that the girls ran immediately for the church at the conclusion of the apparition is also not without mean-

⁴ Conchita was born on February 7, 1949, Jacinta on April 27, 1949, Loli on May 1, 1949, and Mari Cruz on June 21, 1950.

ing. It shows their lively faith in God and in the eucharistic presence of Christ, since their first reaction in their fright was to take refuge there. There may even be some prophetic significance in it, since the Eucharist will eventually be revealed as the principal element in the message of Garabandal and Our Lady will frequently draw the girls in ecstasy to the church.

The angel "shone brilliantly." Conchita will soon mention "how dazzling" he was. She told the author on August 10, 1971, that Our Lady was always accompanied by light, even greater than that of the angel.

Lúcia in her *Memoirs* has described the angel who appeared at Fátima three times in 1916 as gleaming most brilliantly, like a crystal of great beauty through which the sun's rays glisten. She described Our Lady as being "all of light" and completely engulfed in light.

The fortuitous manner in which the four girls happened to come together for the first apparition shows that there was no preconceived plan or deceitfulness on their part.

In this same regard, it is significant that the four girls were not particularly friendly with each other and had not formed a closed group or clique among themselves prior to the vision.

This is pointed out by Doctor Celestino Ortiz Perez of Santander, a pediatrician specializing in child psychology, who spent some fifty days at Garabandal over a period of a year and a quarter. He made that observation in a medical report of his direct personal investigations issued in October, 1962.

The angel did not identify himself on this first visit. The girls learned later that he was the archangel Saint Michael. Is there any significance in the fact that this angel was Saint Michael and not some other angel? The message of Garabandal was not confined to the words spoken by Our Lady to the girls. It was also imparted through persons, places and events, as was brought out in the author's first book *God Speaks at Garabandal*.

God was trying to tell us something by his selection of Saint Michael as Our Lady's precursor and messenger. From the very start of the Garabandal event, our attention was being immediately focused on its principal purpose, the great struggle going on in the world and reaching a particularly violent peak in our day between the forces of good and forces of evil. God was setting the many happenings that would occur at Garabandal in their proper perspective by sending as their herald and forerunner the mighty Michael who had successfully led the faithful angels in their great struggle against Lucifer and the rebellious heavenly spirits.

God was also reminding us, at a time when this was needed, that spiritual creatures, both angels and devils, do indeed exist. Joined to the coming of Our Lady that would soon follow, it was a reaffirming of the invisible universe and of spiritual realities which is always one of the purposes of events like Garabandal and Fátima, where, incidentally, the same Saint Michael was also used as a precursor and secondary personage.

Monday, June 19 *Disappointment and Reassurance*

- The nineteenth arrived. By the time we'd gotten up, the people had already started to talk, saying:

"Those four girls must have seen something because they came down from the *calleja* with such an expression on their faces!"

"It must have been one of those big birds [that they mistook for something else], as it was getting dark," some commented.

"Or it could have been a tiny boy that approached them as they were dreaming," others said.

In brief, everyone had his own thought on the matter. That day, no one talked about anything else.

They asked us how he looked. Most happy to have seen the beautiful figure, we were very glad to tell them, for there were some people who doubted that it was true. We told them how he looked, how he was dressed and how dazzling he was.

Most of the people laughed at us, but this did not bother us for we knew that it was true.

These conversations took place at ten o'clock in the morning, as we were on our way to school.

When we arrived at school, the schoolmistress asked us:

"My dear children, are you really sure of what you told me yesterday?"

"Yes, *Señora*, we saw an angel," we all answered.

The girls who were with us at school were filled with wonder at what we said. We did everything at school as usual, without worrying about anything.

At one o'clock, we left school and departed for our homes. Jacinta and Mari Cruz were walking along together when they met the pastor of the village, Don Valentín Marichalar. He was very nervous and said to them:

"Now, now. Is it true that you saw an angel?"

"*Si, Señor*. Yes, sir!", they both replied.

"I don't know, I don't know if you have not made a mistake!", he insisted.

"No, no, don't worry. We saw an angel," they answered with a smile.

Then they continued along toward their homes.

The pastor walked along looking for me and he met me near my house. He was very nervous and said to me:

"Conchita, be honest. What did you see last night?"

I explained everything to him and he listened very attentively. Then he said:

"Well, then, if you see him tonight, ask him who he is and why he has come. We shall see what he says to you."

I said I would do that.

Then the pastor went to speak with Loli, to see if we all agreed fully in what we said. And I went along to my house.

He asked the same questions of Loli that he asked the three of us and she gave him the same answers that we had.

He was more impressed each time because the four of us were in such complete agreement. He said:

"Good, let's wait two or three more days to find out if you continue to see that beautiful figure, the angel, and to learn what he has to say to you. Then I will go to His Excellency, the Bishop."

We went about our affairs as usual. At home we ate and then we returned to school which began at three in the afternoon. When we left school, each of us went home. At my house they were doing a little repair work.

We went to buy some milk, and the woman we bought it from asked me:

"Is it true that you saw an angel or is this just idle talk?"

"It is certain that we saw an angel," I answered.

"How did you see him?", she continued.

I explained it to her and she listened with great attention. Then smiling, she said to me:

"As I know that you were well brought up, I believe that you saw an angel, but not the others."

"But we did see him, the four of us, Loli, Jacinta, [Mari Cruz],⁵ and I," I insisted.

She didn't have anything else to say and I left for home with the milk.

When I arrived, I said to my mother: "Mamma, I'm going to pray at the *calleja*."

Pepe⁶ Diaz who was working at our house, and my brother Aniceto González,⁷ who was helping him, overheard our conversation. Pepe laughed and said: "Yes, let her go. Why shouldn't you let her go and pray?"

But my brother objected: "No, you shouldn't go. Do you want people to laugh at you and at us, and have them go around saying that you claim to have seen an angel, when it isn't true? No, you shouldn't go."

Naturally, I kept insisting with my mother. As I was pleading with my mother again, the other three girls called me. My mother became nervous and said:

"*Ay, Dios mío*—Oh, my God, what a mess you have got us in."

"There isn't any mess," we said.

"But suppose that it is really true, and I stopped her from going!", my mother reflected.

Then she told me that I could go.

⁵ Conchita inadvertently omitted this name in her *Diary*.

⁶ Nickname for José.

⁷ He died prematurely on March 19, 1966. His nickname was Cetuco.

Very happy, we left for the *calleja*, (*un trocito de cielo— a corner of heaven* (emphasis in the text)).⁸

"Where are you going?", the people said to us.

"To pray at the *calleja*," we replied.

The people made fun of us and said: "Why don't you go to the church to pray rather than to that alley?"

"Because an angel appeared to us yesterday and we're going to pray to see if he will appear to us today," we replied together.

The people laughed at us but we continued on our way to the *calleja*, the place where the angel had appeared to us, hoping that he would appear again.

When we arrived there we started to pray. The people and the boys and girls who saw us go, tried to chase us away. The boys, hiding in nearby cornfields, threw stones at us.

We looked at each other and said: "Why are they throwing stones at us?"

Then we told them to stop. But they laughed at us and continued to throw stones as we recited the rosary.

When we had finished the rosary, we waited to see if the angel would come.

The sky was filled with clouds and a strong cold wind was blowing.

When it became late, we started down toward the church and met the schoolmistress.

"Have you been to the *calleja* today?", she asked us.

"Yes, Señora, but we didn't see anything," we replied with great sadness due to not having seen the angel.

"Don't worry,"⁹ she said to us. "Do you know what the reason is? The angel hasn't come because it is very cloudy."

It was eight-thirty at night and we went to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. After that we went to our homes.

"Did you see the angel?", my mother asked.

"No, we didn't see him today," I answered.

⁸ For some reason, Conchita placed these words in parenthesis in her *Diary*.

⁹ The schoolmistress was right in not being concerned about the children's failure to see the angel. This failure and their great distress over it was an indication of the authenticity of the event they claimed was taking place. It proved that the coming of the vision was independent of their fond hopes and ardent desires.

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Then we did our chores as usual, had our supper and went to bed at a quarter of ten.

We had started our prayers when we heard a voice that said:

"Don't worry. You shall see me again" (emphasis in the text).¹⁰

Very startled, we continued to pray with great fervor until we fell asleep. All this happened on June 19, 1961. •

COMMENT "The pastor of the village, Don Valentín Marichalar" resided in Cosío. He lived in a little rectory attached to the rear of the church of that little village at the foot of the mountain. Garabandal with its own church of San Sebastián, which gave the pueblo its official name of San Sebastián de Garabandal, was a mission of Cosío, the real parish center.

Don Valentín was a good priest, concerned with the spiritual welfare of his flock. He showed this by coming up the difficult cart road from Cosío the very next day after the first apparition in order to investigate the reports he had heard. He continued this personal investigation and made written notes of what he observed. He attached considerable importance to agreement among the four girls in what they said about the apparitions. And rightly so. This is precisely one of the reasons why God brought four girls into these apparitions. Their complete agreement in all matters would always be a strong argument in favor of the authenticity of what they said. It would be particularly powerful in ruling out the possibility of a purely natural explanation of the events, such as all this being a game, a dream or the product of their imagination. It is humanly impossible, on a purely natural level, for four girls to agree

¹⁰ Conchita told the author in 1970 that she was the only one of the four girls who heard this voice. The reason the author asked the question was that in the very next sentence she used the plural "we." In the Romance languages, the first person plural is sometimes used in the place of the first person singular, as the *Diary* shows in the preceding two sentences.

fully concerning the large number of apparitions that were shared at Garabandal.

Tuesday, June 20 *A Mysterious Blinding Light*

• The twentieth of the same month arrived. We continued our daily life as we had done before.

The people continued to make the same comments, but with this difference that they began to wonder if it wasn't imagination on our part. As we had not seen the angel on the nineteenth, they were convinced that he would not appear to us again. They didn't know what had happened the previous night [during my prayers], because we hadn't told anyone about it.

On the afternoon of the twentieth, the other three girls and I did our chores as on the previous day. When school was over, we all went to our homes and when we got there we told our mothers that we were going to pray at the *calleja*.

My mother said to me: "No. Why do you want to go and pray at the *calleja*? Go to the church."

My mother was very worried, as were all our parents and brothers. They were going through a great struggle. Although they were inclined to believe that we were telling the truth, they nevertheless had doubts about it.¹¹

As I was speaking to my mother about this, three girls, Loli, Jacinta and Mari Cruz arrived at my house. They asked my mother why she wouldn't let me go, and they all pleaded: "Let her go! Let her go!"

"But why are you going there to make fools of yourselves?", she said.

"We are not going to make fools of ourselves. We are going to pray and see if the angel will come," we replied together.

"No, I won't let her go. You go, but Conchita won't," my mother exclaimed.

They left very slowly and soon were out of sight, concealed by a wall. They hid there so that my mother wouldn't see them.

This made me very sad.

¹¹ *Si se inclinaban a la verdad, pensaban al contrario.*

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Then my mother shouted: "Loli, the three of you, come here!"

They returned and my mother said to them: "Look, if you do what I ask, I will let Conchita go."

"Yes, yes, we'll do it," they cried out, delighted.

My mother said to us: "Look, you three go now, alone, as if you were going off to play and don't say anything to anyone. When you have reached the *calleja*, Conchita will go by herself secretly, so that no one will notice it."

A little afraid this might be a trick, they started off very slowly. But I said to them: "Go ahead, I'll come along shortly."

Then they moved along faster. I joined them soon after, but they complained that I'd taken a long time to come. When the four of us came together we were very happy and we continued along the road to the *calleja* where we intended to recite the rosary.

When we had finished the rosary and the angel hadn't come, we were about to leave for the village. As we were getting up off our knees, we saw a very bright light that hid us from one another. We couldn't see anything but the light. We were terrified and began to scream, but the very dazzling light was already disappearing.

We went to our homes because it was already very late; half-past nine at night. Because it was so late, we didn't go to the church that day. And when we arrived home, we didn't say anything to anyone.

The village priest had advised us to inform him quickly if something should happen again. As our parents didn't allow us to go to the village called Cosío where the priest lived, we were obliged to tell them about it so that they could go in our place. As was expected, they went and told him.

On those two days [when we saw the angel, and the dazzling light,] there were no people with us. There were only five of us, the angel, Loli, Mari Cruz, Jacinta and myself. •

COMMENT This blinding light without the vision of the angel is a mysterious phenomenon. Conchita said on August 10, 1971, that the light did not come from above but was all around them. They did not see any meaning to it.

It should probably be likened to the apparitions of the angel and considered jointly with them as a preparation for the coming of Our Lady. Lúcia speaks of a somewhat similar phenomenon which took place three times at Fátima in 1915 and which she felt was a psychological preparation for the three apparitions of the angel which occurred in 1916. In *Memoir IV*, she mentions seeing a strange cloud that was whiter than snow, transparent and had a human form.

This blinding light is also an early intimation of the great diversity that will constitute one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Garabandal apparitions. The unusual variety of the mystical phenomena experienced by the children is one of the best guarantees of the authenticity of these apparitions. There is such a wide and unusual diversity that it simply could not have been even imagined by four unsophisticated and poorly educated mountain girls living in a village almost completely cut off from the rest of the world. And certainly much of it could never have been simulated or induced by them. Conchita mentions that the parents did not allow the girls to go by themselves down the difficult four mile mountain road to the parish center of Cosío. That is how isolated their lives had been up to the time of the apparitions. Also, this particular phenomenon, the blinding light, seemingly without any real purpose, does not seem to be the type of thing young children would invent by themselves.

Wednesday, June 21 *Clementina Gonzalez Becomes Excited*

- The twenty-first of June arrived. It went by like any other day, although the people were beginning to believe a little more.

That evening, having done all the chores we were supposed to do, we asked our parents permission to go to the place where the angel had appeared. Because people did not believe

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us, we asked a woman, called Clementina González, if she would come with us so that she could see that it was true.

She was not eager to come since she did not believe in the apparitions. So she asked another woman to come with her because she didn't dare to go alone. The other woman, whose name is Concesa, told her she would go.

Seeing them accompany us, some people decided to come along too. On arriving at the *calleja*, we recited the rosary. As the angel didn't appear, the people really laughed at us and told us: "Say a station!"

As we were finishing the station, he appeared to us.

It was a Friday.¹² We asked the angel who he was and why he had come, but he didn't answer us.

When the apparition was over, the people were very excited and said:

"Ah, my children, when you see the angel again, tell him to forgive us for not believing."

And they started to cry.

Clementina was the most excited and wanted to call all the people of the village, but by the time she got around to it, the angel had disappeared.

Among those with us was an aunt of mine and another woman. They told Clementina not to get worked up that way and they said to her: "Did you see the angel, too?"

"No, I didn't see him," she answered. "But if you don't believe in this, you don't believe in God."

She was so nervous that the other women also told her not to get so excited. But she kept right on.

When we got back to the village, the women who had come with us told everyone what had happened. The people were very impressed by what they were told because they had never heard or seen anything like this. •

Thursday, June 22 *The People Said It Was Authentic*

- The twenty second of June arrived. The day was spent in the usual manner. The pastor of the village having heard about the things the people saw, said that he was going to

¹² Conchita's memory failed her here. The twenty-first was a Wednesday.

tell the Bishop about it. But the people of the village told him to wait until he had seen for himself.

That same day, at eight-thirty, we went to pray at the same place and all the people came with us, including the pastor. We all began to say the rosary together there, the people, the pastor and ourselves.

After we had finished the rosary, the angel appeared to us. Then when the people and the pastor saw us in ecstasy, the people began to shout and to say that this was authentic—*era cierto*.

A professor by the name of Marín was also present. The people said that he was the one who prepared us [through hypnotism] and they wanted to put him in jail. The people who said that he prepared us were not the people of the village. The ones who said this first were the policemen¹³ who came to the village the first time that a large crowd accompanied us to the *calleja*. The reason they said this was that after the apparition he took us to the house of a man of the village for questioning concerning the angel. •

COMMENT It is interesting to note how the very first witnesses of the apparitions—those who were present at this and the preceding one—were convinced of their authenticity simply by seeing the children in ecstasy. This will be a constant fact all during the apparitions. People will continually say: “Having seen the expression on the children’s faces during their ecstasy, is the only proof we need that what they say is true.” This was also the case at Lourdes and at Fátima.

Hypnotism could explain some of the phenomena connected with the apparitions, such as the insensitivity of the girls to blows, pin pricks, etc. But it cannot explain all the varied phenomena taken together, for example, how the girls could always detect a priest even in lay or military garb, or how they read people’s minds and consciences, etc.

¹³ They were members of the *Guardia Civil* from outside the village.

The very casual and factual manner in which Conchita alludes to hypnotism, without denials or personal comment, is in itself a strong indication that there is no truth in the contention that hypnotism was used on them during the apparitions. In the *Diary*, Conchita reports on various things which are unfavorable to herself and the other girls. She is quite indifferent to what people will think or say. This is striking and quite convincing.

Friday, June 23 *The People Become More and More Impressed*

• The twenty third of June arrived. We went to the same place to say the rosary and the people of the village came also. These people had spoken about the events to the people of the villages of Cosío, Puenteansa and Rozadio, and on Friday a large crowd was on hand.

That day we saw the angel at a quarter of nine. The people of the village continued to be more and more impressed, and those from other villages were also much impressed.

When the apparition was over, all the people kissed us—*nos besaba*.

That day, the policemen didn’t want the professor to take us. We went with the pastor to the sacristy to be questioned. He called us one by one in order to see if we agreed in what we said. We told him how we saw the angel and everything else.

After he had called all four of us and we had talked with him, we went outside with him. He told the people that so far everything was from God since the four of us had agreed perfectly in our statements—*hasta hora era todo de Dios, que coincidamos las cuatro igual*. The people were happy that it was from God. •

Saturday, June 24 *The Angel Has a Sign Beneath Him*

• The twenty fourth of June arrived. It was a Saturday and many people came from a large number of places. We did as on the other days and went to say the rosary at the *calleja*.

All the people went along with us, that is, the people of the village, because the outsiders had already gone to the site where the angel had appeared, to get a place from which they could see us.¹⁴

That day he did not give us time to start the rosary. Just as soon as we arrived at the site where the angel usually came, he appeared to us.

We had never heard him speak, but that day we saw him with a sign beneath him. The first line had the word "*Hay—*It is necessary that" and on the second line were some Roman numerals.¹⁵

We asked him what it meant, but he only smiled and didn't say anything.

When the apparition was over, the young men of the village took us to the church in a cart so that the people wouldn't crush us and smother us with kisses. When we arrived there, Don Valentín, the pastor, took us in, one by one, and questioned us on what had happened.

We told him that we had seen a sign. He asked us which letters we saw, but we hadn't paid attention to the sign. The pastor was impatient to go to the Most Reverend Bishop and tell him about it. He told us to go to the professor and to speak to him about it in the hope that we might recall some of the letters which would help him write out the sign. •

Sunday, June 25 *The Cuadro—Conchita's Doctor*

• Sunday, the twenty fifth of June arrived. More people kept coming on each occasion because the news spread to more places each time. The people continued to be very enthusiastic. Among the many who came were five priests who didn't believe. The schoolmaster of Cosío came also.

¹⁴ The bank overlooking the *calleja* was a choice spot.

¹⁵ Conchita stated on August 10, 1971, that they were too attracted by the beauty of the angel to look at the sign. She told William A. Nolan of Illinois in a letter written on March 22, 1965, that the Roman numerals she recalls seeing on the "last" line were XVIII—MCMLXI. These are undoubtedly an allusion to the message of October 18, 1961, which will be encountered shortly.

When we went to say the rosary at the *calleja*, we found that they had built a *cuadro*, a square enclosure with poles,¹⁶ so that the people would not get too near us. The only ones allowed in the *cuadro* were the priests, our parents and brothers and the doctors—and no one else.

That Sunday, many doctors came, and, as I have already said, five priests.

The schoolmaster of Cosío who was there as we were looking at the angel, did not believe. He claimed that it was a farce and said to one of my brothers:

"Your sister puts on a good act."

My brother didn't answer him.

That day as I was looking at the angel, our family doctor took and lifted me up and let me fall from a height of about two meters (6 feet). There was a noise like cracking bones. That was what people said afterward, because I wasn't aware of it myself.¹⁷ My brother [Serafín] wanted to go and stop the doctor from doing what he did, but an interior force kept him back.

When the apparition was over all the people were very moved and most of them came to raise my skirt to see how my knees were. I didn't know why they were doing this, since I had not been aware of anything.

It was about eight-thirty when the apparition ended and we went to the church to pray to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. They put us in the sacristy with all the doctors and

¹⁶ The *cuadro* was a sort of rustic corral made of saplings. It was about twelve feet square with a narrow opening at one end through which the girls and a few other special people could be admitted.

¹⁷ Conchita's family doctor has affirmed that the height from which he let Conchita drop was not more than 75 centimeters or two-and-a-half feet. Now it must be remembered that Conchita was in ecstasy, "looking at the angel," and "was not aware" herself of what the doctor was doing. She had to rely on estimates given her by people who witnessed the scene. In fact, her final estimate of the height "2 meters," or 6 feet, was not her original estimate. In her manuscript, the digit "2" is a correction, written over another digit, which appears to be a "1". This latter (1 meter or 3 feet) would be very close to the doctor's own estimate. In any event it was high enough for her to land with a crunching thud on the hard stone surface of the *calleja*, to the great consternation of the spectators.

priests so that they could ask us questions. The priests did not believe, but some of the others did. After a considerable lapse of time, we looked at our legs which were covered with lumps from pin pricks, pinches, and fingernail clawing. This did not hurt us, but the marks remained. •

COMMENT Priests know that all kinds of people claim to have visions and for that reason are extremely cautious when appraising reports of apparitions. In the early days at Garabandal, priests were not quick to believe as Conchita points out. Eventually about a thousand priests saw the girls in ecstasy and many believed.

Two types of mystical phenomenon are alluded to above by Conchita for the first time, namely, excessive weight and insensitivity. They will be discussed later.

Monday, June 26 *No Apparition*

- The twenty sixth of June arrived.¹⁸ That day we didn't have any apparition. Many people came and went away very disillusioned because there was no apparition. •

Tuesday, June 27 *No Apparition*

- The twenty seventh of June arrived. We continued to be delighted at having seen the angel smiling so much and accompanied by the sign. We went about our affairs in the same way that we always did. The people went around talking about what had happened. Those who had seen what had happened talked to those who had not seen it in order to get them to come and, sure enough, they all came.

Tuesday the twenty seventh there wasn't any apparition.

¹⁸ There is some confusion in the manner in which Conchita relates the events from Monday, June 26, through Sunday, July 1. It must be remembered that she wrote this section of the *Diary* some time after the events of this particular week had taken place. A few slight changes, mainly a regrouping of material, have been made for reasons of order and clarity.

There were many people. In the evening, we went as usual to recite the rosary at the *calleja*, and we said it with the people. When we finished the rosary and didn't see the angel, we were very sad because we thought that the people wouldn't come back again. They went away very disillusioned. If God wants it that way, that is the way it must be.

After praying, we went to say a station before the Blessed Sacrament. Then we went home.

The people of the village believed and were very sad because they thought that we wouldn't see the angel any more.

But the outsiders who had come didn't believe and they went away laughing and saying all kinds of things. They declared:

"As there are many people here and the girls are not sufficiently used to putting on their little act, they don't dare to to try it." •

COMMENT The reader will note again how unconcerned Conchita is in her *Diary* about recording opinions that are disparaging to her and her friends. It is highly improbable that she would do this if indeed she and her three friends were "putting on an act" and making up the whole story.

Wednesday, June 28 *The People Share the Girls' Disappointment—The Angel Appears*

- The twenty-eighth of June arrived. We were a little sad because we hadn't seen the angel. We went to school. As we left it, the people of the village noticing we were sad, cried and kissed us, and said to us:

"Pray a lot for the angel to return!"

In the evening we went to the *calleja* and did as usual. The people prayed the rosary with more faith than ever for him to appear to us.

When we had finished reciting the litany, he appeared to us and was smiling more than ever. We asked him why he had come. He smiled but did not answer.

We started seeing him at nine o'clock and finished at ten, but it seemed a minute or less because we were so happy when we were with him. •

Thursday, June 29 *The Angel Appears*

- The twenty-ninth of June arrived. We saw the angel the same as usual and we did the same things as usual. •

Friday, June 30 *The Same*

- Friday, the thirtieth of June, was also the same. •

Saturday, July 1 *The Angel Talks for the First Time and Announces Our Lady's Coming*

- Saturday, the first of July arrived. A great number of people came thinking that the Blessed Virgin might appear, since it was her day. Many doctors and some autos also came up to the village.

We went to the *calleja* as usual to pray the rosary and the people accompanied us. That day the apparition occurred very early, at seven-thirty, and it was still almost full daylight and the people were able to see very well.

At the end of the holy rosary, the angel appeared smiling very much and said to us:

"Do you know why I have come? It is to announce to you that tomorrow, Sunday, the Virgin Mary will appear to you as Our Lady of Mount Carmel."

"We hope she comes soon!", we replied, delighted with the news.

He only smiled.

The angel had the sign with him again and we still didn't understand what it meant. So we asked him:

"What is the meaning of the sign that you have with you?"

"The Blessed Virgin will tell you," he answered.

That day he talked to us¹⁹ about many things.

He said to Jacinta, Loli and Mari Cruz: "Do you remem-

¹⁹ This was the first time that the angel spoke to the girls.

ber how [on my first visit] you were going to call Conchita's mother, thinking that she was having a fit?"

"It is because she looked so strange," they replied, laughing.

That day he stayed for two hours, but to us it seemed like two seconds.

He said to us: "I shall return tomorrow with the Blessed Virgin."

Then he departed, and this made us very sad.

The people were overjoyed and asked us: "What did he say to you?"

And we told them what he had said.

The people from outside the village were very happy and departed, believing firmly and very eager to speak about what they had witnessed to those who had not seen it.

That day things went along as on the other days. They brought us to the sacristy for questioning and the young men of the village took us to the same place as on the other days.²⁰

The angel came dressed in a long, flowing and beltless blue garment. His wings were pale rose, rather long and very lovely. His little face was neither long nor round. His nose was very pretty, his eyes black and his complexion dark. His hands were very delicate and his fingernails short (sic). We did not see his feet. •

²⁰ It would appear that the true order and meaning of this last sentence is the following: The young men of the village, our bodyguards, took us to the same place as on the other days, namely, the *cuadro*, and after the apparition was over they brought us to the sacristy for questioning.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Sunday, July 2 *Feast of the Visitation—First Apparition of Our Lady of Mount Carmel*

• Sunday the second of July arrived. We went [to church] for the recitation of the rosary, which was held at 3 o'clock. After the rosary we took the road down the mountain because that day [two of] my brothers were due to arrive and we went to see if they were coming. It is five kilometers (four miles) from San Sebastián to Cosío and we covered about four of them. The people recognized us because the four of us were walking together and they had seen us in photographs. They offered us gifts: boxes of chocolates, rosaries, caramels and many other things.

That day ten or eleven priests, some doctors, an abbot and many autos were present.

We were already quite a distance from the village when we decided to go back because the people were pestering us with questions. A boy from the village came down on horseback looking for us and he finally met up with us. Then the driver of a Land-Rover saw us and recognized us. He asked us if we wanted to get in and go up to the village, and we told him that we did, since my brothers hadn't come.

When we arrived at the village, many people and priests were waiting for us.

It was six in the evening and we left for the *calleja* to say the rosary. We had not yet arrived at the scene of the apparitions when the Blessed Virgin appeared with an angel on each side. One of the two angels who accompanied her was Saint Michael. The other we didn't recognize. He was dressed exactly like Saint Michael. They looked like twins.

Beside the angel, who stood at the Blessed Virgin's right

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and at the same height as she, was a large eye which seemed to be the eye of God.

That day we talked a lot with the Blessed Virgin, as she did with us. We told her everything. We told her that we went out to the fields, that we were bronzed from the sun, that we put the hay in stacks, etc. And she laughed as we told her all these things.

We said the rosary while looking at her. She recited it with us in order to show us how to say it well¹—*para enseñarnos rezarlo bien*.

When we had finished the rosary, she told us that she was leaving. We asked her to stay a little longer, saying that she had stayed only a very short while. She laughed and said that she would return on Monday. When she departed, we were sad.

After her departure, people approached us to kiss us and ask us what she had said. Some did not believe because we had spoken to her about many things. However, the majority believed because they said she was like a mother whose daughter has not seen her for a long time. The daughter quite naturally tells her everything. And this was even more to the point in our case since we had never seen her before, and she was our heavenly Mother.

They took us to the sacristy and a priest called Don Francisco de Odriozola questioned us one by one and then told the people what we had said to him.

This is how the day of Sunday, July 2, came to a close. It was a very happy day, because we saw the Blessed Virgin for the first time and are with her whenever we desire.²

The Blessed Virgin appears with a white dress, a blue mantle and a crown of small golden stars. Her feet are not visible. Her hands are wide open with the scapular on the right wrist. The scapular is brown—*marron*. Her hair is long, dark brown and wavy, and parted in the middle. She has an oval shaped face and her nose is long and delicate. Her mouth is very

¹ Conchita will come back to this later, describing how Our Lady instructed them.

² *con ella estamos todas siempre que queramos*. On August 10, 1971, Conchita commented on this by saying that "we can all be with Mary whenever we want to."

pretty with rather full lips. The color of her face is dark but lighter than that of the angel: it is different. Her voice is very lovely, a very unusual voice that I can't describe. There is no woman that resembles the Blessed Virgin in her voice or in anything else.

Sometimes she carries the Infant Jesus—*el Niño*—in her arms. He seems very tiny, like a new-born baby with a little small face. His complexion is like that of the Blessed Virgin. He has a tiny little mouth, rather long hair and small hands, and a dress like a tunic, that is blue. •

COMMENT The precise and detailed description that Conchita gives of the angel, Our Lady and the Infant Jesus are proof that her visions are not the result of hallucination. A person suffering from hallucination has only vague and hazy recollections. The forms that he sees are vaporous and indeterminate. Also the writings of the hallucinated are characterized by incomprehensible sentences, incomplete lines, unfinished words, incoherent citations and prophecies, etc. Although *Conchita's Diary* is a very simple and unsophisticated document, it is quite free from these vagaries.

Conchita's difficulty in describing Our Lady's voice and appearance as manifested in her use of negations is characteristic of all mystics when they attempt to describe their visions.

Conchita mentions that Our Lady laughed twice during this apparition. In her description of previous apparitions she stated that the angel smiled considerably. Pictures taken of the girls in ecstasy show them smiling and laughing. At Lourdes, both Our Lady and Bernadette smiled and laughed quite frequently.

It is legitimate to ask why Our Lady chose the feast of the Visitation for her first apparition at Garabandal. Several things suggest themselves. She came to visit her children and help them, as she had done for her cousin Elizabeth. She came primarily to bring Christ, her Son, to

us. This too had been the case for Elizabeth, whose son John was sanctified by the infant Mary carried in her womb.

Our Lady came also to remind us of our need today for a deep and confident faith, the faith she had at the Annunciation when she was told she would conceive the Savior of the world without losing her virginity, without knowing man, an absolutely fantastic thing. This faith of Mary, ready to accept a humanly unbelievable thing, was the only virtue which the Holy Spirit prompted Elizabeth to praise in her cousin: "Blest is she who trusted that the Lord's words to her would be fulfilled" (Lk 1:45). It points to the overall purpose of Mary's coming at Garabandal, the crisis of faith in the Church.

Monday, July 3 *The Infant Jesus Accompanies Our Lady—The Calls and the Kissing of Objects*

• Monday, the third of July arrived. We were very happy at having seen our heavenly Mother. The first thing the four of us did in the morning was to go together and pray at the *cuadro*. After praying there, we went home to do the chores our parents had for us. Then we left for school.

Our schoolmistress is Doña Serafina Gómez. When we arrived in class, she began to cry and kissed us, saying:

"How lucky you are!"

When we left class, the people spoke to us in the same way she had. They were all deeply impressed and very pleased. And they all believed firmly—*mucho*.

Our parents also believed firmly—*mucho*.

Loli's father Ceferino said:

"There has never been anything like this!"

And her mother Julia said the same thing.

Jacinta's mother María also believed firmly—*mucho*.

Her father, Simón, believed much more —*mucho mas*.

If we engaged in some prank, Jacinta's father would say that the apostles did the same things, and he began explaining that whatever we did seemed good to him.

Mari Cruz' father, Escolástico, who doesn't go to Mass much, didn't seem to say anything.

Her mother Pilar believed at times and at others she didn't.

Concerning my mother Aniceta. She did indeed believe, but she doubted somewhat because we had talked so much on Sunday, the second.

My brothers believed from the time they first witnessed an ecstasy. They believed us and moreover this helped them spiritually, as it did many others.

There were people who had been pleased with what had taken place on Sunday, while others had not been moved by it.

We continued to go about our ordinary life doing whatever our parents told us.

The next day³ during the afternoon, we went to the *cuadro* as soon as we got out of school because we wanted very much to see her. We got out of school at five in the afternoon. The reason we wanted so much to see her is because we had been so happy on Sunday, the second. So we went there just as soon as we got out of school and we started to say the rosary all alone by ourselves.

When we had finished the rosary and had failed to see her, we said:

"We shouldn't be surprised or sad, as the apparition has always occurred later in the day."

Since she didn't come, we went to our homes and did the things they asked us to do around the house.

When the hour approached at which we had seen the Blessed Virgin for the first time on Sunday, our parents, because they now believed more in the apparitions, said to us:

"You should go and say the rosary at the *cuadro*."

"But we haven't been called yet," we replied.

They were puzzled and said: "But, how are you called?"

We told them that it was like an interior voice, but that we did not hear it with our ears, nor did we hear ourselves called by name.

It is a feeling of joy—*es un alegría*. There are three calls—*llamadas*. The first is a weaker feeling of joy—*una alegría mas pequeña*. The second is a little stronger—*algo mayor*.

³ It was really that same day, July 3.

But the third one makes us very excited and very happy—*nos ponemos muy nervosas y con mucha alegría*. Then the apparition occurs.

We only depart for the site of the apparition at the second call, for, if we leave at the first, we have to wait there a long while because there is a long delay between the first and the second call.

So we told them about the calls and they were very surprised, for they had never seen or heard anything like it.

When this conversation was over, we had a call and we told them so. The four of us were together and there were many people with us. Some of these did not believe, probably because they had never come before. They said to Don Valentín, the pastor:

"Why don't you put two of the girls in Loli's house and the other two in Conchita's house—in my house?"

Don Valentín replied: "Yes, this is a good idea. We will put Loli and Jacinta in Loli's house, and Conchita and Mari Cruz in Conchita's house."

He spoke about this to our parents and brothers. Our parents said it was all right.

He separated us that way to see if the four of us would come together at the same time. A half-hour after making this arrangement, we had the second call and the four of us came together in the *cuadro* at the same time. The people were amazed and said:

"How were they able to come together?"

As soon as we arrived at the *cuadro*, the Blessed Virgin appeared with the Infant Jesus. But the angels didn't come.⁴ The Blessed Virgin was smiling very much and so was the Infant. The first thing we asked her was where Saint Michael and the other angel were? She simply smiled more than ever.

The people and parents who were there gave us objects to present to her to kiss, and she kissed them all.

As we wanted to amuse the Infant Jesus, we gathered some pebbles. I placed them in the braids of my hair and Loli in her sleeves. Jacinta offered them to him and he didn't take them. He just smiled more than ever. Mari Cruz said to him: "If you

⁴ The angel's role is that of precursor and messenger. Now that Our Lady has begun to appear, he will come only infrequently.

wish, I'll give you some caramels that someone brought me? If you come with me, I'll give them to you."

He didn't answer anything.

The Blessed Virgin talked a lot with us but she didn't tell us to do it [take the Infant].

The apparition started at seven-thirty and ended at eight o'clock.

When she said: "Remain with God and with me also," we became sad and said good-bye.

Her last words were: "Tomorrow, you will see me again." •

COMMENT In her account of this and of several of the other apparitions, Conchita notes that she and her three friends do whatever their parents ask of them. Doctor Ortiz in the report mentioned above makes a similar observation: "Their behavior with their families, their obedience toward their parents and superiors improved after the apparitions began." This, as the doctor realized, was a significant and favorable sign. It indicated that the girls had benefited spiritually from the visions. Obedience is a key virtue in evaluating the moral character of a visionary.

The kissing of pebbles (and eventually of religious articles) by Our Lady is another of the features of the Garabandal apparitions not associated with those of Lourdes, Fátima or the other well known Marian appearances. As it is quite unusual, Conchita was questioned about it at some length on April 25, 1970.

Conchita affirmed that it all began unexpectedly with "an intuition" they had of using pebbles to amuse the Infant Jesus. When they offered them to him in their play and he refused to take them, Our Lady took them and kissed them and told them to give them to the people around them. It was all as simple—and providential—as that.

When the people discovered that Our Lady had kissed the pebbles, they began giving the children rosaries and medals to be kissed. The substitution of religious articles for pebbles did not originate with Our Lady, but, like the

introduction of these pebbles, was a natural and spontaneous happening. As this runs somewhat counter to general belief, it is felt advisable to quote some of the specific information Conchita gave on the above date.

When asked if, in the early days of the apparitions, the Blessed Virgin had told the girls to gather pebbles and to present them to the people in the crowd around them, she replied:

It was not the Blessed Virgin who told us to gather pebbles.

We did it ourselves. It was an intuition we had . . . to give them to the Infant Jesus. We did it on the first day. As the Infant Jesus did not take them [from Jacinta, who offered them to him—see *Diary* above], the Blessed Virgin touched them and kissed them and then said to us: "Give them to other people." However, on the first day, she did not tell us to give them to particular people—*personas determinadas*.

In the last sentence, Conchita alludes to the fact that eventually Our Lady told the girls to give the kissed pebbles to particular people whom she designated. Later, also, she kissed crucifixes which the girls often carried with them, and she told them while they were in ecstasy to present the kissed crucifixes to specific people in the crowd whom she led them to. It was considered a great privilege and honor to be selected in this way by Our Lady during an apparition.

Conchita repeated that the girls had gathered the pebbles "to play with the Infant Jesus, to give them to the Infant Jesus, . . . to amuse him." She still recalls that she "placed them in the braids of her hair—*en las trenzas*." Therefore when they gathered the pebbles, "it was not with the intention of giving them to the Blessed Virgin to be kissed."

She also made it clear that it was not the Blessed Virgin who asked them to substitute medals and rosaries for the pebbles, something which happened quite soon. It was they

themselves who made the substitution. However, they did this because "the people gave us many rosaries and we took them with us. Then, she [Our Lady] told us to take them so that she could kiss them."⁵

The Blessed Virgin told Conchita that Jesus would perform "prodigies" through these articles she kissed. She did this at the final Garabandal apparition on November 13, 1965. The impression gathered from most of the printed material on Garabandal is that Our Lady made this statement in the early days of the apparitions. But this is not what Conchita said. She was asked specifically: "When did the Blessed Virgin say that her Son would perform prodigies through kissed articles?" Her answer: "On the thirteenth of November."⁶

Another generally accepted statement relating to kissed objects but not found anywhere in the *Diary*, affirms that those who wear these objects with faith and confidence will make their purgatory on earth. Conchita was not interrogated about this on April 25, 1970, but she had previously spoken about it in response to a question put to her on September 14, 1965.⁷ The question asked what value or power objects kissed by the Blessed Virgin would have before and after the miracle? She answered:

The Blessed Virgin said that Jesus would perform miracles through objects kissed by her and that those who wear them with faith and confidence would make their purgatory on this earth with suffering corresponding to what they would have endured in purgatory.⁸

⁵ *Entonces, ella nos dijo traerlo para besarlo.*

⁶ This apparition will be discussed at length later.

⁷ A series of 18 questions were submitted to Conchita on September 14, 1965 by Joey Lomangino and several friends. The author has a photostatic copy of the original document containing the questions and answers in Spanish. The answers are in Conchita's own handwriting.

⁸ Conchita's reply is very difficult to translate: "*Pues ella ha dicho que los objetos besados por ella, Jesus haria milagros. Y los que les llevarian con fe y confianza, el purgatorio correspondiente, lo pasarian en la tierra con sufrimientos.*"

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Another facet of kissed objects is the sweet odor or scent of perfume which occasionally emanates from them. Did Our Lady say anything about this to the girls? Conchita was asked this specific question on September 14, 1965. Her reply:

No, she did not say this at all. But she said that they would produce miracles and prodigies.

Perfume emanating from relics, etc., is a rather common phenomenon. An odor of perfume came from the stigmata of the late Padre Pio, and people who prayed to Padre Pio while he was still alive quite frequently experienced a fragrance during or after their prayer, and this wherever they were in the world.

Not only has this phenomenon of fragrance been definitely observed in conjunction with kissed objects, but another rather similar one, luminosity of kissed objects, has also been noted, although less frequently. Like the fragrance, luminosity was never mentioned to the girls by Our Lady at Garabandal.

July 3 is the first time Conchita mentions seeing the Infant Jesus. Their playing pebbles with him in the delightful manner described by Conchita is proof of their truly young mentality and utter lack of sophistication. It is one of the many things that give a true ring of authenticity to the *Diary*. The people observed the children as they "played" with the Infant Jesus. Their gestures and facial expressions corresponded to the game they were playing. So, also, later when Our Lady occasionally placed the Infant in the arms of the four girls, the spectators noticed that the position and motion of their arms, etc., corresponded to this action. It is interesting to note that in regard to their holding the Infant, the girls affirmed they felt the Infant's weight, but nevertheless somehow had the impression that they were not in contact with his body.

How frequently did Our Lady carry the Infant Jesus with her? Conchita said above this happened "sometimes." Most of the time the Blessed Virgin came alone. This is brought out in a conversation which Conchita had with Our Lady during an apparition on December 8, 1962. Here is the pertinent part of that charming childish conversation:

But it is a long time since the Baby has come! And he has not gotten any bigger at all, at all. He is just like he was before. Where has he been? Where has he been? When the Baby doesn't come, where does he stay? Somewhere in Heaven? or in some crib? Where does he stay?⁹

The three calls or *llamadas*, like the ecstatic marches with which they have certain common traits, are very special features that characterize the apparitions of Garabandal and distinguish them from those of Lourdes and Fátima. Conchita, this thirteen year old mountain girl, gives a very accurate description of these calls when she says they are "feelings of joy". This is borne out in a document recently released, the *Memoirs* of Father José Ramón García de la Riva, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows, Barro de Llanes, Asturias. In this account of his frequent visits to Garabandal from 1961 through 1968 (he was present at some 200 apparitions), Don José Ramón speaks of these "calls" that he witnessed himself. He describes them as "happiness," "an interior joy," a "sort of joyous excitement" that showed itself exteriorly. Although the girls tried to conceal it, he affirms that it could be easily discerned by those who visited Garabandal often. As he points out, it is quite noticeable in an eight millimeter film taken at the pines on a day when the two Jesuit brothers, Father Luis María and Ramón María Andréu were present. This short color movie, for all its amateurishness (which is an assurance of its authenticity), is a most interesting and valuable document.

⁹ *Journal de Conchita-Traduit de l'espagnol par G. du Pilier* (Paris. Nouvelles Editions Latines), p. 36, note (38).

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Many copies of it have been made and several have been shown in the United States.¹⁰

The purpose of the calls, and especially of the ecstatic marches which shall be seen later, was to attract attention to the apparitions and to prove that the Garabandal event had no natural explanation.

¹⁰ The *Memoirs* have been published in English under the title of *Memoirs of My Visits to Garabandal* by Northwest Garabandal, P.O. Box 529, Tacoma, Washington (1969). The English translation is by Mary of Jesus. The *Memoirs* have also been published in French under the title *Mémoires d'un Curé de Campagne Espagnol* by Centre Information Garabandal, Salvat, 49 Vivy, France (1970). M. Gerard Suel is the translator. The French translation is exceptionally well done. It contains a number of interesting letters sent by the various girls to Father García de la Riva while the apparitions were still going on, as well as other material not found in the English translation.

Copies of the film mentioned above can be obtained in the United States through Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Madison Square P.O. Station Box 696, New York City, N.Y. 10010.

3

The First Message and the Commission

Tuesday, July 4 *The First Message*

• The fourth of July arrived. The people of the village and our parents and brothers believed more each day. The people from other villages who had come were very active in telling others to come. We continued to carry on our regular life and did the things our parents told us to do.

During the afternoon of Tuesday, the third day on which we saw the Blessed Virgin, many people and priests came up to the village.

When the rosary was recited in the parish church at six, we had already received our first call. The church was full of people and there were about twelve priests at the main altar. And there were photographers taking pictures. By the conclusion of the rosary, we had already received two calls and started to run for the *cuadro* with the people trotting along behind us. Some of them didn't have time to reach there. Mari Cruz and I stopped a little higher up than Loli and Jacinta. The two of us were inside the *cuadro*, the wooden enclosure, but the other two were not.

The people remarked to each other that, although we had been running, we weren't perspiring, whereas they were perspiring heavily and had reached the *calleja* all tired out. They were astonished, but [it was not really amazing] since it was the Blessed Virgin who carried us.¹

The Blessed Virgin was smiling as usual. The first thing she said was:

"Do you know the meaning of the sign that was beneath the angel?"

¹ *pero como era la Virgen quien nos llevaba.*

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"No, we don't," we exclaimed together.

"It had a message that I am going to give you in order that you may announce it publicly on the eighteenth of October," she said.

Then she told us:

"It is as follows:

"We must make many sacrifices, perform much penance, and visit the Blessed Sacrament."

"But first, we must lead very good lives—*ser muy buenos*."

"If we do not, a chastisement will befall us."

"The cup is already filling up and if we do not change, a very great chastisement will come upon us."

This is the meaning of the angel's sign and the message which we announced on the eighteenth of October. This is what the Blessed Virgin told us this first time. But I didn't understand it.

She left immediately after this. The apparition started at twenty-five minutes after six and ended at seven o'clock.

The next day she said she would explain the message to us and eventually she did tell us its meaning and also the manner in which we were to announce it to the public. She said that we were to announce it ourselves at the door of the church and that on the eighteenth of October we were to tell it to Don Valentín so that he could announce it at the pines at ten-thirty at night •

COMMENT There exists two versions of the first message, or "The Message of October 18, 1961," as it is frequently called. The above version or text was written by Conchita between September 1962 and some time in the second half of 1963. The other version was written by Conchita on a slip of paper and signed by her and the other three girls about a year before the *Diary* version. Because of its earlier origin and the fact that it is signed by all four girls, the author believes that this should be preferred and considered the official first message. Here is the text of this earlier signed version of the Message of October 18, 1961:

We must make many sacrifices, perform much penance, and visit the Blessed Sacrament frequently.

But first, we must lead good lives.

If we do not, a chastisement will befall us.

The cup is already filling up and if we do not change, a very great chastisement will come upon us.

The difference between the two versions is of minor importance and only involves two words. In the *Diary*, "frequently" is omitted in the statement: "We must . . . visit the Blessed Sacrament." And "very" is added in the statement: "We must lead very good lives—*Tenemos que ser muy buenos* (Literally: we must be very good)." It might also be noted that the earlier version carries the following remark which is also endorsed by the four girls: "The Blessed Virgin wants us to do these things, so that we may avoid God's punishment."

The first message of Garabandal makes no mention of priests. The second message, that will be seen later, does. It is important to know that Our Lady did start speaking to the girls about priests from the first days of the apparitions in 1961. She stressed the need of praying for them so that they might be holy and lead others to holiness by their example. It will have been noticed that Conchita frequently points out the presence of priests in the village. Although she started writing the *Diary* more than a year after the start of the apparitions, she still recalls the number of priests on certain days. She mentions the presence of doctors also, but only in an indefinite way. On Sunday, June 25, she noted that there were "five priests" and "many doctors." On Sunday, July 2, there were "ten or eleven priests, some doctors, an abbot . . ." The girls were always especially happy when priests came to the village, and they treated them with very special consideration, although they themselves were not always treated this way by the priests.

Conchita notes that on receiving the third call or *llamada*, she and her three friends ran from the church to the *calleja*

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and reached it without even perspiring, whereas the people who followed them arrived perspiring heavily and all tired out. She found nothing unusual about this since "it was the Blessed Virgin who carried us." Later, in speaking of an apparition that occurred on July 27, she says: ". . . the third call is something that carries us away without our knowing how . . ." This extraordinary phenomenon, the *llamada*, in its effortless "carrying" feature resembles another unusual phenomenon also connected with the apparitions of Garabandal, namely, the ecstatic march, which will be discussed later on.

Wednesday, October 18 *Publicizing the Message—The Doubts of Father Ramón Andréu, S.J.*²

• But the commission said that since it was raining hard and there were many people without any protection, it would be better to announce the message at nine or nine-thirty. This is what the commission said and this is what we did.

The four of us and the people that were there went up to the pines at five minutes of ten. When we arrived at the pines, Don Valentín was already there.

He read the message in a low voice³ and after reading it, he gave us the message so we could read it and the four of us read it together. However, as the people did not understand us well, a man read it.

After reading the message, we went down toward the village.

In the *calleja*, at the place we called the *cuadro*, the Blessed Virgin appeared to use and she said to me:

² At this point in her *Diary*, Conchita temporarily abandons the chronological order she has been following and jumps ahead a few months to October 18th in order to complete the treatment of this topic. As she advances now, she will give very few precise dates. We shall attempt to determine as many of these as we can from the meager sources at our disposal.

³ *para el solo.*

The day before I went to Santander, there were many people at Garabandal and among them was a priest with a white habit. It surprised me greatly to see him there with a habit of that color because I hadn't ever seen any before.

That day my mother told me to ask the Blessed Virgin if she wanted me to go to Santander and I said I would ask her.

It was six o'clock in the afternoon and the four of us had already received two calls. A priest, whose name is Don Alfonso Cebián, had brought a bag of caramels for the four of us and we were dividing them up when the third call came. We dropped the caramels in the road, although we like caramels very much. But we preferred by far to see the Blessed Virgin. Besides, the third call is something that carries us away without our knowing how—*es una cosa que nos lleva y no sabemos como*—and we go to the place called the *cuadro*.

We didn't have time to get there. The Blessed Virgin appeared before we arrived.

As we were very eager to know who that priest was who had come dressed in white, we asked the Blessed Virgin. She didn't say anything but only smiled. However, we insisted again⁶ and finally after a long while she said to us:

"He is a Dominican."

"A Dominicu?", I asked.

"Yes," she replied.

That same day I asked the Blessed Virgin if she would let me go to Santander and she didn't forbid me from going.⁷

That day the apparition lasted exactly one hour, but to us it seemed a minute. She herself told us that she had been with us for an hour. •

at the evening apparition described by Conchita. There had been an earlier morning vision at which Our Lady had announced she would return in the evening. Sanchez-Ventura's book has been translated into English under the title of *The Apparitions of Garabandal* (2nd ed.; Detroit, San Miguel Publishing Co., 1967).

⁵ Don Luis was a relative of Conchita. He took her to Santander at the instigation of the diocesan authorities so that she could be examined by the commission mentioned above.

⁶ As stated above, the girls always manifested great interest in priests. They frequently questioned the apparition about them with real eagerness.

⁷ *ella no me lo quitó.*

Friday, July 28 *First Diocesan Investigation at Santander*

• They wanted to take me to Santander because they claimed I was the one who was influencing the others. They took me therefore to examine me.

The first day I was there I had an apparition near the church of Our Lady of Consolation in the presence of many people. The people were so numerous that the armed (sic) police had to intervene.

That day they performed various tests on me and when the apparition was over they put me in an office⁸ with a priest and a doctor who questioned me. The priest was Don Francisco de Odriozola and the doctor's name was Piñal. The doctor said to me:

"Why have you done those things?" "You are out of your mind—*loca*—deceiving the world like that."

And he told me: "Hold yourself straight and look at my nose. I am going to hypnotize you."

When he told me: "Look at my nose," I laughed.

Then he said to me: "Don't laugh, this not a laughing matter."

That day they didn't do anything else to me.

The next day, they took me to some doctors to see if I was sick. They took me to one called Morales⁹ and to several others. They all told me that I was well and that this affair of the apparitions was all a dream. They also said they were going to leave me there in Santander so that I could amuse myself and forget everything and stop having any more apparitions.

⁸ It was not really an office, but the sacristy of the church of Our Lady of Consolation.

⁹ Father Francisco Odriozola and doctors Piñal and Morales were all members of the diocesan commission of investigation. Don Francisco is the same priest who questioned the girls in the sacristy of the village church on July 2. Sometimes referred to as Doctor Francisco Odriozola (Conchita errs in using the particle "de"), he later became a Canon. Technically the secretary of the commission, he actually played a very active and influential role. He served as liaison man for the various bishops of Santander who followed each other in rapid succession.

Then my mother, who was quite convinced that there was nothing wrong with me because of what the doctors had told her, left me and went away.

Some nieces and a sister of Father Odriozola came each day to get me at the house where I was staying and to take me to the beach¹⁰ and to the fair grounds which I hadn't ever seen before. As I went to the beach every day, the Blessed Virgin didn't appear to me.

At the end of eight days, a gentleman intervened so that I could leave and my mother came to get me and take me away. The man's name is Don Emilio del Valle Egocheaga. I shall remember him all my life.

The day they came for me, I went to Doctor Piñal's to tell him that I was going away. He became very angry and said a lot of things to me to keep me from going. I told him that I wasn't seeing the Blessed Virgin any more, that I supposed that the others were seeing her and that I thought the message was true.¹¹ He asked me to sign what I had said and I did. Then he told me to go and tell it to the Most Reverend Bishop, Don Doroteo, which I did.

All told, they all treated me very well. •

COMMENT While Conchita was enjoying a vision near the church of Our Lady of Consolation, the other three girls saw the Blessed Virgin at the pines of Garabandal and were told by her that Conchita was seeing her also at that very moment in Santander, a city some sixty-five miles away. This is the only time that any of the four girls are known to have experienced an apparition completely outside of the Garabandal area, although Conchita had a locution (a supernatural communication without a vision) at Pamplona and Loli also had one at Borja.

Conchita was picked up bodily while still in ecstasy in

¹⁰ Santander is an Atlantic sea coast city that has a beach.

¹¹ *Yo le dije que no veía a la Virgen, pero que las otras sí me hacían que sí, y que el mensaje sí me hacía que sí era.*

the street and carried this way into the sacristy of the church where she returned to normal.¹²

Conchita has said that she does not believe that the cessation of the apparitions at Santander (the other girls continued to have them daily or so at Garabandal during this time) was brought about by the fact that she went to the beach. The wording of the *Diary* does seem to imply this. She told the author on April 25, 1970 that "she did not think that it was because she went to the beach" that the apparitions stopped. "I did not see anything wrong [in going there]—*no veía ninguna malicia*", she stated.

Conchita gives as the reason for her being taken to Santander the fact that "they claimed I was the one who was influencing the others." They apparently expected the apparitions would cease with her away from Garabandal. But the very first day of her stay in Santander, she had an apparition alone in that city, while her three friends went into ecstasy at Garabandal, simultaneously with her but quite independently of her, some sixty-five miles away. This was heaven's quick answer to those who might have felt that Conchita was inducing her friends into ecstasy.

The reason Doctor Piñal tried to hypnotize Conchita is undoubtedly because of the fact, recorded above (June 22) by Conchita, that some people from outside the village, namely, policemen of the *Guardia Civil* sent to Garabandal to maintain order during the apparitions, stated that the girls had been hypnotized. The Doctor was undoubtedly testing Conchita to see if she was prone to hypnotism.

Conchita has reaffirmed more recently that everyone, priests and doctors, were "very amiable" to her at Santander. She was questioned and examined several times by

¹² Conchita's mother, who was in Santander with Conchita at the time and witnessed the event, told this to the author in the spring of 1970. The girls themselves while in ecstasy were never conscious of what others were doing to them.

them. She also admitted, as also transpires from her *Diary*, that on certain occasions Doctor Piñal was less than amiable. She said that he threatened to place her in an insane asylum and to put her parents in prison. She also declared that she had been forbidden to go to confession, Mass and Communion "during the days at Santander."¹³

Thursday, August 3 *Conchita Returns to Garabandal*

- When I arrived at the village from my trip to Santander, many people and several priests came to meet me because Loli and Jacinta had said in the course of an apparition that I was coming up the road at the time, which was true. They were in the church when the Blessed Virgin told them this.

That same evening, Mari Cruz waited for the Blessed Virgin on the balcony of her house in the presence of many people. •

COMMENT Loli and Jacinta were in an ecstatic fall, stretched out on their backs in the village church before the altar, when they asked the Blessed Virgin for news about Conchita and were told that she was at that very moment on her way up the mountain road. Ecstatic falls began occurring very early in August, 1961. They had been preceded in the second half of July by ecstatic oscillations. Both of these phenomena will be discussed later.

Friday, August 4 *An Attempt to Record Our Lady's Voice*

- The following day as my mother and I were returning from the fields, we met my godmother Maximina González. She was very excited and said to us:

"Don't you know that the voice of the Blessed Virgin has been heard on a taperecorder?"

"What did she say?" I asked.

¹³ Conchita told all this to the author on April 25, 1970.

She replied: "Loli and Jacinta asked her [the Blessed Virgin]: 'Speak, please, speak!' And the people heard the answer: 'No, I won't speak.'"

My godmother told me that the people began to cry because they were very moved at having heard the Blessed Virgin's voice. •

COMMENT The fact that Our Lady's voice was heard by several people on August 4th is quite authentic, but the incident is not described quite accurately by Conchita, who, as she states in the *Diary*, heard it from Maximina González. Maximina is Conchita's maternal aunt as well as her godmother.

G. du Pilier, author of the annotated French translation of *Conchita's Diary* quoted above, states in a footnote of his book that he has read the signed testimony of several persons who witnessed the event and he proceeds to give a summary of what they say. The following information is taken from his summary. Some strangers had brought a taperecorder to Garabandal and showed Loli and Jacinta how it worked. One of the girls had the microphone in her hand when she went into ecstasy.

Du Pilier writes:

The girl spoke to the apparition: "There is a man there who came with an instrument 'that takes all the words.' Why don't you talk into it? It is not for us, it is so that they will believe . . . Speak, say a few words so that they will believe!"

After the ecstasy, the people listened to the tape. There were about fifty persons present. You could hear the voice of the children perfectly. When the replay came to the fervent supplication: "Speak, say a few words so that they will believe," the tape reached the end. At that very moment, a voice that the witnesses unanimously described as 'very sweet— *très douce*', came forth from the instrument: "*No, no hablo*—No, I won't speak."

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As can be imagined, the impression produced on the witnesses was very great. A person declared that day on leaving Garabandal: "To the day I die, I shall have the certainty of having heard the Blessed Virgin's voice."

It should be noted, as a conclusion to this story, that in subsequent replays of the tape, the phenomenon did not recur. In any case, whatever interpretation one may wish to attach to these events, their objective reality is certain, especially since it is based on a dozen testimonies.¹⁴

One thing stands out in all of Conchita's descriptions of unusual incidents and mystical phenomena. She gives the brief stark facts and nothing else. There is no attempt at a suspenseful preliminary build-up, no elaborate or dramatic description of what took place nor any emotional comments about it. All this militates very much in favor of the authenticity and veracity of her reports.

¹⁴ *Journal de Conchita*, p. 48, note (62).

The Great Miracle and Fathers Luis and Ramon Andréu, S.J.

Saturday, July 29 *Our Lady Accedes to Father Ramón's Request*

• While I was in Santander¹ two Jesuit priests, Ramón María Andréu and Luis María Andréu were in the village. They came, as many others did, without believing in the least.

On one of those days, Loli and Jacinta had an apparition at the pines during the daytime. These priests were there, and seeing the two girls had been in ecstasy for a little while, Father Ramón had this thought:

"If this is authentic, let the apparition cease for one of them."

At that moment the vision ended for Loli. Then a few minutes later the Blessed Virgin appeared to her again. The priests considered this as a proof. •

COMMENT Since Conchita was still in Santander on July 29, she did not personally witness the above event. However, her report of it is accurate. It was actually the fourth apparition which occurred on that particular day and it lasted about an hour. Father Ramón has subsequently defined to what extent he considered it "a proof." He has said that he did not begin to believe immediately, but that the incident did convince him that the children

¹ Conchita goes back several days to an incident that occurred on July 29th. We owe this date to Father Ramón Andréu. Conchita does not give any date in the *Diary*.

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were sincere and not deliberately deceiving anyone or putting on an act.

We are fortunate in having Father Ramón's own more detailed report of this interesting and instructive episode which reminds one in a general sort of way of many other episodes in which Our Lady gave "a proof" to various individuals, including the pastor, Don Valentín Marichalar, and Father José Ramón García de la Riva, author of the Memoirs mentioned above.

It was toward the end of the afternoon and Father Ramón was standing very close to the two girls in ecstasy, Loli and Jacinta. He was so close he could hear them talk to the vision in that very special almost whispering voice, characteristic of their ecstatic conversations, and could even understand the things they said. Other people were also present and among them the enquiring pastor, Don Valentín and Loli's father and mother.

This was Father Ramón's very first visit to Garabandal. He did not believe in the least in the authenticity of the events. He had come to the village at the insistence of some friends and because he was tired from preaching several successive retreats and felt the need for some relaxation.

After watching the girls for some time he began to ask himself what the answer to the phenomenon might be. The usual interpretations of hysteria, suggestion, impressionability and hypnotism passed through his mind. Hypnotism arrested his attention most, but even that was quickly discarded as he scrutinized the spectators and saw the admiring surprise reflected on their faces. It was rather they who seemed to be hypnotized! At least there was evidently no hypnotist among them.

We give the remainder of this incident in Father Ramón's own words as quoted in an interview which is related in G. du Pilier's *Journal de Conchita*:

I had already seen the two girls enter and come out of the state of ecstasy together. I had the impression that they

had but one soul. What I thought at that time did not seem to me to make much sense, but I thought it all the same: May one of these two girls return to her normal state and the other remain in ecstasy.

At this precise moment, Loli, who was very close to me, returned to normal, turned slightly and looked at me with a smile. I asked her:

"You aren't seeing the Blessed Virgin any more?"

"No, Sir."

"And why?", I insisted.

"Because she has gone."

Jacinta was still in ecstasy. I said to Loli:

"Look at Jacinta."

The child looked at her and smiled at seeing her in ecstasy, for it was the first time that, being out of the ecstatic state herself, she saw one of her companions in that condition. I asked another question:

"What did the Blessed Virgin tell you?"

She was about to answer when she went back into ecstasy, her head tilted backward. I then heard the following dialogue between the two girls and the vision:

Jacinta: "Loli, why did you leave?"

Loli (addressing herself to the apparition): "Why did you withdraw yourself?"

Then, after a short pause:

"Oh! That's why? It was so that he would believe!"

On hearing that I rejoined my brother Luis and said to him:

"Be careful what you think. The transmission of thought is like lightning here!"²

Tuesday, August 8 *Father Luis Andréu Sees Our Lady and the Great Miracle—The Blessed Virgin Teaches Mari Cruz How to Pray*

- During this vision, the four of us were together, Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz and I. There were also many other people

² Pp. 49-51, note (64).

there, including Father Luis María Andréu, a seminarian, Andrés Pardo, and Father Royo Marín, a Dominican.

It was dark when the Blessed Virgin appeared to us. At the end of the rosary, the four of us went into ecstasy and we began to walk toward the pines.

When we arrived at the pines, Father Luis María, who had followed us, said: "Miracle, miracle," and he kept staring upward.

We could see him. Now, in our ecstasies we never see anyone (except the Blessed Virgin). But we saw Father Luis and the Blessed Virgin told us that he was seeing her and the miracle too.

The people said that we recited the Creed at the pines. That day was the first time the Blessed Virgin taught us to pray.³

Then, still in ecstasy, we went down to the village. When we got to the church we stopped seeing the Blessed Virgin. Since Mari Cruz hadn't seen her for several days, she remained in ecstasy with the Blessed Virgin and went into the church. When she arrived at the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary and of the archangel Saint Michael, she started to say the Creed very slowly with the Blessed Virgin. Mari Cruz said that the Blessed Virgin took the lead and recited the prayer first, in order to teach her how to pray slowly. After the "Creed," she said the "Hail Holy Queen" and then

³ Because of the very great number of apparitions that had taken place before Conchita started writing her Diary in 1962, she evidently had some trouble remembering exactly when certain things happened, as for example when Our Lady first taught them how to pray. In her report of the July 2 apparition, she had written: "We said the rosary while looking at her. She recited it with us in order to show us how to say it well." She says later that on August 18, Our Lady showed them how to say the rosary very slowly. Now according to a question asked Conchita in April, 1969, Our Lady taught them to say the rosary only once. The following question was put to Conchita. "Did Our Lady continue to say the rosary with the girls in ecstasy, even after they had learned to say it the way she wanted? If not, when did she stop her active participation?" Conchita answered: "After the first day, she did not recite it any more. However, when the time came to say the 'Gloria,' she indicated it to us by bowing her head—*Pero cuando teníamos que decir el Gloria, nos lo indicaba ella, inclinando la cabeza.*"

she made the sign of the cross very slowly and very properly—*muy despacio, muy bien.*

She talked with the Blessed Virgin and said: "I'm so glad the Infant Jesus has come! It's been so long since he came! Why have you waited so long before coming to me and why do you come more often to the three others?"

This was heard by several people who were close to Mari Cruz, among whom were Father Luis María Andréu, a seminarian and Father Royo Marín. •

COMMENT Conchita gives only a brief and incomplete description of what took place on this day. There was an apparition shortly after noon which she does not mention. Apparently, it had not seemed particularly significant. The night apparition which she describes was one of the most important of all the Garabandal events.

In the *Diary*, the first mention that Conchita makes of the famous ecstatic walks and marches is on this day, August 8: "At the end of the rosary, the four of us went into ecstasy and *we began to walk toward the pines.*" This does not mean that these unusual phenomena did not actually begin before this date. Francisco Sanchez-Ventura says that they started on August 4, the day of the taperecorder incident. He ascribes August 5 for the first ecstatic flight, or high speed march, from the pines to the church, a thing that would be repeated many, many times, including this August 8, to the continually renewed wonderment of all those who ever witnessed it.

The ecstatic "walk toward the pines" that Conchita mentions lasted quite a while. The girls stopped occasionally to pray at the various places where apparitions had occurred. For some time now, the visions had been taking place at other locations than the *cuadro*. On July 28, as Conchita went into ecstasy near the church of Our Lady of Consolation in Santander, the other three girls saw Our Lady at the pines. From this time on, many apparitions occurred at the pines and, beginning in the early days of August, the girls

would be led in ecstatic marches from the church and other places to the pines where they would stop and spend some time in contemplation of and conversation with the vision. On July 30, Loli had a vision at her grandmother's house, which is the house where she now lives and which is adjacent to the house where she was living during the time of the apparitions.⁴ On August 3, Loli and Jacinta went into ecstasy before the altar in the village church.

As the happenings at the pines on the night of August 8 constitute a major event in the apparitions at Garabandal, it would seem advisable to give some of the immediate antecedents of this great day and also more details about the event of August 8. The *Diary* is so restricted to the essentials that it fails to give the feel or atmosphere of most of the happenings recorded there. Also, in this particular case, some of the things that preceded the night of August 8, help us to understand it. They throw light on why the preview of the great miracle was given at this particular time.

There seems to have been a sort of build up during the second half of July and the first days of August towards the peak of August 8. The apparitions became more numerous and new charismatic phenomena were added to the visions.

On July 27, the day before Conchita went to Santander, the girls had two visions. On July 29 there were four separate apparitions with short intervals between each of them. There were several visions on July 30 and 31. On August 1, there were three ecstasies, at 10:45 a.m., 12:15 p.m., and 3:40 p.m. On August 3, and again on August 7, there were at least two visions.

The new charismatic phenomena that appeared included a number of things. On July 27, Jacinta experienced an

⁴ On this occasion, Loli asked Our Lady: "Why have you come to me here, where nobody can see?" This question is a potent argument in favor of the authenticity of the apparitions and a particularly strong proof that they were not a game or a dream.

ecstatic oscillation, a swaying motion of the body that at one moment brought her half-way to the ground. Mari Cruz, though in ecstasy herself, saw this and put out her arm to prevent her friend from losing her balance.

Ecstatic falls, which are like a second step beyond the oscillation, began during the first days of August. From either a kneeling or standing position, the visionary would gradually bend backward until the body was fully extended on the ground. Never would the girls fall or injure themselves. They would come back off the ground in the same slow, graceful fashion without pushing themselves up in any way. If several girls were involved in an ecstatic fall, the downward and return movement would usually be fully synchronized. The vision continued unimpeded during the entire time of the ecstatic fall. Mari Loli and Jacinta experienced an ecstatic fall on the platform before the altar of the village church on August 3, the day Conchita returned from Santander. They remained there on their backs for about thirty minutes.

Maybe the most significant thing is that the girls had begun to beg for a miracle. On July 30, they pleaded for a proof so that everyone might believe. "The Virgin looks very grave when we ask her for a miracle," they said. On August 4, when they asked the vision to talk into the tape-recorder they had said: ". . . It is not for us, it is so that they will believe . . . Speak, say a few words so that they will believe!"

The pleas of the girls for a miracle had been very persistent during the first apparition that took place on August 8. This occurred in the church shortly after noon. Conchita insisted on the need for a public miracle: "At Lourdes and Fatima you gave them proof . . ." Later Conchita came back again on the same matter: "When we ask you for a proof why do you look so serious? It's nearly two months now." Mari Loli also spoke out: "Give it right now. You keep saying you will give it, you will give it."

Some of the other parts of the same conversation with

Our Lady will help to illustrate the type of thing that went on during the apparitions and will show the girls' simplicity, which has a great ring of authenticity to it. It was this simplicity which prompted Father Luis Andréu to say: "The children have given us an example of the attitude we should have with the Blessed Virgin." The following dialogue, as well as that quoted above, is taken from notes written by a seminarian, Don Andrés Pardo, the pastor, Don Valentín Marichalar and Father Luis Andréu.

Conchita: "Do you want me to show you everything I've got? She held up seven or eight pairs of rosary beads. You're to kiss them . . . Today they brought up some dolls . . . How do I look with my hair short? [Her long tresses had been cut during her stay at Santander] . . . You're coming this evening? Good!"

Jacinta: "Do we have to stay two in each house again this afternoon? [Our Lady had asked them to do this on the previous day. She usually asked them to stay indoors for their own protection on days when crowds were especially large] . . . How old are you? . . . You're three years older than me . . . Six? That's right. Twelve and six make eighteen. You're seven years older than Mari Cruz, since she's eleven."

Then they asked her why the angel had not returned, and they commented on the arrival of some priests who had come to Garabandal for the first time: "One of them said Mass very slowly and very well."

The Mass alluded to would appear to be that of Father Luis Andréu. He had left Aguilar del Campo at six that morning with a group of twenty people who travelled in five cars. They had arrived several hours later and Father Luis had celebrated Mass in the village church. Conchita, Jacinta and Mari Loli had received Holy Communion at his Mass. After this Mass, the girls declared that Our Lady had announced she would appear in the church, early in the afternoon.

The first apparition in the church started at 12:10 p.m.

In addition to the conversation, parts of which were just quoted, the girls walked backwards to the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary where they recited the rosary with very great devotion and experienced an ecstatic fall. Then Our Lady gave them a rendezvous for that evening. This meant that most of the people would stay on and wait for this second apparition.

It was at 9:35 p.m., after the recitation of the rosary in the church, that the girls went into ecstasy before the main altar. There was the usual type of conversation.

Yes, as you wish, as you command [This phrase was repeated several times during the conversation] . . . We haven't given any proof and the people don't believe . . . I don't mind going all over the place. As you say . . .

The girls got up and walked out of the church in ecstasy ready to comply with the wishes expressed by Our Lady that they pray at the places where other visions had occurred. Then there was more conversation with the apparition.

When's the next time we'll see you, so that the people can come. I heard people say that we are sick and the children throw stones at us . . . If you are pleased with us, then we don't mind.

Father Luis Andréu followed the children and stayed with them at their various prayer stops on the ecstatic march that eventually led them to the pines. There, more conversation took place.

Yes, this is where the chapel will be built. This is a good spot. Shall we stop here?

They knelt down and sang a hymn to Saint Michael. They kissed something in the air. Father Luis Andréu was kneeling close to the children and at this point he looked deeply moved. The girls who were still in ecstasy were as-

tonished that they could see him. They heard him repeat the word "miracle" four times and noticed that he kept staring upward. Our Lady told them that he was seeing her and the miracle too. Father Ramón who was next to his brother Luis, heard him pronounce the word "miracle" distinctly four times and in that same tone of voice that characterized the girls when they spoke in ecstasy. Father Ramón did not see Our Lady nor did he share with his brother in his preview of the miracle.

Father Luis Andréu is the only person to have had a preview of the great miracle at Garabandal. The girls did not see the miracle on August 8 nor did any one of them see it during any other apparition. However, Conchita, and Conchita alone, was told by Our Lady what the miracle consists of and when it will occur. She will refer again briefly to the miracle later on in the *Diary*.

The brief description which Conchita gave in the *Diary* of Father Luis' sharing in the vision of Our Lady and of his preview of the miracle demands some explanation. She said: "We could see him. Now, in our ecstasies we never saw anyone (except the Blessed Virgin). But we saw Father Luis and the Blessed Virgin told us that he was seeing her and the miracle too."

Conchita is referring to what has been called "the field of vision" of the girls during an ecstasy. When in ecstasy, the girls saw only the vision and whichever other members of their group were actually participating in the apparition with them. If one of the girls was not participating, either because she did not share in it at the start or because she was excluded or withdrawn from it at some point while it continued for the others, these others could not see her. Also, they could never see any of the spectators or bystanders, precisely because they were not participating in the vision. This explains the girls' surprise at seeing Father Luis during this particular apparition. They were able to see him because he was indeed participating with them in the vision, although they did not know this until Our Lady told them.

The girls recited the Creed at the pines, apparently after the Father Luis event. Then they departed for the church in one of their sensationally rapid ecstatic flights.

In his notebook in which he recorded his observations of the Garabandal events he witnessed, Father Luis described this flight as "an impressive descent." Father Antonio Royo Marín, O.P., author and professor of mystical theology at the University of Salamanca, who, as Conchita noted in the *Diary*, was also in the village on this day, remarked: "The girls have wings on their feet." This ecstatic flight and other things he observed prompted the highly regarded Dominican theologian to utter this even more significant statement: "I am a specialist in these matters and I affirm that the vision of the children is true."

When they arrived at the church, Conchita noticed that she had lost a pair of rosary beads that had been confided to her. She spoke about it to the vision:

I've lost the rosary. It was the student's [the seminarian, Don Andrés Pardo]. I'm so sorry. Will he scold me? Eh? Where did I drop it? Up there on the hill. Higher up than where we saw you?⁵

The girls said the rosary, led by Conchita and Mari Loli. Then, three of the girls came out of ecstasy. The apparition continued on for Mari Cruz who entered the church and walked ecstatically to the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary and of the archangel Saint Michael. What happened there is told quite adequately above in the *Diary*.

One or the other of the girls coming out of ecstasy, while the others remained in it, was a rather frequent occurrence at Garabandal. The girl or girls who returned to normal would quite often go back into ecstasy with the others after a varying lapse of time.

Mari Cruz' poignant words: "Why have you waited so

⁵ For all the various conversations with the vision and many of the facts related above, see Francisco Sanchez-Ventura y Pascual, *Las Apariciones*, pp. 113-118.

long before coming to me and why do you come more often to the three others?" are very important. They allude to the fact that all four girls did not share equally in the apparitions. At the start, all four girls did participate together in the ecstasies. Quite soon, diversity began to manifest itself in the number of girls involved in an apparition. Only one girl would see Our Lady, or two or three would see her together.

It is a fact that Mari Cruz came to be excluded from the visions more than any of the other girls. This started quite early since she complains about it to Our Lady as early as August 8, 1961. Also, Conchita in describing the apparition that took place at the pines about July 28, while she was in Santander, mentions only Loli and Jacinta as being involved in it. This was the day, just mentioned above, on which Father Ramón Andréu saw Loli withdrawn from the apparition and quickly readmitted to it.

It is precisely to authenticate the visions, to show that they could not be produced at will by the visionaries, that this diversity was introduced by the Almighty. It is evident from Mari Cruz' remark to Our Lady that she suffered from not seeing her as often as the others. If she had really enjoyed any control over the matter, she would have seen Our Lady as frequently as they. Indeed, some seem to believe Mari Cruz was so sensitive to being left out in this way that, in an effort to hide her exclusion, she occasionally simulated ecstasies.

Saint Teresa of Ávila in speaking of mystics who often experience visions at a certain period of their spiritual life, mentions that these favors are occasionally withdrawn suddenly, "as if the Lord wishes to show that it is not a thing that can be produced by any human means."

Conchita had lost a pair of rosary beads confided to her by the seminarian, Don Andrés Pardo. Loli had been entrusted with a one decade finger rosary, the circular type with notches on the outer rim and a hole in the center through which a finger is inserted and around which it is

rotated for the counting of the Hail Marys. It belonged to Father Luis Andréu and had been given to Loli so that Our Lady might kiss it. Loli lost it during the rapid ecstatic flight from the pines to the church. She was still in ecstasy when she noticed she had lost it, and she told the vision what had happened. In a brief conversation, Our Lady revealed to the child the exact spot and under which stone the object had been lost.

At the end of the ecstasy, Loli told Father Luis that she had lost his finger rosary but that Our Lady had told her where to find it. She invited him to go immediately with her to get it. But as it was after ten o'clock, Julia, Loli's mother, objected and told her daughter to wait until daylight the next day to go for it.

Father Luis concurred with the mother's decision and told Loli: "If you find the rosary, keep it and don't give it to anyone except my brother Ramón. If I don't come back, my brother certainly will."

In view of what eventually happened, as shall soon be seen, Father Luis' words "If I don't come back," seem to have been prophetic.

The next day, Loli found the finger rosary at the exact spot and under the precise stone indicated by the vision. By that time Father Luis had left not only Garabandal but also this earth. Loli eventually gave the rosary to Father Ramón. Finding lost objects with the help of the vision was quite a common occurrence at Garabandal.

Wednesday, August 9 *The Mysterious Death of Father Luis Andréu*

• The following day, the four of us went to sweep the church. While we were sweeping, Jacinta's mother arrived in a great state of excitement and said to us:

"Father Luis María Andréu has died!"

We did not believe her, since we had seen him the day before. So we dropped our brooms and went to get more information.

They said that as he was dying, his last words had been:
 "This is the happiest day of my life! What a wonderful mother we have in heaven!"

Then he died. His death came on the way to Reinosa, after leaving San Sebastián de Garabandal. He was traveling in the same auto as Carmen Fontaneda and her husband Faito, and several others.

Father Luis' mother entered a convent of nuns forty-eight hours after his death. •

COMMENT The apparition on the night of August 8 ended after ten o'clock. Father Luis Andréu went down to Cosío in a jeep. At one o'clock in the morning he spoke with Don Valentín Marichalar who had just come down the mountain on foot. He said to him: "Don Valentín, what the children say is true, but I ask you not to repeat what I have just told you, for the Church can never be prudent enough in this kind of affair." The good pastor, who kept a record of the events of Garabandal, copied these words that very night in his note book, little suspecting what was to happen within a matter of hours.

As Conchita mentions, Father Luis departed from Cosío in the auto of Don Rafaël (Faito is the nickname for Rafaël) Fontaneda. Rafaël's wife Carmen, a young daughter and the driver, José Salceda, were in the same car, which along with four or five other autos, set out in the direction of Torrelavega and Reinosa. Don Rafaël and his wife and the driver were struck by the air of great happiness that Father Luis radiated and by the absolute certainty that he manifested concerning the things involving the four girls. He told Don Rafaël that he had talked to Father Royo Marín, the expert in mystical theology, and that they had been in agreement on everything.

The Fontaneda car made a short stop at Torrelavega. On resuming the journey, Father Luis slept for about an hour. When he woke up, he told his travelling companions

that he had slept very soundly and felt fully refreshed and very fit.

The cavalcade of cars stopped at a public fountain at the outskirts of Reinosa. It was about four o'clock in the morning. The people got out to drink with the exception of Father Luis who from the seat of his car answered the many questions that were put to him. Again the cars moved on. As they were passing through Reinosa, Father Luis repeated once again, and in almost identical terms, the things he had said so many times along the way from Cosío:

I am so happy. What a favor the Blessed Virgin has bestowed on me. How fortunate we are to have a mother like her in heaven! There is no reason to fear the supernatural life. The girls have given us an example of how we must act with the Blessed Virgin. There is no doubt in my mind that the things involving the girls are true. Why should the Blessed Virgin have chosen us? This is the happiest day of my life.

After pronouncing these words, he lifted his head and remained silent. In answer to a question inquiring whether anything was wrong with him, he said that he felt sleepy. Then he lowered his head and made a slight coughing sound. His eyes turned upwards. This was his last living gesture. But there was still a smile on his lifeless lips.

Father Luis was thirty-six years old. He liked to go hiking and to play handball. There was no history of heart trouble in his family and the only malady he was known to have was hay fever which never incapacitated him. It is generally felt that he died of excessive joy resulting from the sharing in the vision and the preview of the great miracle.⁶

⁶ The above quotation and much of the other information comes from a report written by Don Rafaël Fontaneda only a few hours after the events took place. The report is cited by Francisco Sanchez-Ventura y Pascual, *Las Apariciones*, pp. 120-123.

When Conchita states that "Father Luis' mother entered a convent forty-eight hours after his death", she is repeating some information she heard in the village. His mother did fulfill a ten-year long ambition and entered the convent of the Visitation of Saint Sebastián (Guipuzcoa), but it was in October, 1961, some two months after her son's death.

Tuesday, August 15 *Our Lady Announces that Father Luis Andréu Will Talk with the Girls during an Apparition*

- A few days after Father Luis' death, the Blessed Virgin told us that we were going to talk with him. August 15, feast of Our Lady, was the day designated. On that day many people had come for an outing with the intention of carousing. As they conducted themselves in a scandalous way, Father Luis María Andréu did not come.

At four o'clock in the morning, which was the very hour at which Father Luis had died, the Blessed Virgin appeared to me in our kitchen and said:

"The Father won't come today, but he will come tomorrow." •

COMMENT The fact that scandalous carousing caused the cancelling of a promised visit by Father Luis is another good indication that the devil was not the author of the events of Garabandal. He would certainly not allow any carousing to interfere with his announced plans.

Father Ramón Andréu was at Garabandal on August 15. One of the girls carried a rosary which he had given her. When she handed it back to him, the cross was missing, having somehow become loose and fallen off. As it could have dropped anywhere in the village, Father Ramón felt that it would be impossible to find it and gave it up for completely lost. However, twenty days later, on September 5, he had a change of heart. He told the girls to ask Our Lady where the cross was. They complied with his request

and he heard the conversation in which they asked Our Lady and she told them the exact place where the small cross could be found. At the end of the apparition, they went immediately and without the slightest hesitation or trouble found the cross lying in the mud underneath a stone in one of the streets.

Wednesday, August 16 *Delayed Visit of Father Luis Andréu*

- The next day, at eight or nine o'clock in the evening, the Blessed Virgin appeared to us smiling very, very much as usual. She said to the four of us:

"Father Luis will come now and speak with you."

A moment later he came and called us one by one. We didn't see him at all but only heard his voice. It was exactly like the one he had on earth.

When he had spoken for a while, giving us advice, he told us certain things for his brother, Father Ramón María Andréu. He taught us some words in French, in German and in English, and he also taught us to pray in Greek.

After a while we didn't hear his voice any more and the Blessed Virgin talked to us. She stayed for a moment and then went away.

On that day, the Blessed Virgin told us that on the following day we would hear a voice and not to be afraid but to follow the voice. •

COMMENT This conversation with the "voice" of Father Luis, was the first in a series of some ten or eleven such events, according to a letter which Conchita sent Father Ramón Andréu on November 27, 1964. Father Ramón himself was present at some of the first ones. He was there for this very first one and has given some very enlightening information that Conchita, in her usual brevity, has not provided in the *Diary*.

. . . I was truly stupefied: the little girls repeated in my presence the words of their vision and I heard them relate

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the death of my brother and the description of the funeral. They gave a certain number of very precise details concerning the special rites of the burial of a priest. They even knew that Father Luis' burial had involved a few exceptions regarding the traditional rules for the dressing of the deceased: for example, they had not placed a biretta on my brother's head and the chalice which he should have held in his hands had been replaced by a crucifix. The girls also gave the reasons for these variations.

Father Ramón also gives some interesting details concerning the foreign languages that Conchita said Father Luis taught the girls:

The children talked in foreign languages several times. I personally heard one of them recite the Hail Mary in Greek. I also have in my possession two extracts that I would like to quote in entirety: they are from a letter written by Conchita and dated "June, 1962:"

"Two words to tell you that I have spoken to Father Luis. He asked me to tell you that you yourself were acting very properly, that he desires very much that you come here, but you must continue to obey His Excellency, the Bishop. (Indeed, he forbade priests to go to Garabandal without explicit permission from the bishop's house)." [This is what Conchita was apparently alluding to in her *Diary* when she said: "He told us certain things for his brother, Father Ramón María Andréu."]

In the second extract, Conchita says that Our Lady told her how to write the girls' names in French: "Loli — Marie des Douleurs; Cruz — Marie-Croix, Jacinta — Jacinthe; (Conchita) Marie-Conception." And she affirms that Our Lady gave her the following song in French:

Espoir, Espoir. Au ciel étoilé,
Parait et sourit Notre Mère,
Espoir, Espoir, Marie a parlé,
Son Fils entend notre prière.

Hope, Hope. In the starry sky,
Our Mother appears and smiles,
Hope, hope, Mary has spoken,
Her Son hears our prayer.

These verses are from the hymn of Pontmain, France, where Our Lady appeared in 1871. They give the meaning of the Garabandal happening and of all Marian apparitions.

Father Ramón has also described another conversation between the girls and his brother's "voice":

On another occasion, I heard the children say in ecstasy that my brother Luis died without having made his profession [of religious vows]. They also talked about me and my vows: they knew the precise date, the exact place where they had been pronounced and the name of the Jesuit who had taken them at the same time that I did. You will understand my astonishment, my stupefaction in the face of this unchallengeable array of rigorously exact details, when I knew pertinently that the children could not have learned about them, at least through purely human means. . . . There is no doubt that all this is truly astonishing, and I would even say, bewildering, incomprehensible. . . .⁸

This humanly inexplicable knowledge that the girls reveal in this whole long episode of several days involving Fathers Luis and Ramón Andréu, was not unusual at Garabandal. It showed itself many times in a variety of circumstances. It is another link in the chain of evidence testifying to the fact there is no natural explanation for the Garabandal event.

It should be evident from all that has been said about them up to now, that the two brothers, Luis and Ramón Andréu, were not just ordinary bystanders, who like so many others, happened to be present at a number of the Garabandal happenings. They were and still are very spec-

⁸ All the above quotations are taken from an interview between G. du Pilier and Father Ramón which is reproduced in *Journal de Conchita*, p. 56, note (70).

ial witnesses of the Garabandal event. They were chosen by God to bear important testimony to the authenticity of these events.

We might call them secondary or supporting personages, as opposed to the girls, the principal personages of the Garabandal event. Father Luis shared with the girls in one of the apparitions and was even granted a privilege never accorded to them, a preview of the great miracle. He also came back a number of times after his death and talked with the girls during apparitions of Our Lady.

However, Father Luis seems to be more than an exceptional witness to the authenticity of the events that occurred at Garabandal. He would also appear to have a symbolic role in regard to the main elements of the message imparted at that mountain village, as shall be seen later.

Father Ramón, in keeping with the variety encountered at Garabandal, participated in the events less directly than his brother Luis, but nevertheless in a very intimate way. He was shown special consideration the very first time he assisted at an apparition when Loli came out of ecstasy for him, almost at his beck, so that he could have this proof and might believe. His incredible spiritual experience on October 18, 1961, when the first message was publicly proclaimed, his standing by his brother's side at the pines on August 8, the message given to him through the girls by his brother after his death; all these things associate him with the Garabandal event in a very special way.

At least one other person would qualify as a secondary personage, namely, Joey Lomangino, "The Blind American" from Lindenhurst, Long Island, New York. He was mentioned twice to Conchita by Our Lady at Garabandal. The Blessed Virgin stated that he would recover his sight on the day of the miracle, associating him in a very particular way with this great event that shall authenticate the apparitions of Garabandal. Because of this and because of a special charisma that is quite apparent to all those who know him, he has become today the greatest apostle of

Garabandal in the entire world. The work he has done and the influence he has had in spreading the story and message of Garabandal are truly exceptional.

Something very unusual happened to Father Ramón Andréu on October 18, 1961. Conchita mentioned it briefly in the *Diary* at that place where she combined the events of July 4 and October 18. It will be recalled that July 4 was the day on which Our Lady gave the first message to the four girls and that October 18 was the day she designated for its public announcement.

Speaking in the *Diary* of October 18, Conchita says:

In the *calleja*, at the place we called the *cuadro*, the Blessed Virgin appeared to us and she said to me: "At this moment, Father Ramón María Andréu is having doubts." Because I was very surprised, she told me where he had started to doubt, what he had been thinking about, and everything else.

The importance of these remarks can be fully understood only now that the reader is acquainted with the events which started on August 8 and that have been discussed above.

From his first visit at the end of July until October 18th, date of the proclamation of the message, Father Ramón Andréu had returned to Garabandal many times and had witnessed considerable extraordinary phenomena during various apparitions. As has been seen, Conchita knew this and that is why she was surprised when Our Lady told her on October 18th that the Father was experiencing doubts.

Father Ramón has confirmed what Conchita mentioned above concerning his doubts on October 18. Much valuable information has been given by the priest at various times. In his translation of *Conchita's Diary*, G. du Pilier has published a long interview he had with Father Ramón concerning this incident. As it is the most detailed document available, it shall be used here.

Father Ramón arrived at Garabandal on October 17 in

a very favorable state of mind. Over a three month period he had witnessed many impressive events at the village and "had no reason to doubt." The children had announced eight days in advance that a message would be publicly proclaimed on October 18 and he wanted to be present for what he felt was an important event. On October 18, a large crowd, estimated by some at 5,000, was on hand, despite torrential rain that had turned the road up the mountain and the village streets into a quagmire.

At about ten o'clock, the people, the four children and Father Ramón began the long three hundred and fifty yard trek through the muddy streets of the village, along the steep slippery stone-surfaced *calleja*, and up the last abrupt and treacherous rise to the pines.

When he arrived at the half-way mark of his journey, Father Ramón found himself suddenly and inexplicably caught in the throes of a very painful interior spiritual crisis. Here is how he describes this strange happening:

I managed nevertheless to get half way up without any incident, when I experienced suddenly and brutally an intense interior bitterness. It was, if you wish, a mixture of painful impressions and depressing feelings. Everything seemed to get out of joint. I had just entered a moral desert. The past became obscure. The only thing that remained clear and evident was the death of my brother Luis which had occurred a little more than two months before.

Then this state of interior suffering began to get worse. I believe I can affirm that never in all my life have I experienced such spiritual and moral desolation.

I was tempted to leave. "These four children are just simply sick," I told myself. "Why are you still here? You can see that all this is only a miserable act put on by backward countryfolk! . . ."

Then I stopped for an instant. I cast my eyes inquisitively toward the sky. I would have liked the "great miracle" to take place, although the children had never announced that it would occur on this eighteenth of October. Naturally, nothing happened. My disillusionment was complete.

I moved along and stopped again for a length of time that I cannot recall, as I was aware only of the crowd passing by me in the darkness, and of climbing toward the pines. It was night, silence, I was alone, alone . . .⁹

The reading of the message did nothing to relieve Father Ramón's interior agony. He stayed in the neighborhood of the pines for about an hour, firmly convinced that it was all a hoax and feeling sorry for the people who still believed.

Shortly after returning to the village, he was called with two other people to Loli's house. His first reaction was to refuse the invitation, but he decided to go with "the sole and firm intention of bidding a final farewell." He found Loli with a group of about fifteen persons. She was radiant with happiness but this did not buoy him up nor affect his incredulity. She invited him to sit down and then came over and sat next to him.

There ensued the following conversation:

"Of you three, there is one who does not believe," she said to me. "Do you know who it is?"

"Yes," I told her. "And you, do you know who it is?"

"Of course, I know who it is. The Blessed Virgin told me."

"And when did she tell you?"

"Just a while ago, as I was returning from the pines."

"Then, tell me who it is," I insisted.

"I don't dare," she replied with mischievous timidity, "in case it might be one of the other two!"

"Yes, it is I," I admitted, feeling that I had been detected.

"I just didn't believe any more."

Then in Loli's childish face, I perceived like a flickering of intelligence. She continued:

"The Blessed Virgin said to us: 'The Father doubts everything and is suffering very much. Call him and tell him that he should not doubt, that it is really I, the Blessed Virgin, who is appearing here. And so that he will believe, tell him:

⁹ *Journal de Conchita*, pp. 110-111.

"When you came up, you were happy; when you went back down, you were very sad!"

The child had stopped. I was looking at her, stupified, and couldn't find a single thing to say. She added:

"The Blessed Virgin talked a lot about you to Conchita."

At this juncture, Father Ramón and his two friends left Loli and went to Conchita's house. Here is how the Jesuit priest relates the conversation that took place there in Conchita's room:

Before I had opened my mouth, Conchita smiled and asked me:

"Father, are you happy or are you still sad?"

"I don't know," I replied. "Loli told me that the apparition spoke to you quite a bit about me. Is it true?"

"Oh, yes! at least a quarter of an hour."

"And what did she tell you?"

"I can't tell you," the child answered.

"Then, I am just where I was before," I thought out loud. Conchita smiled.

"There is something I can tell you, however," she resumed.

"When you came up, you were happy; when you went back down, you were sad."

And the child added: "And she told me everything you were thinking about, and the place where you thought it. You thought: 'Now I shall return to Central America.' At another spot, you thought: 'I don't want to hear anything further about such and such a person.' And you were suffering a lot. The Blessed Virgin asked me to tell you this, and to let you know that all this happened so that henceforth you would remember these events and never doubt again." I was dumbfounded. The following day, Conchita pointed out to me on a photo the precise places where each thought had invaded my mind.

G. du Pilier, who was interviewing Father Ramón, then asked him if Conchita had been accurate when she indicated the places where his different thoughts had occurred.

"Absolutely accurate," he replied. "And so was all that she had told me the preceding evening. I remember especially this: the apparition made it a point to inform me: 'All that happened so that, henceforth, you would never doubt again.'"

"Since then, I have passed through other moments of uncertainty and doubt, but they have not produced in me the anguish of that night of the eighteenth to the nineteenth of October, 1961. It has been frequently repeated to me—and the statement has come to me at times from authorized sources—that the story of "the apparitions of Garabandal" is over with, and that the documents relating to it have been definitely judged and rejected. At these moments, I think of my personal experience, of the surprising events that I have witnessed, and I invariably reply: 'And yet, the problem is not resolved . . .'"¹⁰

It is obvious that in God's overall plan for Garabandal, Father Ramón Andréu has been assigned a very special role as a witness to the authenticity of the apparitions. The sudden mysterious appearance of his doubts and Our Lady's manifestation of them to the children certainly have a much broader divine purpose than convincing just the priest himself.

To fully understand the mysterious nature of Father Ramón's doubts—and they are humanly inexplicable—one must consider that some two months prior to the incident just described, he had been standing beside his brother Father Luis when the latter joined the four girls in seeing Our Lady during an apparition and was granted a preview of the great miracle. Also, Father Luis, though a young man of thirty-six and apparently in good health, died "of joy" just a few hours after all this happened. And, starting seven days after his death, Father Luis accompanied Our Lady during ten or eleven apparitions, and engaged in conversation with the four girls. Now, all these events had taken place before October 18, the day of Father Ramón's

¹⁰ *Journal de Conchita*, pp. 111-113.

doubts! Yet, what is most amazing, and indeed, almost unbelievable, is the admission by Father Ramón, that even after October 18 and all the accumulation of extraordinary phenomena concerning both his brother and himself, he has "passed through other moments of uncertainty and doubt."

These doubts that reappear, notwithstanding the abundance of evidence, have a special providential purpose. They are the best possible credentials concerning Father Ramón's reliability as a spokesman for truth. They prove that he is not easily excited by visions, and that on the contrary, he is particularly hard to convince, both reassuring traits in a witness of this type. Also, his testimony is all the more trustworthy since he testifies against himself; the facts he describes reveal himself in what many people would consider an unfavorable light. In brief, he is not an emotional believer, but a strictly objective witness whose testimony we can accept with complete confidence.

Thursday, August 17 *A Strange Voice*

- The next day, the Blessed Virgin appeared to the four of us at the same hour as on the previous day. She stayed for a few minutes smiling very much, but without saying a word. A few minutes later we found ourselves in darkness. A voice called to us and Mari Cruz said:

"Tell us who you are. If you don't we'll go home."

The voice lasted a moment. And during that time it was very dark and we didn't see the Blessed Virgin. After the voice stopped, the Blessed Virgin arrived and it became very light. She said to us:

"Don't be afraid."

She talked to us for a moment, then, for the first time, she kissed us. She kissed us one by one and departed. •

COMMENT The kiss was imparted on this day undoubtedly to calm the fear caused by the voice calling in the

darkness. It was a maternal gesture that was repeated quite often in subsequent apparitions at the conclusion of the ecstasy. The children were observed placing themselves in a position to receive or give a kiss to the vision. Occasionally they lifted each other, without any effort, to reach Our Lady. This would usually take place before or after a final sign of the cross after which the apparition would end.

The girls have never given any explanation for the darkness or the mysterious voice. Conchita has said that she does not know what the meaning of this event is.

Friday, August 18 *The Blessed Virgin Teaches the Girls how to Say the Rosary*

- The next day, almost at the same time, the Blessed Virgin appeared to us again. The first thing she told us was to say the rosary. As, naturally, we never took the lead in reciting it, she said to us:

"I am going to pray first and you will follow me."

And she recited the prayers very slowly—*muy lento*."

She said "Holy Mary" and we repeated "Holy Mary."

We prayed in that manner. When it was our turn to say "Hail Mary" and the other parts of the rosary prayers, we said them very slowly.

When we came to the "Hail Holy Queen," she told us to sing it and we did.

At the end of the rosary, she gave us a kiss and departed, saying:

"I will return tomorrow." •

COMMENT One of Our Lady's principal purposes in coming to Garabandal was to teach the girls, and through them each and every one of us, how to say private prayers, and particularly the rosary, properly. She left us a very simple but effective program for the renewal of private

prayer. This has been discussed at length by the author elsewhere.¹¹

Saturday, August 19 *Composing Songs—A Ten-Hour Apparition*

• She came the next day, as she said she would, and she told us, as on the preceding day:

"Say the rosary."

So we started it.

That night, we went to the places where the Blessed Virgin had appeared at the beginning. The people told us after our ecstasy that we had gone up to the pines and that we went from pine tree to pine tree¹² on our knees, praying.

Up until this time, we had all these ecstasies when the four of us were together,¹³ Jacinta, Loli, Mari Cruz and myself, Conchita. But now the Blessed Virgin began calling us separately, each in her own house.

On this occasion, Mari Cruz had already had an apparition first and had gone to bed when the three of us saw the Blessed Virgin. We said to her:

"Teach us a song that we can sing to Mari Cruz."

And so we proposed one word and the Blessed Virgin added another. The following is one of the songs:

"Get up, Mari Cruz, get up.

"For the good Virgin has come

"With a little basket of flowers

"For you her little one.

"Mari Cruz, Mari Cruz

"What sorrow you cause us!

"Pray hard to the Blessed Virgin

¹¹ See his book *God Speaks at Garabandal* which treats of the entire message, or his pamphlet *Garabandal Prayer and the Rosary* which deals principally of the prayer and rosary message. Both were published in 1970 by Assumption Publications, 500 Salisbury St., Worcester, Mass. 01609.

¹² There are nine pines in the grove planted by Conchita's grandfather. Apparitions have occurred at each of these trees.

¹³ Conchita suffers a memory lapse here. See Comments on the August 8th apparition, p. 65 and ff.

"So that she will return to you.

"Mari Cruz, Mari Cruz

"Don't throw away the white lilies.

"The Blessed Virgin brought them to you

"So that you would be a better girl."

That night the Blessed Virgin was with us from nine in the evening until seven in the morning and we played hide and seek with her. Two of us hid and the other went looking for them. •

COMMENT "Say the rosary." The rosary is not mentioned in the first message made public on October 18, 1961, and it was not included in the last message given on June 18, 1965. This does not mean that it is not part of the authentic Garabandal message. It is quite evident, just from the part of the *Diary* seen so far, that it held an important place in Our Lady's mind. She has mentioned it to the girls in one way or another several times.

From a series of questions sent to Conchita in April, 1969, it was learned that Our Lady 'ordered—*mandó*' the children to recite the rosary each time they saw her and that they actually did recite it during every apparition.¹⁴ Also she ordered them to recite the rosary daily—" *mandó rezarle diariamente*." These facts alone are sufficient to justify Conchita's affirmation, also made in April, 1969, that "the rosary is a very important part of the Blessed Virgin's message—*Si, es muy importante el rosario en el mensaje de la Virgen*."

The above incident is not the only occasion of spontaneous composing and singing by the girls. Several times they were heard improvising little songs with "catchy" tunes. This type of artistic gift is granted at times to mystics when they are in ecstasy. It is another of the many facets

¹⁴ Loli wrote to Father José Ramón García de la Riva on May 26, 1962: "She [The Blessed Virgin] tells us . . . everyday [she appears] to say the rosary—*nos dice . . . todos los días que recemos el rosario*."

of the intriguingly diversified phenomena encountered at Garabandal.

No Date *Fire in the Clouds—A Star with a Very Long Trail*

• During one of our apparitions, as Loli and I were coming down from the pines with a large number of people, we saw a thing like fire in the clouds.¹⁵ The people who were with us saw it, and so did those who weren't with us. She told us that is what she came in.¹⁶

During one of our other apparitions that occurred on the feast of Our Lady of Pilar, as Loli and I were looking at the Blessed Virgin, we saw beneath her feet a star with a very long trail. A certain number of people saw it also. We asked the Blessed Virgin what it meant, but she didn't answer us. •

COMMENT The mention by Conchita of "a thing like fire in the clouds" in which the Blessed Virgin "came," and of "a star with a very long trail beneath the Blessed Virgin's feet," recalls similar phenomena witnessed at Fátima.

At Fátima, the three children saw the Blessed Virgin arrive from the east during the apparitions. She came surrounded by a bright light that glided toward and eventually came to settle over the little tree of the apparitions. On September 13, 1917, many of the thirty thousand spectators at Fátima saw a globe of light advance from east to west and finally settle over the holm oak of the apparitions. The "chariot" of light was seen for a longer period of time by some than by others.¹⁷ However, on August 10, 1971, Conchita said that at Garabandal Our Lady did not advance toward them. She was suddenly there before them.

¹⁵ *vimos una cosa como fuego en las nubes.*

¹⁶ *Ella nos dijo que en aquello vino ella.*

¹⁷ See Joseph A. Pelletier, A.A., *The Sun Danced at Fátima* (5th Printing; Worcester; Assumption Publications, 1952), pp. 104-109.

It is interesting to note that even at Garabandal, where this particular type of extraordinary phenomenon was not very abundant, there seems to have been some diversity regarding the number of spectators who witnessed it. Indeed, when Conchita speaks of the "star with a very long trail" that she and Loli observed, she points out that "a certain number of people saw it also." This contrasts with her statements describing the "fire in the clouds" where she says that everyone saw it: "The people who were with us saw it, and so did those who weren't with us."

No Date *Feigning the Start of an Ecstasy*

• There were times when the three of us wanted to be together but couldn't because our parents wouldn't allow us to stay out after dark. That is why, occasionally, when we came [out of church at night] from the rosary after having already received two calls, we would look above as though we were seeing the Blessed Virgin. In this way we were able to stay together in the streets. Our parents and the people followed along behind us. Then the Blessed Virgin would appear to us while we were together. We always ended up by seeing the Blessed Virgin and we never feigned entire ecstasies. •

COMMENT Since the four girls were not always involved together in the apparitions, they had an opportunity while they were in a natural state to observe the others in ecstasy and it was not difficult for them to imitate the postures and attitudes they had seen. Their pretense was discovered in a simple but significant way. As they walked with their heads thrown back and their eyes cast upward, the people of the village noticed that they tripped repeatedly and bumped into other people, things they never did during an authentic ecstasy!

When they were questioned about their feigning, they always gave the same answer. They said that since they

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knew the Blessed Virgin was going to come, because of the calls they had already received, they wanted to be together. They also affirmed that they hoped in this way to hurry the vision's arrival. The Blessed Virgin scolded them several times for pretending the way they did and they did not continue this practice very long. Conchita's candor in reporting unfavorable or compromising happenings should again be noted.

No Date *Losing Objects and Finding Them with Our Lady's Help*

- When we were together and someone's shoe would come off, the Blessed Virgin would say to one of the others:

"Put on her shoe."

And we would put on each others' shoes.

When we were alone and our shoe came off, we spent the entire apparition without it. At the very end, the Blessed Virgin would tell us where the shoe, or whatever it was we had lost, could be found. •

No Date *The Children Ask for a Miracle*

- During the apparitions, we asked the Blessed Virgin to perform a miracle. She didn't say anything to us, but only smiled. We insisted:

"Perform it so that the people will believe, because no one believes."

But she only smiled. •

The Eucharist and The Miracle of the Visible Host

No Date *Unconsecrated Hosts—Real but Invisible Communion*

- At the beginning of the apparitions, the angel Saint Michael gave us unconsecrated hosts. We had eaten shortly before, but he gave them to us just the same.¹ He did this to teach us how to receive Communion.

One day he asked us to go to the pines in the morning without eating anything and to take a little girl with us. We took along a little girl and did what he asked us to do. When we reached the pines, the angel appeared to us with a goblet that looked like gold. He said to us:

"I am going to give you Holy Communion but this time the Hosts are consecrated. Recite the 'I Confess.'"

We recited it and then he gave us Holy Communion.

Afterwards, he told us that we should give thanks to God. When we had done this, he told us to recite with him the prayer "Soul of Christ." This we did also. Then he said:

"I will give you Communion again tomorrow."

And he went away.

When we told this to the people, some didn't believe, especially the priests because they said that an angel can't consecrate. When we saw the angel again, we told him what the people had said and he answered that he took Hosts already consecrated from tabernacles of the earth. Afterwards we told this to the people and some doubted it.

He gave us Communion over a long period of time. •

¹ Conchita is alluding to the rules of the eucharistic fast, which at that time required abstention from food for three hours prior to receiving Communion.

COMMENT Deeper research into the facts and the message of Garabandal continually reveals the powerful thrust of that message toward the related themes of the Eucharist and the priesthood. When Conchita was questioned at some length about the Eucharist on April 25, 1970, one of her answers pointed up the importance of the Eucharist and how frequently Communion was received from the angel. The question enquired whether Our Lady had spoken of Communion and of receiving Communion frequently:

No. She did not tell us to receive Communion frequently. But, never during the time of the apparitions could we pass a day without receiving Communion. Perhaps the example was worth more than words.

Another question was of a broader nature and concerned the Eucharist, and not specifically Communion. The question was: "Concerning the Eucharist: did the Blessed Virgin speak frequently about the Eucharist to the girls, to yourself or to the others?" It is interesting to note that although the question was directly related to the Eucharist, Conchita brought the priesthood into her answer:

I don't know, or rather, yes, but not properly about the Eucharist. But she gave us many examples. For instance, she told us about the worth *-el valor-* of a priest. She compared him with an angel and said that if we saw an angel and a priest we should acknowledge the priest first or fall on our knees in front of the priest rather than the angel.² She told us that it was because the priest consecrated, because he held Jesus Christ in his hands and the angel did not. Yes, she talked to us in this manner about this on various occasions . . . She also told us that it was a greater grace to receive Jesus [in Holy Communion] than to see her.

² *antes teníamos de saludar al sacerdote o caer de rodillas antes del sacerdote que antes del ángel.*

One thing is sure. Statements such as these are not the product of children's dreams or games, nor are they likely suggestions of the devil. Conchita's last statement about the superiority of Holy Communion over an apparition of Our Lady is particularly something that the girls would not have spontaneously advanced if they had been deliberately deceiving the people and making up the whole story of the apparitions.

Conchita's remark that Our Lady's teaching them through example or making them do a thing was possibly more significant than her speaking or talking about it, applies to the entire Garabandal message. Our Lady always backed her verbal exhortation with the practical instruction of making the children do these same things in ecstasy. For example, she told them in the first message to "visit the Blessed Sacrament frequently." But she also led them in ecstasy to the foot of the main altar of the church and made them kneel and pray there before the Blessed Sacrament. And when the diocesan authorities ordered them not to go into the church in ecstasy, Our Lady made them kneel in ecstasy at the door of the church or she led them in ecstasy around the church, making them recite the rosary as they walked. During the April 25, 1970 questioning, Conchita said that Our Lady told them frequently to visit the Blessed Sacrament and that "she led them every day and several times a day" to the Blessed Sacrament. Indeed, there were periods when apparitions occurred several times a day.

The ecstatic march was used at Garabandal as a powerful means of instruction, supplementing the verbal messages given during the conversations between the girls and the vision. It is one of the unique and fascinating aspects of these modern Spanish apparitions. We are reminded of the prophets of the Old Testament who taught the People of God through their actions and lives as well as by the spoken word.

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Some precisions as to when the angel started preparing the girls with unconsecrated hosts and when the Communion with consecrated Hosts began, were also given by Conchita in the spring of 1970 in answer to an inquiry as to whether all this had started after her return from Santander: "Yes, after the return from Santander, he gave us unconsecrated hosts in order to teach us how to receive Jesus with due respect. Then afterwards, he quickly began to give us Communion with consecrated Hosts, when he knew that there was no priest in the village."

Conchita's clause "when he knew that there was no priest in the village" is the key to this unusual practice. Had there been daily Mass and the possibility of receiving Communion in the church from the hands of a priest, Communion from the angel would not have taken place. When asked, again in the spring of 1970, if these Communions from the angel occurred during the entire period of the apparitions, Conchita replied: "I don't know. I don't remember. I think that it took place every day that there were no priests in the village, that they could not say Mass. On a day when there was a priest in the village, it did not occur."

At the start, all four girls received invisible Communion together from the angel. According to information gathered by Father José Ramón García de la Riva, who personally witnessed a number of these Communions, there came a time when Conchita and Loli received Communion alone; Conchita at the pines, the *cuadro* of the *calleja* and on the porch of the church, and Loli at the *cuadro* and on the porch of the church.

He also describes how these Communions took place. The girls would make the sign of the cross and recite the "I Confess to God." The recitation of this prayer before Communion was, of course, part of the regular ritual for the reception of Communion during the Mass and also outside of the Mass, under the regulations that prevailed up to the liturgical renewal that followed in the wake of Ecumenical

Council Vatican II. Then the girls would converse briefly with the angel and extend their tongue. They would withdraw the tongue and swallow in a manner that was noticeable by the movement of their cheeks. They came out of ecstasy after receiving Communion. The ecstasy never lasted more than ten minutes.³

Saturday, November 4, 1961⁴ *Our Lady Orders the Girls to Say the Rosary-She Seeks Penance*

• The Blessed Virgin ordered—*mandó*—the four of us, Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz and myself, to recite the rosary at the *cuadro*. On certain days, we went at six o'clock and on others at a later hour. Jacinta and Mari Cruz went at six in the morning and at seven. Loli did not go at any fixed time. Later, Mari Cruz was not able to get up so early and she went at eight o'clock, while Jacinta continued to go at six with her mother. People from the village went with us. During Holy Week, the Blessed Virgin ordered me to go at five in the morning, which I did (because the Blessed Virgin always wants us to do penance). •

COMMENT The girls were very faithful to Our Lady's request to say the rosary at the *cuadro*. In a letter written January 11, 1962, two months after Our Lady made her request, Mari Cruz told Father José Ramón García de la Riva: "Yes, I go to say the rosary every day at six in the morning. The Blessed Virgin commanded me to say it at

³ Mémoires, pp. 74-75.

⁴ We owe this date to Father Porro Cardeñoso. In his book *Dios en la Sombra*, (Zaragoza: Editorial Circulo), written under the pen name of José María de Dios, he states: "It was the 4th of November when the visions began occurring at eight in the morning and from that day the girls rose to recite the dawn rosary at six in the morning, because the Blessed Virgin asked them to do so for sinners" (pp. 102-103).

that hour every day until the sixteenth [of January] when I shall start seeing her again."⁵

There was a temporary slackening in the tempo of the apparitions toward the middle of November, 1961. At this time, Our Lady told the girls that she would appear to each of them only at certain definite future dates. She said that Conchita might possibly see her on December 8, and if not on that day, then definitely on January 27, 1962. She stated that she would appear to Jacinta on December 16, to Loli on January 13, 1962, and to Marie Cruz on January 16, 1962. The girls did see Our Lady on these precise dates at which time she gave them still other dates for later encounters, which she also kept faithfully.

Conchita actually saw the Blessed Virgin on December 8, 1961. In fact she had two apparitions on that day, as she indicates in a letter she wrote to Don José Ramón García de la Riva on December 13, 1961.

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the Blessed Virgin came and congratulated me, as indeed she had told me she would come. She laughed a lot. The first thing she said to me was: "Congratulations!" And so it was that I passed a short part of that day in a wonderful way—*muy bien*. However, I won't see her again until January 27.

She came toward the evening. They say it [the first apparition] lasted a long while, but to me it seemed but a very short time. Then she said that she was going to leave so that I could have supper and that after supper she would come back.

So, when I had finished supper, she returned right away. They said that I went to where we had the first apparition and that I came down to my house backwards. Then they said that I went out of the house again and recited the rosary in the streets, visiting all the sick and giving them

⁵ *Mémoires*, pp. 129-130. Our translation was made directly from a photostat of the Spanish original. The *Mémoires* and letters have not as yet been published in Spanish.

the crucifix to kiss. As you know, I am not aware of these things. Others tell me [that I do them].⁶

The apparitions resumed with very great frequency some time during the winter of 1962, as indicated by the following extract from a letter which Conchita wrote to Don José Ramón on February 15, 1962.

It is snowing today. I just came from reciting the rosary at the *cuadro*. Last night at eight o'clock, I had an apparition at the *cuadro*. It was hailing very heavily, but I saw it all as though it had cleared.⁷ I wasn't cold at all. My mamma was trembling like a leaf from the cold. However, she was greatly intrigued by what I told her.⁸

The apparitions continued in the same way. Mari Dolores [Loli] sees her every day. Indeed, she has four or five apparitions a day, although some days there are only two. Mari Cruz sees her every day of the week with the exception of one or two days. Jacintuca⁹ saw her on the eighteenth, but hasn't seen her now for a month.¹⁰

Mari Cruz and I had apparitions at the *cuadro* during a certain period of time, but they were not at the same hour every day. Loli sees her in the village [streets], in the houses and at the pines.¹¹

⁶ During an apparition, the girl's attention is entirely focused on the vision. This letter can be found in *Mémoires*, pp. 127-128. Our translation was made from a photostat of the Spanish original.

⁷ *pero yo todo la veia escampado*.

⁸ Conchita probably told her mother that she had not noticed the hail and had not felt the cold during the apparition.

⁹ This is an affectionate form of Jacinta.

¹⁰ *que hace un mes que no la ve*. This could also be translated: "but hadn't seen her for a month." The girls' use of verb tenses leaves much to be desired and makes translating difficult.

¹¹ Our translation of this letter was also from a photostat of the Spanish original. In Father García de la Riva's *Mémoires*, it can be found on pp. 130-131.

This last letter of Conchita is very valuable since it indicates both the great number of apparitions and the variety of ways in which the different girls were involved in them. Conchita certainly describes here one of the peak periods in regard to the number of apparitions. It is easy to see how they have been estimated at approximately 2,000.

Friday, June 22, 1962 *The Miracle of the Visible Host is Announced by the Angel*

- We were always pleading with the Blessed Virgin and the angel for a miracle, so on June 22, when I was about to receive Holy Communion from the angel, he said to me:

"I am going to perform a miracle, not I, but God, through my intercession and yours."

"What is it going to be?" I asked.

"When I give you Holy Communion, the sacred Host will be visible on your tongue," he replied.

I paused to think and then said to him:

"But when I receive Communion from you, can't they see the Host on my tongue?"

"The people around you cannot see it, but on the day of the miracle they will see it," he answered.

"But that is [a] tiny [miracle]—*chicu*," I said to him.

He laughed and departed. •

Saturday, June 23,¹² 1962 *Two Apparitions—Conchita Asks Both the Angel and Our Lady when the Miracle Will Occur.*

- The next day, as there wasn't any Mass, after reciting the rosary in the *cuadro*, I set out for the church to say a station.

¹² The date of this apparition is not clear. Conchita starts by saying "the next day", which would be June 23, but later she affirms that "this apparition took place on the twenty-ninth of June."

Before I could get inside, the angel appeared to me smiling very much and said to me as usual:

"Say the 'I Confess' and reflect that you are going to receive God."

And then he gave me Communion and told me to say the "Soul of Christ" with him, which I did.

When I had made my thanksgiving, I asked the angel:

"When will the miracle take place?"

"The Blessed Virgin will tell you that," he replied.

Then he went away.

This apparition took place on the twenty-ninth of June, [1962]. After the angel had told me that there was going to be a miracle, I told the three other girls, Loli, Jacinta, and Mari Cruz, that the angel was going to perform a miracle involving us.¹³

On the evening of that same day when I asked the angel when the miracle was going to take place, the Blessed Virgin appeared, smiling very much as usual. I said to her:

"The angel Saint Michael told me that through his intercession and mine, God, Our Lord, was going to perform a miracle."

She didn't give me any answer, so I said to her:

"When will the miracle occur?"

"On Friday, the thirtieth,¹⁴ you will hear a voice which will tell you," she replied.

"Whose voice will this be?", I asked.

But she didn't answer me.

The first person I told that the angel was going to perform a miracle was a priest, Don José Ramón García de la Riva.

That same day, I also spoke about it to Mari Cruz, Loli and Jacinta. •

COMMENT Don José Ramón says in his *Mémoires* (pp. 70-72) that Conchita confided this information to him at the pines on the afternoon of July 2. At his suggestion she consulted with the other three girls who were

¹³ *iba hacer con nosotras un milagro el angel.*

¹⁴ In 1962, the thirtieth was a Saturday.

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with her at the pines before revealing the exact nature of the miracle. When Loli came down from the pines she told her father what the miracle would be. On learning this, Conchita became very angry and told her mother in the kitchen of her house that because of Loli's indiscretion the angel would cancel the miracle. Her apprehension turned out to be ill founded, as shall be seen shortly.

Friday, June 29, 1962 *The Date of the Miracle of the Visible Host Is Announced*

• Friday, the thirtieth¹⁵ of June arrived. As the Blessed Virgin had told me, while I was at the pines I heard a voice which said that the miracle would take place on the eighteenth of July. And the voice said:

"The little miracle—*El milagru*,¹⁶ as you call it."

After I had been told the date, I informed my mother and my aunt Maximina that the angel was going to perform a little miracle and I explained what it was going to be. They declared:

"Now, if that miracle does take place, then surely everyone will believe."

I didn't tell this to anyone, except those I have named. •

No Date *Fifteen Days Advance Notice to the People*

• On the occasion of one Communion that the angel gave me, I asked him when I could announce that there was going to be a miracle and describe what it was going to be.

"Fifteen days in advance," he replied.

When this apparition was over, the people of the village asked me if the angel had said anything to me about the miracle, because I had already mentioned in the village that the angel was going to perform a miracle. But the people didn't believe it very much. •

¹⁵ As mentioned above, in 1962, the thirtieth was a Saturday.

¹⁶ This is a term peculiar to the region of Santander.

Monday, July 2, 1962 *Conchita Announces the Miracle of the Visible Host*

• When the day arrived on which I was supposed to announce the date, I told it to the people of the village and I also wrote some letters. But Don Valentín, who doubted that the miracle would take place, told me not to write any more letters.

"It might not occur," he said.

There was a man in the village, Eustaquio Cuenca, who told me the same things as Don Valentín, namely, not to write any more letters. I told them that the Blessed Virgin and the angel had ordered me to announce the miracle, but that the people of the village didn't believe in it. •

COMMENT One of the letters Conchita wrote was delivered to the Bishop of Santander personally by Don Plácido Ruiloba who lived in that city. This is very significant in view of the fact the girls were later to deny the apparitions. There could not have been any doubt in Conchita's mind about the apparitions at this time, if she went to the trouble to see that the bishop was personally advised of this miracle which was promised by the angel as a proof of the apparitions.

According to Don José Ramón, Conchita also sent a letter to Father Francisco Odriozola of the diocesan commission of investigation. Neither the bishop nor Father Odriozola came, but they sent a representative who was not able to see the miracle with his eyes because of the crowd and confusion around Conchita when it occurred.¹⁷

Wednesday, July 18, 1962 *The Miracle of the Visible Host.*

• When the eighteenth of July arrived, the village filled up with people. They all came for the miracle. It was the feast

¹⁷ *Mémoires*, pp. 72-73.

day of the village [Saint Sebastián]. Near my house, a dance was taking place. Two things were going on together. Some people were saying the rosary and others were dancing. A certain number of people wanted to stop the dance because they were afraid that if it continued the miracle would not take place. So one of the men, Ignacio Rubio,¹⁸ asked me if I wanted him to suppress the dancing. I told him that whether the people danced or not, the miracle would still take place. From that point on, there was no further discussion about the dance.

When darkness settled in and the time passed, the people became restless. However, as the angel and the Blessed Virgin had told me that the miracle would occur, I was not worried, for neither one had ever told me a thing would happen without its actually happening.

By ten o'clock, I had already received one call. At twelve, I received another. Then later, at two in the morning, the angel appeared to me in a room in my house. My mother Aniceta, my brother Aniceto, my uncle Elías, my cousin Luciuca, and a friend from Aguilar, María del Carmen Fontaneda, were present. The angel stayed with me a little while and then said, as on other days:

"Say the 'I Confess' and think about whom you are to receive." This I did, and then he gave me Communion. After that, he told me to recite the "Soul of Christ," to make my thanksgiving, and to leave my tongue out with the Sacred Host until he departed and the Blessed Virgin arrived. And I did this.

When the Blessed Virgin came, she said:

"They still don't all believe!"

Then she ordered me to say the rosary, which I did.

After this miracle performed by God, Our Lord, through the intercession of the angel Saint Michael, had taken place, the people who had seen the complete miracle [those close enough to Conchita to see the Host suddenly appear on her tongue] and some of those who had only seen the Host [after it appeared] on my tongue, believed immediately and firmly.

¹⁸ He came from Corboda and was present at many of the early apparitions.

Even those who saw nothing themselves but accepted the testimony of others who had, also believed.

However, as the days went by, the people started to doubt because some claimed that I was the one who had put the Host on my tongue. For quite some time, the Host was the only topic of conversation.

There was a Franciscan priest, Father Justo, who at the time he saw it, did not believe. He told the people who had not witnessed it, that it was a lie and that I was the one who had done it. However, two or three days later, I received a letter from this priest, who asked my forgiveness for having thought evil in this manner. And he added that it was the devil who had tempted him.

A few days after receiving his letter, three priests arrived in the village. They had come on the part of Father Justo and because of things here in the village relating to the Blessed Virgin that he had explained to them. They told me that Father Justo had spent several days and several nights without sleep, thinking about the miracle of the sacred Host, but that he had reacted well, was now very happy and believing firmly. •

COMMENT The fear of the people who wanted to stop the dancing was based on past experience. On several occasions when worldly and unbecoming celebrations were taking place in the village, the girls had failed to experience an ecstasy. Conchita mentioned above in the *Diary* that Father Luis Andréu did not come to speak with them on August 15, as they had been told he would, because "many people . . . conducted themselves in a scandalous way."

Many priests, including the pastor, Don Valentín, were in the village on the eighteenth. This was also an object of concern because of the nature of the promised prodigy, namely, Communion from the angel. In the past, the girls had received Communion from the angel only on days when there were no priests to give it to them. Conchita knew of this anxiety, and, though it is not mentioned in

her *Diary*, she told the people that the presence of priests would not prevent the promised miracle.

The *llamadas* or calls never preceded the angel's visits when he came alone. It was because Our Lady immediately followed him during the same ecstasy that Conchita received the calls on this occasion.

Conchita neglects to say in the *Diary* that sometime after the start of the apparition, she engaged in one of the characteristic ecstatic marches. (It must be remembered the girls were not conscious of these marches.) With her head flung back, she very quickly descended the stairs from her room on the second floor where the vision had started. She passed out of the house into the expectant crowd which milled around her and followed her. She turned left around the corner of her house into a lane and then left again into a street. There in the street, immediately behind her house, she fell suddenly on her knees in a puddle of water and received visible Communion from the angel. He was holding a ciborium or some similar vessel from which he took the Host that he placed on her tongue.

Conchita states in the *Diary* that the miracle took place at two o'clock in the morning, that is, on July 19. It had been announced for July 18.

However, it would appear that the ecstasy did actually start at the very end of July 18. According to the sun, the eighteenth did not end until 1:25 a.m. When Conchita says in her *Diary* that the angel appeared at "two in the morning," she was not attempting to pinpoint the time with exact precision. The Rev. Dr. Porro Cardeñoso in *Dios en la Sombra*, affirms that Conchita went into ecstasy at 1:30 a.m. and that the miracle of the visible Host took place at 1:40 a.m.¹⁹ This is quite interesting because of the parallel it presents with the last apparition and the miracle of the dancing sun at Fátima, on October 13, 1917. Our

¹⁹ Page 105.

Lady had told the little shepherds that she would appear at noon. She actually appeared close to 1:30 p.m., but it was then exactly noon by the sun. (However, on the other days when she announced she would come at noon, she came at 12 noon according to the official government time and not at noon according to the sun.)

There is still another way of solving the apparent problem of time. Conchita indicates in her *Diary* that she received the first call on July 18 at 10 p.m., and the second call at midnight. Now these calls can be legitimately considered as part of an apparition since they are essentially related to it. They have no meaning except as a summons or invitation to a vision. They can legitimately be considered as the beginning of the apparition taken as a whole, just as the ecstatic march is truly a part of it. The apparitions of Garabandal were in that regard different from those of Lourdes or Fátima.

The miracle of the visible Host is certainly an important event. It was given in response to the children's repeated plea for a miracle that would prove the authenticity of the apparitions and it was announced publicly fifteen days in advance. It is estimated that between 2,000 and 3,000 people, including some foreigners, were in the village on that day. Many departed when the miracle delayed in taking place, but there were still a good number on hand when it did occur.

There were several reliable witnesses who stood very close, some within inches, of Conchita at the moment of the miracle. They affirm that she first opened her mouth and put out her tongue and they certify that at that moment there was absolutely nothing in her mouth. Then suddenly the white Host appeared on her extended tongue and remained visible for about two minutes. Most of the witnesses, but not all, maintain that it was a little larger and thicker than a normal Host. Pictures taken at the time seem to indicate an unusually thick Host.

Conchita insists that the Host was of the same size and thickness as the Hosts normally given in the village church. This insistence on her part is worthy of note. If the miracle were a fraud, as some have maintained, it is hardly probable that she would contest the testimony of these well regarded witnesses. The safe thing to do would be to go along with what they claimed they saw.

Moving pictures of the visible Host were taken at the time and one of the frames has been printed in a number of books and publications. As the pictures were taken by an amateur at night with only flash light illumination, they are not very clear. The amateur photographer who took them, Señor Alejandro Damians of Barcelona, is one of the important witnesses of the miracle. Here is a summary of a report he wrote about his experience.

He came to Garabandal on this occasion almost reluctantly. The movie camera he took with him was loaned by a cousin. He was totally unfamiliar with such instruments and was given only a few quick instructions on how to use it. When Conchita fell on her knees in the street just before the start of the miracle, the movement of the rushing crowd carried him unexpectedly within "fifty centimeters" or about twenty inches from Conchita's face, at her right. Thanks to cleared skies, a bright moon and numerous flash lights, he clearly saw the child open her mouth and extend her tongue as for Communion, except that she put it out a little further than normal. Her recollection and the beauty of her enraptured face made a deep impression on the crowd.

Señor Damians kept his eyes riveted on Conchita's tongue, not removing them for a single moment. Then suddenly and without the slightest change in the girl's expression, a Host appeared on her tongue. Don Alejandro is emphatic in his assertion that it unexpectedly appeared there with speed beyond the perception of the human eye. The Host remained visible on Conchita's immobile tongue

for about two minutes. There is no doubt in his mind that it was of normal size and not larger than usual.²⁰

Don Alejandro suddenly remembered the camera he was carrying. Having never run a movie camera before, he only vaguely remembered the directions given by his cousin. He pointed the instrument at Conchita's head and set it in motion during the last few moments of the Communion. Seconds later, he was pushed violently and fell to the ground with the camera. He was quite surprised when the developed film showed seventy-nine frames of the scene with several that quite clearly revealed a round white object on Conchita's tongue.

Communion from the hands of the angel was an unusual thing and it is natural to seek some special divine purpose behind it other than the obvious sacramental graces it brought to the girls. It fits in with the eucharistic content of the two messages of Garabandal, the one made public on October 18, 1961, and another that will be seen later. It is obviously a way of focusing attention on this very important part of the message. The miracle of the visible Host emphasized it even more.

It is interesting to note that the three children of Fátima were also given Communion by an angel. In the fall of 1916, on the last of his three visits to the little Portuguese shepherds, an angel who called himself "the Angel of Peace" and also "the Angel of Portugal" and has since been identified as no other than the archangel St. Michael, appeared with a chalice in his hands and above it a Host. Drops of blood fell from the Host into the chalice. The

²⁰ The size of the Host is really only a very minor issue. It is a matter of a difference of a fraction of an inch and involves something seen under imperfect illumination and by people caught up in a jostling crowd where religious emotion was running high. The answer may very simply be that during the two minutes the Host remained on Conchita's tongue, it absorbed the moisture of her saliva and puffed up somewhat. The impression one gets from the photograph is that of a swollen object.

angel placed the Host on Lúcia's tongue and gave Jacinta and her brother Francisco the contents of the chalice.

It is with this eucharistic perspective and backdrop that we should view the person of Father Luis Andréu. It will give us the key to understanding his primary role in the Garabandal event.

It is evident that Father Luis' sharing an ecstasy with the four girls and being given a preview of the great miracle is not a random happening. No one else has ever shared a vision with the girls and not even the girls themselves were given a preview of the miracle! What was the divine purpose behind this? Since the message of Garabandal was imparted through events like the ecstatic march as well as through the words of Our Lady, it seems legitimate to seek some meaning for this happening in relation to that message. Now the main thrust of the message appears to be the Eucharist and the priesthood. Could it be, then, that Father Luis was chosen for the special privilege granted to him because he was a priest and a holy priest, as indeed everyone who knew him considered him to be?

It is necessary here to anticipate the second message of Garabandal given on June 18, 1965, in which Our Lady asked that we pray for priests. Conchita, however, has affirmed that Our Lady did not wait until that late date to speak to the girls about the need of praying for them. She has declared that the Blessed Virgin began asking for these prayers at the start of the apparitions and that she spoke of this almost every time she came. Even more important is the reason which Conchita says she gave when requesting these prayers, namely, that priests might give a good example for people to follow. In other words, Our Lady was asking us to pray that priests may become holy. This is what Our Lord himself told Conchita in a locution as early as July 20, 1963:

Concerning priests, he told me that we should pray much

for them so that they may be holy and fulfill their duty properly and make others better. "May they make me known to those who do not know me, and may they make me loved by those who know but do not love me."

It would appear then that God was drawing our attention to a prototype of the good shepherd who leads his flock as much by his life and deeds as by his words. This was the kind of priest that Our Lady was asking us to pray for and that God wants, a holy man to whom God grants special favors and insights symbolized by the sharing in the vision and the preview of the great miracle.

Maybe this was best summarized by Conchita when she wrote to some priests and lay people who were promoting the Garabandal message: "Pray much for priests who are the salt of the earth . . ."

Loli wrote a message for the author on a card. It is quite significant in view of what has just been said: "As a reminder of the fact that I shall ask the Most Holy Virgin that you be a holy priest." Jacinta gave him a holy card with a message that expressed basically the same thing: "I shall pray much for you, that the Lord may enlighten you and that you may give abundant witness of the truth to men." Both of these messages were written in the summer of 1970.

The message of June 18, 1965 stated: "Less and less importance is being given to the Eucharist." On September 3, 1965, Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* on the teaching and worship of the Most Holy Eucharist. Much of its significance comes from the fact that it was given to the Church before the Second Vatican Council had concluded and notwithstanding the fact that the Constitution on the Liturgy had already been accepted by the Council and promulgated by the Pope on December 4, 1963. In the encyclical, the Holy Father affirms:

Moreover the Catholic Church has held to this faith in the presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the

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Eucharist, not only in her teaching but also in her practice, since she has at all times given to this great Sacrament the worship which is known as *latria* and which may be given to God alone . . . (Par. 55).

The Catholic Church has always offered and still offers the cult of *latria* to the Sacrament of the Eucharist, not only during the Mass, but also outside of it, reserving consecrated Hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to solemn veneration of the faithful and carrying them in processions to the joy of great crowds of the faithful (Par. 56).

In a general audience on June 9, 1971, eve of the feast of The Body and Blood of Our Lord, Pope Paul reaffirmed the validity of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament outside Mass, precisely because, as Our Lady said, "less and less importance is being given" to this devotion.

Eucharistic piety has an extension greater than the brief moment of celebration of the Lord's Sacrificial Supper. The Lord remains in the sacramental species, and this permanence not only justifies but demands its own cult; especially adoration, Holy Communion outside Mass if it was not possible during Mass, and the solemn procession that will be the rite proper to tomorrow's feast.²¹

²¹ Quoted in *The Catholic Free Press*, Worcester diocesan paper, June 18, 1971.

No Date *Our Lady Announces a Great Miracle and a Chastisement*

• The Blessed Virgin advised me of a great miracle that God, Our Lord, will perform through her intercession.

Just as the chastisement will be very, very great, in keeping with what we deserve, so too, the miracle will be extremely great, in keeping with the needs of the world.¹

The Blessed Virgin has told me the date of the miracle and what it will consist of. I am supposed to announce it to the people eight days in advance, so that they will come. The Pope will see it from wherever he is, and Padre Pio also. The sick who are present at the miracle will be cured and the sinners converted. There will be no doubt in the mind of anyone who sees this great miracle which God, Our Lord, will perform through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.²

And now as we all await this great day of the miracle, let us see if the world changes and the chastisement is averted. •

COMMENT No one should be surprised at Conchita's statement that the Pope will witness the miracle of Gara-

¹ *Como el castigo es muy, muy grande, como le merecemos, el milagro tambien es inmensamente grande, como el mundo le necesita.*

² *El Papa la verá desde donde esté y el Padre Pio. Los enfermos que asistan a él sanarán. Los pecadores se convertirán. Y no quedará duda el quien vea este grande milagro que Dios, Nuestro Señor, per intercesión de la Virgen, hará.*

bandal "from wherever he is." The miracle of Fátima, urgently requested by the little shepherds and promised three months in advance as a sign to convince people of the apparitions, was first witnessed on October 13, 1917. On that day seventy thousand people saw the "sun dance." Thirty-three years later, Pope Pius XII personally witnessed the same miracle four times in the Vatican gardens at Rome. This sensational news was revealed to a gathering of a million people by Cardinal Tesdeschini on October 13, 1951. His Eminence was representing the Holy Father as Papal Legate at ceremonies held at Fátima marking the conclusion of the Extended Holy Year. In his sermon at the Pontifical Mass, the Cardinal after describing the original dance of the sun that had occurred at that very spot, declared:

I tell you that another person has seen this miracle [but not Our Lady herself, as the first news release in the secular press of this country erroneously stated]. He has seen it at a distance of years. He has seen it at Rome. The Pope, our own Pontiff Pius XII, has seen it. . . .

It was four in the afternoon on October 30 and 31, and on November 1 of last year, 1950, and on the octave of November 1, the day of the definition of Mary's Assumption into heaven. From the Vatican gardens, the Holy Father turned his gaze toward the sun and there before his eyes the wonder of this valley and this day was renewed.

The sun's disc was surrounded by halos. Who could gaze upon it? But he could! On all four days he was able to gaze upon the activity of the sun. Under the hand of Mary, the sun, agitated and entirely convulsed, was transformed into a picture of life, into a spectacle of heavenly movements, into a transmission of mute but eloquent messages to the Vicar of Christ.

Conchita also affirmed that Padre Pio would see the miracle. When he died in September of 1968, this caused considerable consternation on the part of some who knew of Conchita's statement. The fact is that Our Lady's

prophecy, transmitted to us in the *Diary*, has actually been fulfilled. Padre Pio saw the miracle sometime before he died.³

Padre Pio is not the only one to have seen the Garabandal miracle. It was seen by another priest, the Jesuit, Father Luis Andréu.

No Date *Our Lady Foretells Contradictions and Denials of the Four Girls.*

• At the very beginning of the apparitions—*al principio del todo*, the Blessed Virgin told the four of us, Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz and me, that we were going to contradict each other, that our parents would not get along well with each other,⁴ and that we would come to the point where we would even deny that we had seen the Blessed Virgin and the angel. To be sure, we were greatly surprised to hear her say this to us.

But in the month of January, 1963, everything that the Blessed Virgin had told us in the beginning, happened. We began contradicting each other and we went so far as to deny that we had seen the Blessed Virgin. We even went to confess it one day.

But interiorly—*en nuestro interior*—we knew that the angel and the Blessed Virgin had appeared to us, because they had brought to our souls a peace, a deep joy and a great desire to love them more than ever with all our heart. Their smile and the conversations they had with us made us want to love them much more and surrender ourselves to them completely.

When we went to confess this, we did so without thinking, without believing that it was a sin.⁵ We went because the pastor, Don Valentín Marichalar, told us we should go. He gave us ten rosaries and five Our Fathers for a penance.

I don't know why we doubted a little—*un poco*. It was a kind of doubt that seemed to come from the devil who wanted to make us disavow the Blessed Virgin.

³ The author holds this from what he considers a reliable source.

⁴ *nuestros padres no andarían bien.*

⁵ *sin pensar, sin creer que era pecado.*

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Next we told our parents that we had not seen the Blessed Virgin but that the calls and the miracle of the sacred Host were true. Interiorly, I found it strange to be saying these things, since my conscience was completely at rest about having seen the Blessed Virgin.

A few days after we had said these things, the Blessed Virgin appeared to us again.

Loli's father, Ceferino, brought in a commission of doctors made up of Alejandro Gasca, Felix Gallego and Celestino Ortiz.⁶

The very night it arrived, the commission began asking Mari Cruz, Jacinta and Loli and their parents, the reasons why they had said that they had not seen the Blessed Virgin. I don't know what they said. But I do know that the doctors stated that I had fabricated the miracle of the Host.⁷ They explained it in their own way, clearly in one of those moments when one does not realize what he is saying, and they also allowed themselves to be influenced a little by the devil.⁸ •

COMMENT The contradictions and denials that Our Lady foretold "at the very beginning of apparitions" were predicted as early as the second month of the apparitions.⁹ This fact throws considerable light on this mysterious matter which has had much to do with the negative stance taken by the various bishops of Santander concerning the apparitions of Garabandal.

⁶ This was a purely private commission. These doctors were never on the official diocesan commission.

⁷ *el milagro de la Hostia lo había hecho yo.*

⁸ *se dejaron dominar algo del demonio.*

⁹ Conchita's aunt, Maximina González, gives this as the time of the prediction in a letter she wrote to Father José Ramón García de la Riva on November 11, 1966. She affirms: "... I myself heard Conchita say it during the second month of the apparitions: there will come a time during which we will deny each other; we will contradict each other and it will come about that no one or almost no one will believe. This, I heard her say myself during the second month of the apparitions." The translation is our own from a typed copy of the Spanish original. The letter is in Father García de la Riva's *Mémoires*, pp. 144-145.

"We were greatly surprised to hear her say this to us," Conchita comments on Our Lady's prediction. Actually the girls were dumfounded and looked enquiringly at each other, when the people questioned them after this apparition. Pressed to speak, they finally said: "We don't understand very well." Eventually they blurted out what Conchita has recorded in her *Diary*.

Father M. Laffineur relates that the people pursued their questioning, asking if Our Lady had said anything else. The girls replied: "Our Lady said that we would establish among ourselves the same confusion that now exists in the Church." A priest protested: "It can't be the Blessed Virgin who is appearing, for there isn't any confusion in the Church. It must be the devil who said this."¹⁰

The confusion was certainly present in the Church at this time, but it had not yet manifested itself publicly to any great degree in the summer of 1961.

On August 10, 1971, Conchita said that she did not remember Our Lady saying that the confusion among the girls would be an image of that in the Church, but only that there would be confusion in the Church. The author must say that occasionally he has found that Conchita's present recollection of minor matters differs from what she wrote in the *Diary*.

Father José Ramón García de la Riva related this interesting fact to us on August 9, 1971. One day in 1962, Conchita, hearing him discuss with another priest the debates among bishops at the Council in Rome, remarked: "You are saying that there is a little confusion at the Council, that some bishops don't agree with the opinions of others. Well, worse things are yet to come—*van a suceder cosas peores todavía*." It must be remembered that this is the statement of a thirteen-year-old girl.

¹⁰ Father Laffineur states these facts in his "Canadian Lecture", given on December 29, 1967. This lecture and his "Swiss Lecture", given on September 8, 1967, were published together, both in France and in Canada, as a supplement to his book *L'Etoile dans la Montagne* (Comité International d'Information et d'Etudes Historiques, 1966). See the Canadian supplement, p. 60, for the above information.

This reference to the confusion in the Church was truly prophetic when it was made, as witnessed by the energetic protest by the priest. The entire message of Garabandal was prophetic in this same way, in that it pointed to elements of Church doctrine and devotional practice that were on the verge of being challenged, attacked and even repudiated, such as the traditional role of Mary, the rosary and the divine presence in the Eucharist, to mention but these.

The trial experienced by the girls in early 1963 as described by Conchita in the *Diary* was unusual and mysterious, evidently not something purely natural in origin. Exteriorly they denied seeing the Blessed Virgin, while interiorly they remained convinced that they had seen her. They told their parents that the visions were not true, but that the calls and the miracle of the visible Host that were directly related to these same visions were nevertheless true! This was indeed a strange denial!

The third paragraph of this last section represents one of the spiritual highlights of Conchita's *Diary*. She writes like an authentic mystic. Peace, interior joy and a great desire to love more are the hallmark of God's action and presence in a soul. They are the signs which a confessor or spiritual director must look for when he is attempting to evaluate and pass judgement on spiritual favors and mystical graces that God bestows upon a soul. To appreciate this paragraph, it must be remembered that it was written by a meagerly educated child of fourteen whose mental age (according to doctors) was considerably less because of the backward cultural and social environment of her secluded village.

No Date *End of the First Phase of the Apparitions—
The Doubts Disappear*

• Since that day, the three girls have not had any more apparitions. However, I had an apparition that same night

and other apparitions up to the twentieth of January. Since then I haven't seen the Blessed Virgin any more.¹¹

Loli and Jacinta have now returned to reality and believe that they saw the Blessed Virgin. To be sure, how could they not believe it?

But Mari Cruz continues to say that she did not see the Blessed Virgin.

I also doubted a bit—*un poco*—whether the miracle would take place. And one day when I was in my room doubting if the miracle would occur, I heard a voice that said:

"Conchita, do not doubt that my Son will perform a miracle!"

I heard it interiorly, as clearly as if through my ears and even better than if it had been through words. It left me with a peace and a joy even greater than that experienced when I saw her.

Placido [Ruiloba of Santander]¹² was the first person to whom I told this. He told it to others. These things are called locutions. They can be described as a voice of joy, a voice of happiness, a voice of peace.

I no longer experienced any doubts about anything.¹³

The days passed and the voice did not come back to speak to me again. This made me feel bad. But I understood. How could God give me such sweet happiness without my having merited it?

The locutions did me so much good, so very much good,

¹¹ Conchita said on August 10, 1971, that Our Lady actually appeared to her on January 20, 1963. This is the liturgical feast day of Saint Sebastián, patron of the village. However, the people observe the feast on July 18, when the weather is more favorable for outdoor religious and social activities.

From January 20, 1963, to the second part of that same year, when Conchita finished writing her *Diary*, the Blessed Virgin did not appear to her or to any of the other girls. The apparitions resumed on December 8, 1963, but on a greatly reduced scale and to Conchita alone. By then the Garabandal event had entered on a new and different phase.

¹² He followed the events at Garabandal very closely from 1961 to 1965.

¹³ A second period of doubts began for the girls in 1966, long after the writing of these lines.

for it was as if the Blessed Virgin was within me— *dentro de mí*. What happiness!

One month later in the church, I again heard that voice of interior happiness which speaks without words.

I prefer the locution to the apparitions, because in the locution I have her within me—*la tengo en mí misma*. Oh, what happiness when I have the Blessed Virgin in me! What a shame to be so bad! But this is the way the world is.

I prefer to have Jesus in me—*tener a Jesús dentro de mí*, Jesus who will give me the cross to purify me, and who through my crosses will permit me to do something for the world with the help of God, for by myself I can do nothing.

Here is a prayer that I say to Jesus:

"Oh, my Jesus! *Ay, Jesús mío!*" •

COMMENT Significantly, Conchita ends her *Diary* on a strong mystical note. She gropes for words to express an ineffable experience and she reveals a spiritual understanding that one is amazed to find in such a young back-country girl.

The locution or interior voice that cleared up Conchita's doubts, marks the start of a second phase in the Garabandal event. This new period was characterized by the appearance and predominance of this mystical phenomenon that had not been encountered at Garabandal before this time. A distinctive feature of the locution is that it does not involve any apparition or vision. Nothing is seen by the person who "hears" or receives the interior message.

Conchita's remark concerning the superiority of the locution over the vision or apparition, is very enlightening in regard to the authenticity of her personal experiences. What she says is in full conformity with the experience of those saints who have enjoyed both visions and locutions. When Saint Teresa of Ávila was twenty-two years old, she had a vision of Our Lord. He reproached her for certain things she was doing but she nevertheless continued to do them. It was only twenty years later when she was forty-

two, that a locution succeeded in detaching her heart completely, freeing her from certain affections, which though harmless, were hindering her spiritual progress and union with God.

Conchita's locutions were of the highest type, intellectual locutions. There are various types of locutions. The lowest form of locution is the exterior one. Words are heard as coming through the bodily ears. Then there is the interior locution in which words are heard in a purely interior fashion and not as coming through the bodily ears. Finally, there is the interior locution where no words are involved. The message is imparted directly to the mind without the use of any words. This is the intellectual locution which Saint Teresa describes in these words: "The Lord introduces into the inmost part of the soul what he wishes the soul to understand, and presents it not by means of images or forms of words. . . . It is as if food has been introduced into the stomach without our having eaten it, or knowing how it got there; but we know quite well that it is therein."¹⁴ Speaking of Our Lady's voice heard in locution, Conchita wrote above: "I heard it interiorly, as clearly as if through my ears and even better than if it had been through words. It left me a peace and joy even greater than that experienced when I saw her . . . One month later in church, I again heard that voice of interior happiness which speaks without words."

The recollection of the locutions with Our Lady is still vivid in Conchita's memory. On August 10, 1971, she stressed as she did in her *Diary*, the great intimacy of the locution. When Our Lady appeared, she was "outside" and "above". In the locution she was "within us".

From letters sent by Conchita to Joey Lomangino while the locutions were still taking place, it is evident that the locutions Conchita had with Our Lady were "one way" affairs. Our Lady alone talked and Conchita could not ask

¹⁴ *Life*, c. 25.

questions. Conchita confirmed this on August 10, 1971. She said she could never ask questions of Our Lady during her locutions with her. However, the locutions with Our Lord were two way conversations, as will appear later in the second part of the book.

The pattern the locutions will take in the second phase is already intimated in the *Diary*. Conchita will have a locution once a month with Our Lady and it will usually take place in the church: "One month later in the church," Conchita noted above, "I again heard that voice of interior happiness which speaks without words." These monthly locutions with the Blessed Virgin will be intermingled for her with an occasional and infrequent locution with Our Lord. She had apparently had at least one of these before she finished writing her *Diary*, for she states: "I prefer to have Jesus in me . . ." We know as a fact that Conchita's first locution with Our Lord took place in the village church on July 20, 1963. This is the last event alluded to in the *Diary*.

Loli also is known to have had some locutions, possibly four or five, during this second phase of the Garabandal event. Apparently Jacinta did not experience any, nor did Mari Cruz.

From the report of a locution which Loli had with Our Lady, and which will also be examined in the second part of the book, it appears that Loli, contrary to Conchita, could ask questions of Our Lady and receive a reply from her.

In regard to apparitions or visions during this new phase, they dwindled down to practically nothing and Conchita is the only one of the four girls to have experienced any of them.

bo hacer por interaccion de Ella.
Como el castigo es muy muy grande, como
le merecemos, el milagro tambien es inmensamen-
te grande como el mundo le merece.
Ami me ha dicho la Virgen el dia de la fecha del
milagro y en que va a consistir, y 8 dias antes
tengo que decirlo al la gente para que venga.
El Papa lo vera desde donde este y el Padre Pío, los
enfermos que asistan al el sanatorio, los pescadores
se convierten y lo oyo que daba duda el quien sea
este grande milagro que Dios Nuestro Señor
por intercesion de la Virgen hara.
Ahora todos esperando se grandia el milagro
haber si el mundo cambia y el castigo se viene a
nos otras 4 Loli Jacinta Maria Cruz y yo al
principio del todo, nos habia dicho la Virgen
que nos ibamos a contradecir unas con otras
nuestros padres no han darian bien y hasta
que habiamos de oregar el que ubieramos
visto a la Virgen y al Angel. nos otras nos esta-
y en el mes de mayo de que orogamos esas cosas
apareado todo esto que la Virgen nos habia

Photostat of a page of the *Diary* that treats of the miracle, the chastisement and the denials.