



## Chapter 1

# God and the Human Condition

### 1. The Existence of God

It is the events at Garabandal taken as a whole rather than any particular fact which give witness to the existence of God. Nevertheless, there is one revelation which is more striking than the others, namely the large eye which the visionaries saw at the first appearance of the Virgin, and which they thought "might be the Eye of God." It seems that they were right. One might say that it was the first visible sign that everything they were to experience would come from God. We should also not forget that the Vision radiated a bright light, harmless to the eyes. Light evokes divine reality. Light evokes the Glory of God.

"What folly in man's nature, this ignorance of God! So much good seen, and He, Who is, not known! Should they not learn to recognise the Artificer by the contemplation of his works?" (Wisd. 13:1).

"From the foundations of the world men have caught sight of [God's] invisible nature, His eternal power and His divinity, as they are known through His creatures. Thus there is no excuse for [the impious who] did not honour or give thanks to Him as God" (Rom. 1:20-21).

On September 14, 1965, when Conchita submitted to a number of questions she showed that she was quite aware of the existence of atheists. Indeed she was very concerned about them: "We should pray hard for our brothers who do not know God," she wrote on December 10, 1965. What kindness, what hope in this simple statement! The visionaries had always said that the

◀ *The visionaries of Garabandal in ecstasy, 1961.*

Miracle would be such that unbelievers would believe. As for the Warning, Conchita declared on October 22, 1965, that it would be such that "even the unbelievers would fear God."

We should ponder these matters carefully. We live in a time when it is fashionable to place man above God. Prevailing philosophies have turned their backs on Him, for as Marx wrote: "Man is the God of man." Today there even exist theologies of the death of God.

Moreover, one could say that contemporary man is so absorbed by science and technical achievement that he has largely lost the ability to take the necessary mental steps as quoted above from the Book of Wisdom and the Epistle to the Romans. The first steps in this mental process where all the faculties play their part need a certain detachment, even a contemplative attitude, which for many reasons are not commonly found in modern industrialised societies. It seems that many of our contemporaries need a theophany, a manifestation of God, a certain proof, before they will believe in His existence.

We should try to understand this, for if God should never manifest extraordinary signs of His existence, then there is a grave indication either of His non-existence or at least of His refusal or inability to communicate with man. He would be no more than Aristotle's First Cause, the Architect of the universe of many Freemasons, or its watchmaker according to Voltaire. The problem of the existence of God would thus be irrelevant. For although there are the great divine manifestations of the past—those of Moses, of the Prophets, of Jesus the Saviour—many consider these to be shrouded in the mists of an uncertain and inaccurate history, beaten down by historical criticism. There is some justification for their position, and although one can stoutly maintain that the mystical experiences of the great God-seekers are well established facts, these are generally little understood or accepted, and some even think they can reduce them to purely subjective phenomena explainable by, for example, Freudian psychoanalysis or by environmental causes such as propounded by Marx and other modern sociologists.

Some people feel the need of concrete signs of God's existence. A young woman from Garabandal who at present lives near Barcelona, having been informed by letter from her mother that St. Michael and then the Blessed Virgin had appeared in her native village, knelt down in prayer, thinking to herself "that God was giving one more proof of his existence." Her behaviour

may cause the wise and learned to smile, which is typical of the widespread modern mental attitude.

We should not despise signs and miracles, for Jesus said: "You must see signs and miracles, or you will not believe!" (John 4:48), but after this rebuke He immediately made the sign which had been requested.

Surely this is precisely the prophecy of the visionaries of Garabandal, announcing the Warning, the Miracle and the Sign. What a promise for the future!

## 2. The Almightyness of God

The almightyness of God was manifested at Garabandal in many ways: by ecstasies, whether motionless or walking, forwards or backwards, moving on the knees, ecstatic running impossible to follow, unusual agility, levitations, and invisible telekinetic communions (except once, after it had been prophesied). There were cases of knowledge of secret hidden things or knowledge of sacred things (hierognosis), luminous irradiations from sacred things (photogenesis), scent irradiations from blessed objects (osmogenesis), and insensibility to pain caused by blows, pricks or pinches. The girls received violent shocks on their heads and knees without suffering wounds or fractures. They were neither burnt by fire nor wet by water. They ran barefoot without getting hurt. Their faces were transfigured. They knew foreign languages without learning them. They composed canticles in spite of their ignorance.

Specific instances have been reported.

On June 18, 1966, eminent Spanish psychiatrist, Dr. Ricardo Puncernau, in a lecture given at the Palace of Music, Barcelona, reported:

"During certain walks in a state of trance, sometimes very fast, when they were really running, it happened that they were subjected to head-on collisions by somebody bumping violently into them. The head of the little girl would crash against the stones of the path and bounce back, making one shudder. However, the little girl would get up graciously without coming out of her state of ecstasy and without showing the least symptom of pain or fright. After waking up, no trace of wound or haematoma was found."

A levitation of Conchita was witnessed by three priests, a policeman, a doctor, and two other people. One of the priests was Fr. José Ramon Garcia de la Riva, parish priest of Barro, Llanes,

Asturias; the doctor, Dr. Celestino Ortiz Perez of Santander; the policeman, a sergeant of the *Guardia Civil* of Puenteansa, Don Juan Alvarez Seco. All three have related the fact in three distinct documents which have been read, examined and copied. The sergeant wrote: "Suddenly I saw her holding herself horizontally, completely separated from the ground . . . I think that I shall not forget it as long as I live" (Testimonio del Brigada de la Guardia Civil, Don Juan Alvarez Seco, p. 9). "The child was suspended in mid-air, without anything or anybody to hold her up" (same witness, in *Por Qué*, No. 347, May 17, 1967, p. 9).

Don José Ramon Vazquez and Simon, father of Jacinta, were also witnesses. Afterwards Simon asked if the phenomenon of levitation might be explained to him. The best witness was the priest Fr. José Ramon Garcia de la Riva. He reports that he was in Conchita's kitchen with her mother, two other priests, a young Mexican, and the sergeant of the *Guardia Civil*. "We saw her rise to a height of ten centimeters . . . After a minute and a half (we checked the time) she began to come down very slowly, her body keeping perfectly and decently stretched out, and came back to the ground. We all signed a statement relating the fact, and we handed it over to Fr. Valentin, the parish priest, that he may send it over to the Bishop of Santander" (Mém., pp. 98-99).

On October 10, 1961, Conchita levitated again in the same kitchen. The names of the witnesses, who numbered seven, are known (AGSI, pp. 42-43). There were six men including the priest and the doctor mentioned above, and a woman.

Mercedes Salisachs saw Mari Loli also in a state of levitation.

One day when Benjamin Gomez was standing by the church door he saw Conchita return to it and lie down, but her body moved to and fro without touching the ground. This witness saw another man making sure that the girl's body was levitated by passing his hand back and forth between it and the ground (LVP, pp. 178-179).

Phenomena of levitation have been observed elsewhere, especially in India, but in the case of adult ascetics only very briefly and without the accompaniment of other phenomena.

Fr. Heredia, a Mexican Jesuit, has often simulated levitations in front of numerous spectators who found themselves incapable of detecting the simulation though they had been warned by him beforehand. But how could uncultured young girls be capable of doing this?

It is certainly true that men of science "have tried to find partial explanations but, in truth, no natural scientific explanation has been found which encompasses all these extraordinary phenomena" wrote Dr. Ricardo Puncernau, neuropsychiatrist and sophrologist, President of the Spanish Association of Parapsychological Investigations, in *Neg*, p. 137. (Sophrology is a branch of medicine dealing with hypnotism and similar states.)

We can see that the signs of the omnipotence of God were given to us liberally at Garabandal. However, this divine omnipotence will not be fully and strikingly manifested before the realisation of the prophesied events, and Conchita was well aware of this when she said in an interview of February 7, 1974: "For the words of the Blessed Virgin to be complete, there must be the Warning and the Miracle" (*Needles*, Spring 1974, pp. 16-17).

Will these signs of God be understood by us and our contemporaries? It is thought that three conditions will have to be fulfilled:

*Firstly*, that the knowledge of the Miracle be broadcast by the mass media;

*Secondly*, that a prevenient and concomitant grace be bestowed upon those who will see or know the Miracle in order that they may recognise its transcendental cause, Almighty God;

*Thirdly*, that the minds and hearts of man be prepared and well disposed, thanks to prayer and to the Warning.

On July 30, 1961, a little over a month after the first apparition at Garabandal, the visionaries, perhaps moved by divine inspiration, asked repeatedly that a miracle be performed so that the people might believe. The Virgin then "looked very grave." Why? Probably because she knew that a miracle would strikingly demonstrate God's omnipotence. This is of capital importance. It is one of the two main apologetic arguments, together with prophecy, which come into play in the Miracle to come (Cf Vatican I, Const. Dogm. Fid. Cath., Denz., No. 1790).

Moreover, the Virgin knows that unbelievers who will not change their way of thinking, and sinners who will not change their way of living, after having seen or known the Miracle, will sin very gravely: "You will watch and watch but for you there is no perceiving" (Isa. 6:9 quoted in Acts 28:26).

We may also assume that the Blessed Virgin shared Jesus' thought, for had He not severely rebuked the Jews who were requiring a miracle? (Matt. 12:38-39). However, later, probably to demonstrate that she had granted the visionaries'

childish request, she started to smile.

In the New Testament it is almost only in the Apocalypse that God is named the Almighty or All-powerful *Pantocrator*. And His omnipotence is often vindicated.

Jesus shares this omnipotence: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). His "works" manifested this, as He underlined: "Many good works have I showed you from my Father" (John 10:32). The disciples were conscious that He had been "a prophet mighty in deed" (Luke 24:19).

This power is also that of the Spirit (Luke 4:14).

Conchita is conscious both of the greatness of the Miracle to come (it will be "extremely great") and of the needs of the world ("it will be in keeping with the needs of the world"). It may be for this reason that she never doubted it, except for a short time as she reports at the end of her diary.

She is also conscious of divine omnipotence. In July 1970 a priest was telling her of his difficulties in bringing the Gospel to teenagers of families where the parents hardly prayed at all. She answered, "God can do anything."

She knows that He can act as He thinks through any agent. In August 1970, someone was pointing out to her that some of her private messages on the backs of holy cards—messages of great variety—exactly answered personal questions of the addressees. Her simple reply was, "God does it."

### 3. The Love and Goodness of God

Both the Old and the New Testament tell us that God loves us and that God is good. This goodness is chanted in the Psalms: "The Lord is good" (25:8); "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive" (86:5); "Praise the Lord, for He is good" (135:3); "His love is everlasting" (136).

Jesus is the very revelation of this love and goodness: "I will reveal Thy name to them, so that the love Thou hast bestowed upon Me may dwell in them and I, too, may dwell in them" (John 17:26). He is "the good shepherd." He proves His love in His Passion and in the Eucharist: "Christ loves us and has given Himself for us" (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2). He loved us "unto the end" (John 13:1).

The goodness of God is forever alive among us. He intervenes through events he provokes and words he pronounces. He is constantly at work. His goodness culminated in the New Testament through the presence among us of the Word made Flesh.

But God's goodness did not cease there. Jesus did not bring to an end the marvelous history of divine intervention with His first event. He marked out a summit and opened up a new era, the last, that of the New Covenant, and among these divine interventions of goodness and love, those of San Sebastian of Garabandal strike us by their overwhelming grandeur.

#### *God watches over us*

God watched over mankind at the time of Abraham. He awoke and led Abraham, and moved him through orders and promises. He led Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and his sons, from Ur of the Chaldees to the oaks of Mamre, from Egypt to the Promised Land. He repeatedly seems to have gone to sleep, for example at the time of slavery in Egypt, at the time of the ungodly kings, at the time of the captivity, and at the time of the Greek persecution. But He stirred up liberators like Moses and Cyrus, prophets like Elijah and leaders against oppression like the Machabees.

The people would sometimes complain: "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise!" (Ps. 44:23). God was thus testing their patience.

The prophets are watchers (Isa. 21:8). God is Himself a watcher, watching to ensure that His word is done (Jer. 1:12).

If God thus acted untiringly with His people, it was because of His love and goodness. It is the great message of Deuteronomy. Liberations, threats, chastisements, promises, protests of eternal faithfulness follow each other unceasingly in this book and in the prophets. When God castigates, it is to draw back to Himself hearts too hardened to be touched by other means.

God acted similarly in the history of His Church. When churchmen became worldly, he allowed the Church to drift into decline and collapse into internal struggles and divisions. He finally intervened when all seemed hopeless, "that no flesh should glory in His presence" (I Cor. 1:29).

God watched over His Church in that year 1961 as He had at the time of the prophets of Israel, even though there appeared to be no crisis, except perhaps in the opinion of very well informed and penetrating minds.

At Garabandal, God acted before the crisis which followed the Second Vatican Council began to unwind. God's love 'anticipated', and this is particularly striking. Unlike Lourdes and Fatima, for example, God did not wait for the crisis. He sent an



angel, and then Mary the Virgin, before the crisis came to a head.

His love, as at Lourdes, was motherly. He sent a Woman, a Mother, Mary, the purest image of the goodness and love of God. And she was to say, "I love you very much and do not want your condemnation" (Message of June 18, 1965).

*Listen, Israel (Deut. 6:4). O children, listen to me (Prov. 8:32)*

Why does God send messengers? There is a great biblical constant, a leit-motiv, and as we shall see again in Chapter 3, No. 10, God warns, cautions, exhorts, threatens, promises us. Avowals of love and chiding follow each other unceasingly.

When one considers the first Message of Garabandal one must agree with His Excellency Beitia Aldazabal, Bishop of Santander, that surely God is "offended by our sins." When, however, God announces a chastisement, He resists giving vent to His wrath before giving precise warning as He did so superabundantly and wonderfully in Deuteronomy, particularly in Chapters 3 to 11.

His warnings are clear and unmistakable. He shows us through these marvelous events that it is really He who is talking to us.

He has announced that a great Miracle will take place at Garabandal which, according to Conchita, will be a striking manifestation of His love. It will be preceded by a salutary Warning of short duration to all mankind to make amends and benefit from the Miracle, thus avoiding the chastisement, conditional but fearful. The Warning will be perceived everywhere and by everyone. It will draw the good closer to God. The ugliness of our sins will be revealed. Unbelievers will feel the fear of God. It will be dreaded by all mankind. It will purify us and warn us of the Miracle to come which will take place not more than a year later. If we read carefully, we shall understand that the Warning is an extraordinary token of God's love.

#### 4. The Most Holy Trinity

The facts of Garabandal were unfolded in a climate of continual prayer. Faith in the Holy Trinity was expressed in every "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit," concluding every ten beads of the Rosary which the visionaries said at every apparition.

They were often seen crossing themselves, with the three signs of the cross and crossing witnesses and patients with a crucifix, the implication here being of faith in the Holy Trinity, as it was

done "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

But it was only at the last apparition, on November 13, 1965, that the Blessed Virgin mentioned expressly the Most Holy Trinity in these words:

"I love you very much and I desire your salvation and your reunion here in heaven with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

It was only late in the gospels that the three persons of the Most Holy Trinity were mentioned together, namely at the end of St. Matthew's gospel: "Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

In 1966, Conchita said that when she arrived in heaven she would kiss the Virgin and the THREE, the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, and on August 8, 1970, she wrote: "May we understand that the devotion to Mary does not stop with her, but that it is merely, to be true, devotion to Jesus and the Most Holy Trinity in His temple of election" (revealed by the late Fr. Laffineur).

#### 5. Original Sin

On March 31, 1962, Mari Loli's mother, Julia, gave birth to a daughter, Lupita, on the upper floor of the inn. Mari Loli entered into ecstasy on the ground floor. She was heard to say, "Ah! It is a little sister? . . . What, so little, and sin already in her?"

She then came out of her ecstasy.

Fr. Laffineur asked her what she meant. She answered, "I saw original sin in the soul of my little sister."

Those present were Ceferino the innkeeper (Julia's husband and Mari Loli's father), Fr. Laffineur, Maria Bernaert and "a gentleman I did not know."

Such was the witness of Miss Bernaert which was obtained, in handwriting, signed and countersigned. Fr. Laffineur also spoke of this, notably in a lecture given at Candé-sur-Beuvron in France in 1969.

Conchita told Charles Mailloux from New York, that on another occasion a young woman was holding a three-month-old baby in her arms. The girl spoke of the baby to the Blessed Virgin who said he was in state of sin. Out of ecstasy, Conchita made this comment: "I do not know what it means, but if the

Blessed Virgin said so, so it is." She came up to the young woman and told her, "The Virgin told me that the baby is in a state of sin." The mother answered, "It is true. The baby has not yet been baptized." Baptism took place soon afterwards.

The Blessed Virgin thus confirmed twice the existence of original sin.

The teaching of St. Paul is explicit: Jews and Gentiles are alike convicted of sin . . . . All alike have sinned and are unworthy of God's glory" (Rom. 3:9, 23). "One man [Adam] commits a fault, and it brings condemnation upon all; One [Jesus Christ] makes amends, and it brings to all justification" (Rom. 5:18).

It is not generally known how the visionaries have brought up their children, but we do know that the seers have been brought up firmly and that their parents have always taken into consideration the consequences of original sin in their methods of education.

But in spite of her own adherence to moral values, it is perhaps not unreasonable to note that Conchita sometimes fears that a chastisement is unavoidable. She thinks that after a time of amendment, the world will go astray again (Message to the Americans, August 7, 1971, in OL, p. 219).

## Chapter 2

# The Hereafter

There is death, and life after death.

On December 8, 1962, three of the visionaries composed a canticle from which are quoted two stanzas:

"The Virgin has warned us  
Already thrice  
Oh! Little Virgin of Mount Carmel,  
What sorrow death causes us.

Men, women and children,  
Say the holy Rosary  
That, hereafter, in the other world,  
We may find eternal rest."

On July 20, 1963, having received a locution of Our Lord, Conchita asked Him if she would soon die, and she received this surprising reply: "One never dies." She had thought that we do not go to heaven until we have risen from the dead. Jesus' answer to Conchita was in keeping with what He told Martha of Bethany: "Whoever has life and faith in Me to all eternity, cannot die" (John 11:26).

On January 1, 1965, the Blessed Virgin told Conchita that we, Catholic Christians, do not think enough about life after death, about heaven and hell. We should think about them, and thus would our lives be more closely bound to that of Christ.

In 1970 Conchita told the author that when she spoke about death to her companions they did not want to talk about it.

## 6. Heaven

Heaven should be considered as God's given end for us after death, the end He wants for us, whilst purgatory is a transitory purifying state, and hell is the awful state of souls who, through their own fault, have missed their supernatural end, God.

The apparitions at Garabandal were 'heavenly' manifestations, of unspeakable beauty, light, peace, and joy.

Coming out of an ecstasy at Conchita's house Mari Loli cried out, "Oh Mummy, what a splendour there was, and how dark it is here!" She said the same thing after an ecstasy at the *calleja*. She was so impressed that she said to the Apparition, "Bring me to heaven right now" (SM, p. 109).

As early as August 1961, the visionaries understood that Fr. Luis Andreu, who had died a few days previously, was in heaven. They called him "San Luis Andreu" and his voice, emanating from a great light explained to them the great difference there is between life here on earth and in heaven. It is a state of perfect bliss (G II, p. 21). On December 8, 1963, the Blessed Virgin told Conchita that "although you will not be happy on earth, you will be happy in heaven."

The Apparition told the children that, among the saints in heaven, an exceptional veneration is paid to St. Joseph "as spouse of Mary" (SV, p. 113).

In a locution on February 7, 1966, the Virgin told Mari Loli "that she wants us all to be very good so that we may all be reunited with her, in heavenly glory."

"Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 24:43), Jesus told the repenting thief. St. Paul says that heaven is seeing God face to face (I Cor. 13:12). It cannot be expressed in any human tongue (II Cor. 12:4), and it surpasses whatever our hearts may desire (I Cor. 2:9). This vision of heaven will manifest the reality of our divine sonship (I John 3:1-2). We all find our true home in heaven (Phil. 3:20), St. Paul wrote forcefully. We are led on by our hope so that "we sigh, longing for the shelter of that home which heaven will give us" (II Cor. 5:2; see Rom. 8:23-25).

A startling picture of the triumph of the elect is found in chapter seven of the Apocalypse, especially in verses 9 and 15.

In the same way that Mari Loli reacted to the heavenly apparitions, many witnesses, when contemplating the enraptured girls, received in their turn a certain foretaste of heaven. As



*Jacinta and Mari Cruz in touch with the supernatural. >*



*Jacinta (left) and Mari Loli in ecstasy.*



soon as she saw the first ecstasy, Conchita's aunt, Antonia Gonzalez, was extremely struck by "the kind of splendour which emanated from them, as if they were sources of a fluorescent light, a bright, a very bright light. I watched their faces carefully. They were transfigured and luminous" (LVP, p. 250).

A priest who was present at the time said, "I do not know what heaven is, but it seems to me that at Garabandal, I was in its antechamber" (G II, p. 81). Señora Gallardo, when describing the faces of the children, said, "they were drowned in felicity." They smiled most of the time and often laughed "a laugh of glory, filled with beatitude but almost silent, deeply respectful, not of this world, I would dare to say drunk with heaven." One of the villagers, Margarita, was so uplifted that she wrote her mother that she no longer ate or slept and that she was "in glory" (LVP, p. 334). Another person said of Mari Loli, Conchita and Jacinta that they were "marvelously transfigured." Many of the photographs tell this story—a silent eloquence.

A well-known writer, Señora Mercedes Salisachs, who had lost a son, was assured of his salvation by Mari Loli when speaking in the name of the Virgin. "Your son is in heaven . . . he is in the greatest happiness, he is very happy, very happy."

## 7. Purgatory

In a written reply to a written questionnaire of September 14, 1965, Conchita declared, "The Blessed Virgin said . . . that those who wear objects kissed by her with faith and confidence would make their purgatory on this earth with suffering corresponding to what they would have endured in purgatory" (OL, p. 45, where the original Spanish wording, difficult to translate exactly, is also given).

What the Blessed Virgin said on this occasion acquires importance because the doctrine of purgatory is not shared by our Protestant brethren and there are in fact notable differences between Orthodox and Catholic theologies on the doctrine of atonement through suffering in the other world.

"The servant who knew his lord's will, and did not . . . do his will, will have many strokes of the lash; he who did not know of it, yet earned a beating, will have only a few" (Luke 12:47-48). Thus, every servant will have to atone for his faults through 'strokes', numerous or few in keeping with his guilt. Catholic exegetists see in this text a scriptural foundation for the doctrine of purgatory, as the expiation does not always take place

in this world. It is then carried over into the next.

Jesus also spoke of a sin which cannot be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come (Matt. 12:32), from which we must conclude that there are sins remissible in the other world, and which hints that there is a post mortem atoning penalty for those who need it.<sup>1</sup>

We should perhaps remember here what the Council of Trent has defined on purgatory:

"Considering that the Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Spirit and relying upon Holy Scripture and the ancient Tradition of the Fathers . . . has taught that purgatory exists, . . . the holy Council prescribes to the bishops to take care that the sane doctrine of purgatory be believed, professed and asserted by the faithful and it be preached to them with zeal" (Council of Trent, Session III; cf Denz. No. 983).

On the question of purgatory, see also Chapter 5, No. 23.<sup>2</sup>

## 8. Hell

The Blessed Virgin did not use the word 'hell' in the Second Message of Garabandal. But she alluded to it when speaking of those "on the road to perdition."



*The visionaries' faces reflect the serious teachings being imparted to them.*

1. Cf A. Michel, *Les Mystères de l'Au-delà*, Téqui 1953, pp. 97-98.

2. The Autumn 1976 issue of *Needles* deals with purgatory. One of its articles, by Fr. Joseph Pelletier, is entitled "Garabandal and Purgatory."

The word perdition often has a weighty meaning in the New Testament. We know the Lord's saying that "broad and wide is the road that leads on to 'perdition'" (Matt. 7:13). He referred to eternal perdition. Three chapters further on we read that: "there is no need to fear those who kill the body, but have no means of killing the soul; fear him more, who has the power to ruin body and soul in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

Our Lord several times affirmed the existence of an eternal hell, or fire, or torment. For instance, in His discourse on the Last Judgment, He showed us the Son of Man saying: "Go far from Me, you that are accursed, into eternal fire . . . And these shall go to eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:41, 46).

The Second Message of Garabandal, however, as well as the Gospel, distinguishes between "the road to perdition" and "perdition." The Message does not contain a condemnation of certain priests and "the souls they are taking with them," but rather a salutary, merciful and loving warning. Moreover, a careful reading will reveal that the Blessed Virgin did not pronounce any judgment on cardinals, bishops and priests, nor did she speak of 'bad' cardinals, etc. She intimated that some may be misled and misleading, without their inner dispositions being necessarily evil.

Conchita has used the word 'hell' at least twice, once in her letter of December 11, 1965, and once again in her personal message to Fr. Bandelier of Melun in France. She told him that priests should warn souls that, as there is a heaven, so too, there is a hell (GSG, p.99).

## Chapter 3

# Those Who Save

### 9. God, Christ, The Holy Spirit

The extraordinary happenings of Garabandal came from God. The young visionaries were not perfectly conscious of this at the beginning; indeed they often asked the Blessed Virgin to perform a miracle. On June 22, 1962, when Conchita was about to receive Communion from the angel, he said, thus correcting and instructing her, "I am going to perform a miracle, not I, but God, through my intercession and yours." It referred to the miracle of the visible Host. The Blessed Virgin also said on the occasion of her last apparition on November 13, 1965, "Through the kiss I have bestowed on these objects, my Son will perform prodigies."

On July 20, 1963, our Lord told Conchita in a locution (a conversation without any accompanying apparition) that He would perform the great Miracle, she playing a role of intercession.

The same may be said, on another level, of heavenly messages, that "God speaks at Garabandal," (and such is the title of a book) but only through persons who are no more than messengers, such as the angel and the Blessed Virgin.

It is interesting to note here that the Virgin came sometimes with her Child, notably in her last apparition. (In a later chapter Mary's divine Motherhood upon the Church and upon each one of us will be examined.)

The last time Conchita conversed with our Lord in a locution, He spoke to her with striking gravity and firmness. A notable question was: "Who redeemed you?" This was at Pamplona



on February 13, 1966. He spoke thrice of His will.

Conchita came to realise that Mary's role is to draw us to the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

She also came to understand the part played by the Holy Spirit in Christian life and she said or wrote more than once, "Call upon the Holy Spirit and St. Michael" (testimony of Fr. Laffineur and letter of Conchita of January 20, 1971, to the 'workers of the Blessed Virgin', OL, p. 218).

The reader may find this chapter obvious, possibly even commonplace, but it is felt necessary to present its contents so that what follows will appear in a proper perspective.

## 10. The Blessed Virgin Mary

It is not necessary to reaffirm that the Blessed Virgin Mary is not to be placed on the same level as Our Lord. "No creature . . . can ever be set on the same footing as the Word incarnate and redeemer" (Vatican II, LG, No. 62).

Mary came to Garabandal:

### *Firstly, as a visitor*

The day the Virgin chose for her first apparition is significant, namely, the Feast Day of the Visitation, July 2 and, as described later, she visited the whole village from 1961 to 1963.

On September 11, 1961, she led Conchita in ecstasy to Mari Loli's house and then Mari Loli to Conchita's; in other words, on a double visit. This was witnessed by Mr. Rousseau-Vellones. The visionaries often visited each other under the guidance of the Virgin, as Fr. Valentin Marichalar can testify.

We can see in these visits a reflection or illustration of a Gospel event. The first of Mary's actions after the visit of the angel was to visit her cousin Elizabeth. The "Blessed of the Father" are those who have visited the sick and the prisoners (Matt. 25:36).

### *Secondly, as Our Lady of Mount Carmel*

The angel had announced Our Lady under this title, and she indeed wore the same habit that she wore when she appeared to St. Simon Stock in the 13th century, with a Carmelite scapular on the right wrist. She was dressed in a white robe and a blue mantle. Some people said, in the Fall of 1961, that she could not be Our Lady of Mount Carmel, but she appeared once to

Conchita alone dressed as a Carmelite nun in the traditional brown dress, saying, "I am one and the same."

Mount Carmel reminds us of many things:

- a. The prophet Elijah, who brought Israel back to God and the Covenant, an object of contempt for the kings and the people (I Kings 17-22);
- b. An outstanding miraculous sacrifice proving that the Lord is the only God (I Kings 18:37-39);
- c. The contemplative life, union with God, and the call to sanctity, taught and exemplified by the great Carmelite masters;
- d. The wearing of the scapular, a token of divine protection;
- e. Attachment to the Blessed Virgin, Queen of the Prophets, so conspicuous in the Order of Mount Carmel;
- f. Israel, where Mount Carmel remains a dominating hilltop to this day. Pope Paul VI has reminded us of the exalted sayings and prophecies of St. Paul (Rom. 9-11) which give the Israelites a special position in the hearts of Christians: "We could not forget in what moving terms the great apostle Paul has spoken of you, of your people, of the hope he fosters in his heart for his Israelite brethren."<sup>1</sup>

It is not coincidental that at Garabandal there are to be found six facts which are analogous to those enumerated above, namely:

- a. The visionaries were instruments who, by the messages they conveyed, exhorted Christians to return to the New Covenant, Jesus being its Priest and Victim of atonement—"Think about the Passion of Jesus" (Second Message)—and the Eucharist being its permanent sacramental sign—"Visit frequently Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament" (First Message);
- b. As at Mount Carmel at the time of Elijah, an outstanding Miracle will confirm these heavenly messages; it will be "greater than that of Fatima" as Conchita wrote to Dr. Caux and as stated in *Journal de Conchita*, p. 52, note 66;
- c. The children gave a wonderful example of prayer both in and out of their ecstasies;
- d. The Blessed Virgin wore a scapular of Mount Carmel;
- e. The children adhered to Mary, as we shall see later;
- f. The daughter of an Israelite received at Garabandal a figure

*Our Lady of Mount Carmel came to Garabandal, a mountain village. Peaks of the Peña Sagra range (altitude 6,800 ft.) can be seen to the southwest. >*

1. Address given on February 27, 1972, when the *Encyclopedia Judaica* was presented to him, published in *Les Nouvelles Chrétiennes d'Israel*, vol. XXIV, No. 1, p. 51, and republished in *La Documentation Catholique*, No. 1656, p. 557.

of baptism; she indeed received her baptism shortly afterwards at Burgos.

Finally, if Mount Carmel is a mountain, Garabandal is a mountain village.

*Thirdly, as a prophetess*

The charism of prophecy is a charism of revelation: "God reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). It enables men to know things that they are unable to discover by themselves. The prophet teaches, emends, exhorts, denounces faults, enlightens kings, priests and people, and announces the future—all in the name of God.

Though Abraham and Moses were of course also prophets, the charism or gift of prophecy really began with Elijah, prophet of Mount Carmel and inspirer of the order bearing that name.

"The accomplishment of a prophecy at a short date authenticates a prophet's message" (Bible of Jerusalem, note on Jer. 28:17). Elijah made such prophecies as did Elisha, Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Biblical prophecies are sometimes expressed absolutely but are nevertheless conditional. Such is the case of Jonah announcing the destruction of Nineveh, and Elijah, the extermination of the males of Ahab's house (I Kings 21:21). St. John of the Cross underlined that these prophecies were unmistakably inspired but were not fulfilled because of a change of heart.

The practice of prophecy ceased for over two centuries, and its revival occurred with St. John the Baptist. But he was not the only prophet of the New Testament. There had been Simon (Luke 2:25-35) and Anna (Luke 2:36), and the charism of prophecy is met again in the Acts of the Apostles and in the churches founded by Paul (I Thess. 5:20). The prophet of the New Covenant also edifies, exhorts, comforts, and foretells the future, but what he says, as opposed to the prophets of the Ancient Covenant, is not a basis of the deposit of faith, namely what must be believed.

Prophecy, this work of the Holy Spirit, will not wane before the glorious return of Christ, no more than other charismatic gifts meant for the edification and sanctification of the People of God. The Spirit "provides [the Church] with various gifts, hierarchical and charismatic, through which He guides it" (LG No. 4). These charisms, whether they be more striking or

more simple . . . are very appropriate and very useful to the Church and its necessities" (ibid, No. 12; see also Nos. 7, 32, 33). Among the more striking gifts or charisms, that of prophecy plays a very important part. Jesus said, "Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men and scribes" (Matt. 23:34).

Women also have the gift of prophecy. St. Paul knew and recognised women "who prophesy" (I Cor. 11:5). This had been announced by Joel and the apostle Peter quoting him (Acts 2:17-18). The deacon, Philip, had four daughters who also prophesied. Indeed the prophetic voice of woman fills the Church. Let us remember, for example, the two Teresas, the great and the little.

The Virgin Mary herself was a prophetess at Garabandal.

- a. She denounced faults in both formal Messages;
- b. She called us to penance, as did John the Baptist, and the prophets of old;
- c. She enlightened the priests and people in both Messages;
- d. She exhorted and edified the visionaries in a thousand ways, and us through them.
- e. She predicted the future.

Some of her prophecies have already been fulfilled. The miraculous visible Communion was announced by the angel, but the Blessed Virgin intervened in giving the date. She also said that Padre Pio would see the future Miracle which he did shortly before his death, as known from a reliable source (OL, p. 115). She announced six months beforehand the last apparition of St. Michael, the dangers threatening the priesthood and the Eucharist (Second Message), and the dangers of confusion within the Church.

Other prophecies are awaiting their fulfillment. Some are of major importance: the Warning, the great Miracle which will coincide with a rare and fortunate event in the Church, the permanent Sign, the conditional Chastisement. There is also the prophecy concerning the Popes: after Pope John XXIII there will be only three popes, and then will come *el fin de los tiempos* which must be translated "the end of our epoch."<sup>2</sup> Conchita

2. Conchita knew beforehand, facts which she could by no means foresee naturally, unless we admit the existence of remarkable premonitions. Two or three days after the death of John XXIII, Placido Ruiloba told her, "this end of our epoch will come in three times fifteen years." Conchita answered: "just like John XXIII, one of the popes will last but a very short while—*muy poquisimo*" (conversation of the author with Mr. Ruiloba on November 13, 1978, shortly after the sudden death of John Paul I).



does not know the meaning of that announcement of the Virgin which was given at the death of Pope John XXIII. Some theologians have already begun to discuss it. Other prophecies are of minor importance: the healing of Joey Lomangino, the blind American; the priestly ordination of Pepé Luis one of the young children of Garabandal (testimony of his mother Maximina); the vision of the Miracle by the Pope "from wherever he is." Fr. Luis Andreu's body will be exhumed the day after the Miracle and found intact, as Conchita heard in a locution of July 18, 1964.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Fourthly, as the Mother of Jesus*

Jesus was presented to the visionaries as a newborn babe, speechless—and this is new in the history of modern Marian apparitions—to be admired, loved, and finally worshipped.

St. Joseph and his spouse had presented Jesus to the Lord God in His Temple, as well as to Simeon and Anna, elderly Jews, waiting for the consolation of Israel.

This presentation to the young girls of the Child Jesus, Whom they even held in their arms, prepared them to receive Him: in Holy Communion, either from a priest's hand or from the angel's; in the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, recommended in the First Message; in the locutions of the Lord to Conchita.

The Blessed Virgin had told them that it was a greater grace to receive Jesus in Holy Communion than to see her.

#### *Fifthly, as Queen*

To this day it is a custom in the churches of the diocese of Santander to call upon the Virgin Mary as "Our Lady well appeared, Queen and Patron of the Mountain" in remembrance of apparitions at the beginning of the 17th century. In ecstasy, the visionaries said, instead of Queen and Patron of the Mountain: "Queen and Lady of everything created—*Reina y Señora de todo lo creado*," which was to declare that her royalty is universal.

On July 29, 1961, the Blessed Virgin appeared crowned with small golden stars. It is important to notice that the Child also wore a little crown. The *niñas* played with these crowns, and re-

marked that the crown of the Blessed Virgin was too large and that of the Child too small.

Two comments are noteworthy: Firstly, Jesus' divine kingship was His by right from birth, and not through a gradual consciousness of it as He grew up, or for instance at His baptism as some theologians have recently speculated. In fact, He was King from the very moment of His conception. Secondly, and this is a certain theological conclusion, Mary's queenship is entirely dependent on that of her Child. She is queen only because her Son is King.

A woman with a starry crown appears in the Apocalypse (Rev. 12:1-17). According to good exegetists she is a double symbol, because the word Christ (whose mother she is) had, for a long time, a double meaning: the first, Jesus, and the second, the Mystical Body, namely the Church. Generally speaking the allegorical literary form admits a plurality of meanings.

For example, some features suit only Israel and the Church. Others suit particularly well the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus, the Virgin prophesied by Isaiah (7:14), the woman to bring forth a child, announced by Micah (5:2): her son, a powerful king destined to rule nations with an iron rod. Some features fit both: for example the pangs of childbirth suit mainly Israel out of which came Jesus and His Church out of which came Christ as Mystical Body. In a way, they also suit Mary who gave birth to the Church and a new era of faith in the pangs of her compassion, as prophesied by Simeon (Luke 2:35).<sup>4</sup>

After a deeply critical analysis conducted on the occasion of the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Signum Magnum* of May 13, 1967 and "The Marian Cult Today", No. 12 of March 22, 1974, both by Pope Paul VI, the liturgy is thus fully justified in continuing to use this text for the Feast of the Assumption.

The Church dedicates August 22 as a feast-day to Mary as Queen of Heaven, Pope Pius XII having established this feast and treated the subject in an encyclical, *Ad Coeli Reginam*.

Catholic piety has often given her the title: *Regina Coeli*, Hail Holy Queen, whilst the Council called her "Queen of the Apostles" (Presb, No. 18), and Pope Paul VI called her "Queen, Mother of the King, Queen of Peace, Queen of Mercy" in "The Marian Cult Today," Nos. 6, 22, 25.

3. This last prophecy raises a problem. His corpse was exhumed in 1976 and it was not incorrupt. Will God reconstitute his body? (see *Needles*, Jan.-March 1977, pp. 14-15).

4. Cf. *Allo, L'Apocalypse*, Gabalda 1922, pp. 160-161; 172-174. Also A.-M. Dubarle, *La Femme Couronnée d'Etoiles*, Mélanges Bibliques A. Robert, 1957, pp. 512-518.

It impresses upon us her high office as the Blessed Virgin, and the vital role she plays as mother of her Son in the government of His Church, but at the same time in full and total dependence on Him. It would seem, especially since 1830, that God wishes that this reality, normally hidden to mortal eyes, should occasionally appear in this world through Marian apparitions. Indeed these manifestations of Mary encourage us to respond to the invitation of the Second Vatican Council which urges us "to address to the Mother of God and of men pressing supplications so that . . . exalted above the saints and the angels, she continues to intercede before her Son . . . until all families of all peoples . . . be at last happily united into one People of God" (LG, No. 69).

*Sixthly, as Mother, educator and catechist*

Mary, as "Mother of men" played these three roles at Garabandal.

At the outset of her *Diary*, Conchita noted that Mary treated them as a mother would treat her children. She listened at length, even to their nonsense—*tonterias*—showing interest in what they were saying and doing, lending them her crown and her Son's so that they might try them on, and even finally handing over the Child so that they might hold Him in their arms.

She helped them compose canticles. She corrected them when they crossed themselves incorrectly or said a prayer badly.

It was after "the strange voice" on August 17, 1961 (OL, p. 86) that for the first time the Blessed Virgin kissed all four of the visionaries, one by one. It was the natural action of a mother comforting her frightened children.

On the night of November 4, 1962, the motherhood of Mary was displayed toward Mari Loli in a stunning and touching way. While she was waiting for an apparition, her mother ordered her to go outside in the dark to bring in the laundry which was drying outside, as it looked as if it were going to rain. Mari Loli, rather frightened, was preparing to obey and had lit a torchlight. As she approached the door, she fell into ecstasy and the Blessed Virgin appeared before her. Mari Loli crossed herself, presented the crucifix to be kissed, went out and, still in ecstasy, gathered the laundry and came in. She had hardly come out of her trance before she was asked what had happened. She explained that it had been very difficult for her to obey her mother's order to go out alone as she had been afraid, but she understood that the Blessed Virgin had accompanied her with a

motherly affection (G III, p. 187).

On another occasion, Mari Loli was told by the Blessed Virgin in a locution: "Repent and don't repeat it." She told a priest that it made her feel "a mixture of sorrow, comfort and confidence, because there is no mother as good and understanding as the one we have in heaven" (G III, p. 219).

On November 13, 1965, on the occasion of her last apparition the Blessed Mother said, "I have come for all my children, with the desire to draw them closer to our Hearts," thus extending her motherhood to all people. And she added, "Talk to me, Conchita, talk to me about my children. I hold them all beneath my mantle."

On April 25, 1970, in an interview with Fr. Pelletier, Conchita enlarged upon Mary's motherhood. During the ecstasies she often kept silent. "She looked at the other people," declared Conchita, "and she said that she was looking at her children."

Her motherhood was thus universal.

On August 1, 1961, probably under divine inspiration, the children were heard saying the Hail Mary but adding three words: ". . . Holy Mary, Mother of God 'and our Mother', pray . . . etc." (G III, p. 200).

She was indeed a most loving Mother. "How well we felt with the Virgin!" Conchita would say. "She was really a friend. She called us by our Christian names. She did not say Maria Concepcion but Conchita, nor Maria Dolores but Loli" (G II, p. 222). "The Virgin was just like us, there was no distance" (G II, p. 242). "She was human" (ibid., p. 235). She exchanged feminine confidences. She perfumed the tufts of the *babuchas* (oriental slippers) that she wore on earth (ibid., p. 226).

She played hide and seek with Conchita and one of the other visionaries from nine in the evening until seven in the morning. Fr. Auguste Valensin has told of a Hindu man of God who once invited a child "to play with God" (Joy in Faith, 1937, quoted in *Needles*, Winter 1975, p. 24). This may distress some religious people and philosophers. But divine Wisdom played in front of God and among men (Prov. 8:30-31). Why not our Mother with her children?

Jacinta's father has a story to tell: "The Virgin laughed while listening to the small talk of the visionaries in ecstasy. It was as if a mother had been away from her children for a few days and upon her return was greeted by them with all the news that had



*The visionaries playing, June or July, 1961.*

occurred in her absence. It often happened, too, that the children would play in ecstasy. One of them was made 'It' while the other three hid, while she went looking for them. Did they laugh!" One of the days that they were seen enjoying that game was Conchita's feast-day, according to Sergeant Juan Alvarez Seco, either December 8, 1961 or 1962.

The Blessed Mother behaved as an elder sister or a friend. Conchita often calls Mary "her heavenly mama and her best friend." Mari Loli also loves the Virgin. While in ecstasy, she asked her, "that she may love her all her life . . . more and more, until death." She confided to Señora Gallardo, "If we knew how much she loves us, we would have nothing else to do but to love her immensely—*muchísimo*" (letter from Señora Gallardo to the author, September 11, 1975).

In 1966 in the locution at Pamplona, Jesus told Conchita about "Mary whom you love very much." In Summer 1967 she told Dr. Porro Cardeñoso, "Now, I love her much more, but I make very few sacrifices." However, in March 1968 she stated in writing that she now wished to suffer for others.

As 'educator' the Blessed Virgin gave 'orders', for instance that the Rosary should be recited, and 'recommendations' such as being clean: "Be very clean, I also paid attention to that when I lived on earth," she told them, as Conchita related to Mother

Maria Nieves in October 1966. She would also 'correct' them when they crossed themselves badly and sometimes she 'reprimanded' them, as on a day in 1961 when Jacinta lacquered her nails and Mari Loli used lipstick. An innocent act by itself, but improper for children about to see the Virgin Mary.

As 'catechist', her teaching was both motherly and complete; complete in the sense that, taking into account their age, their baptismal grace and their Christian family background, she taught them many things regarding Christian behaviour, including penance and sacrifice, and also how to recite 'properly' the prayers that Spanish Catholic girls of their age should know by heart. It seems the Virgin paid special attention to Mari Cruz, getting her to recite the Creed and the Hail Holy Queen perfectly and to cross herself properly.

The conversations of the visionaries in ecstasy showed how filial and complete was their confidence. They confessed their sins to her. Their confidence shines in Conchita's *Diary* and in her conversations with Mother Maria Nieves, for instance when she told her that she loved Mary as if she were her mother.

Mary's role as educator and catechist is of great importance throughout this book.

Here is a stanza composed by the visionaries in ecstasy. We cannot of course sing it, as there is no musical score, but we can recite it.

Seguid Cristianos la Virgen  
Con humildad y fervor.  
Pedidla nos haga un sitio  
En la celestial mansion.

Christians, follow the Virgin  
With humility and fervor.  
Ask her that she prepare you a place  
In the heavenly dwellings.

## 11. The Angels

It is widely known that St. Michael the Archangel played an important role at Garabandal. He came as a herald, an announcer of the Virgin, an ensign-bearer of the First Message and spokesman of the Virgin for the Second Message.

We also know that at her first apparition, the Virgin came accompanied by two angels, one of whom was St. Michael the

Archangel and the other whose name is still unknown. However, Jacinta asserted later that it was St. Gabriel (GG, p. 50).

It is also worth underlining that the Blessed Virgin asked if a chapel might be built in the pine grove, not in her honour but in honour of St. Michael.

It is not however widely known that the Virgin appeared accompanied by five small angels, and on that occasion she explained that she was the Queen of Angels and that is why they accompanied her (Memor, p. 15).

Once when Mari Loli was in ecstasy she was handed a toy representing the devil. She flung it down. She was then immediately given another toy representing the guardian angel. This she took, carrying it throughout the village (AGSI, p. 59).

*The angel the visionaries saw did not look like this statue in the village church. He appeared to them to be about nine years old.*



G. LUCAS

The children when in ecstasy often sang a canticle to St. Michael the conqueror of Satan:

San Miguel Arcangel  
Gran batallador  
Que en fiera pelea  
A Luzbel vencio, etc.

Saint Michael Archangel  
Great warrior  
Who in fierce battle  
Vanquished Lucifer, etc.

Conchita mentions the devil four times in her *Diary*, twice as one who felt satisfaction in seeing evil committed (such as the pilfering of apples), and twice as one who sowed doubt in the visionaries' minds, thus bringing false accusations against Conchita by the Commission which she attempted to excuse. However if we meet Satan at Garabandal as the Evil One and the Tempter, he was met there far more frequently as the 'vanquished'. The stones which the children threw at him before the first apparition harmed him little, but shortly afterwards the angel appeared and overcame him (Rev. 12:7-10; 20:1). The angel's statue can be seen now above the Church's holy water basin. He is represented as a winged Roman soldier, holding under his left foot a swarthy chained devil, and in his right hand a spear pointed toward the devil's eye. The art is of course naive and may well cause us to smile, but it illustrates in its popular way the intervention of St. Michael as God's champion at Garabandal.

As Fr. Pelletier has emphasised, these facts show the importance of St. Michael in the work of salvation and in the struggle against evil and the Evil One, a struggle which increases in intensity throughout the world where Satan, without apparently revealing himself, is more than ever active. It is a chastening thought.

It is thus difficult to understand how some theologians can have recently cast doubt on the existence of angels. It is certainly true that in some passages of the Old Testament, the expression "angel of God" means "apparition of God under the shape of a human being," and in chapters two and three of the Apocalypse, they refer to the chiefs of the local churches. But in the oracles of Zechariah and Daniel, they designate distinct beings, in the plural, and bearing names. They are spirits at God's service.

It is remarkable that the word “angel” is found 170 times in the New Testament and only 110 times in the Old, in spite of the fact that the Old Testament is four times longer. In the New Testament Jesus used the word 21 times and only in the plural. Here is an example: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit down upon the throne of glory” (Matt. 25:31).

Angels played a part at supreme moments in His life: the Incarnation, the Nativity, the temptation in the desert, the agony, the Resurrection, as well as in difficult moments in the lives of Peter and Paul.

The angels are mentioned twice by the Council (LG, No. 49, 50), and twice in Pope Paul VI’s Profession of Faith.

It would seem that belief in the angels was stimulated in the visionaries by these apparitions, at least in the case of Conchita.

As already stated, she is given to say, “Invoke frequently the Holy Spirit and St. Michael.” Her father’s example must have played a part in her devotion to St. Michael, for as she told the author in July 1970, her father prayed to St. Michael every day of his life. She too calls upon him every day, as she told the staff of *Needles* on February 7, 1974 (Spring 1974, p. 17).

## Chapter 4

# Salvation Through the Church

### 12. Life in the Church

The Queen of the Apostles appeared in Garabandal, a village which was particularly united in its faith.

In 1961 the four children were as usual questioned after emerging from a trance.

“What did the Virgin tell you this time?”

The children looked at each other as if in consultation.

“Well, tell us!”

“We don’t understand too well” came the reply.

“Well, talk just the same” they said.

The children replied that the Virgin had said, “A time will come when all four of you will contradict yourselves about the apparitions; when your families will not believe well about them; when even you will doubt the apparitions, and even deny them.”

“Is that all?”

“No,” they replied. The Virgin had added, “Thus will you establish among you the same confusion that now exists in the Church.”

A priest who was present protested vigorously: “It’s not the Virgin who is appearing. In fact, there is no confusion in the Church. It’s the devil talking” (SM, p. 202). This reaction shows that at that time, the confusion “that now exists in the Church” did not go beyond a restricted circle of theologians whose research was well intentioned but adventurous. This particular priest was not aware of this, or if he was he did not measure its consequences.

On a practical level, the visionaries showed a deep interest in

the Church, and zeal, and obedience toward those who had ecclesiastical authority. This was inculcated in them by the Apparition.

When they added the words "and our Mother" to the Hail Mary, the Blessed Virgin told them that it seemed good to her, but not to use this formula regularly as long as the Church had not introduced it.

On October 18, 1961, Our Lady specified that the children were to read the First Message at the entrance to the church, then to hand it over to Fr. Valentin, their parish priest, who would read it in the pine tree grove. Thus was the authority of the Church acknowledged—or more precisely the priest who had authority to examine the Message in the first instance.

As a result of obedience to the commission entrusted with investigating these facts, things turned out somewhat differently.

The Blessed Virgin led the children *to the church* to pray. They did this on August 5, 1961, firstly at the altar of the Immaculate Conception, then at the main altar to beg forgiveness, and then at the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary for the recitation of the Rosary, which they did very well.

On August 23, 1961, when the ecclesiastical authorities forbade them to enter the church while in ecstasy, they immediately obeyed, and the way they obeyed has been told in detail by the priest who communicated this order to them (Mém, pp. 36-38). The details are interesting. They did not enter the church again in ecstasy, except once, on September 5, two weeks later. Fr. Valentin arrived and told them, after having dismissed the public, "By order of His Lordship the Bishop, you must leave the church." They came out of their ecstasy at once and left the church. They often walked around the church in a sort of little procession, reciting or singing the Rosary. Their ecstasies often ended at the closed door of the church. There are wonderful photographs showing the four of them kneeling against this beautiful door.

Something particularly noticeable usually occurred on religious feast-days. On October 7, 1961, the Feast of the Holy Rosary, the Rosary was said most impressively. It was interspersed with canticles and lasted two and a quarter hours. Something similar occurred on October 7, 1962, but, according to Simon, father of Jacinta, it was on the Feast-day of the Annunciation of 1962 that the children sang the Rosary itself for the first

time, with angelic voices which filled all the villagers with admiration.

The conclusion is that with regard to their age, their condition, the events in which they were involved, their feeling for the Church was expressed mostly through obedience to those who had authority.

"If [a brother] will not listen to the Church, then count him all one with the heathen and the publican" (Matt. 18:17).

"Let the laymen . . . accept . . . in Christian obedience what the Pastors decide" (Vatican II, LG, No. 37).

The worship of the visionaries for the church as a building should be considered as worship of the Church of Christ, "God's building" (I Cor. 3:9), every church symbolizing the Church of God, as sung in the preface of the Dedication.

Josefina Cosio, a villager of Garabandal, was returning one day from a mountain pasture. When she passed by a pen belonging to Conchita's family, she saw Conchita standing alone at the gate, in ecstasy. Her hands were tightly closed on the fleece of a little sheep which she was trying to force into the pen; it was at that moment that the child had her vision. The amazed Josefina went from house to house to bring people to watch and later testify. No one was able to pull the little sheep away from Conchita's hands as long as she remained in ecstasy.

*The village church.*



On another occasion Conchita had gone after a rather stubborn sheep which refused to enter the pen. She had grasped it by its fleece to lead it when she went into ecstasy. She remained in that state with the ewe struggling hard but without being able to free itself. Her brother Serafin, a strong lad, was unable to open her fist. They finally got Mari Loli to come but she did nothing. She just said, "Well, Conchita, why don't you let this sheep go?" And she let it go at once. It is believed that these two episodes are distinct, but this should be clarified. On yet another occasion, Conchita went into ecstasy at the very moment she slapped a sheep to send it back on to the right path. It remained stuck to Conchita's open hand and had to follow her wherever she went. The only way to separate the two was to cut off some of its wool with a pair of scissors.

We think that these episodes are living images for us with a pronounced biblical background. The Church is a sheep-fold and men are scattered sheep, often restive, to be guided and led to their true fold (Jer. 23, Ezech. 34, John 10).

The visionaries were very interested in the activities of the Vatican Council, and during the night of September 25, 1962, Conchita was heard speaking about it in ecstasy. The Council was due to begin work on October 11. Don Luis Navas Carrillo was able to record on tape the words of the young visionary who said: "The Council will be the biggest of all? . . . It will be a success? . . . Oh, how good it is! So you will be better known and happier." Fr. Valentin took note of this in his diary.

The moment that Conchita's ecstasy began coincided exactly with the procession of the Conciliar Fathers as they moved into St. Peter's to celebrate its opening (G III, p. 181).

Antonia Gonzalez one of the villagers remembers well that, one night at Ceferino's she heard the little girls speak, so it seemed, to the late Fr. Luis. They were saying, ". . . the Churches will unite, they will unite . . ." Who gave them what we can only call this hope? Was this a prophecy?

On another occasion the visionaries cried in ecstasy, and they explained later that the Virgin had told them that the people had shown disrespect for the church. On September 2, 1970, an Englishwoman asked Conchita a question, the author serving as interpreter, "The Blessed Virgin seemed to complain that the Message was not communicated. Now then, she also wants us to obey the Church, so what can we do, as most bishops are opposed to its propagation?" The answer came as quick as light-

ning: "Sacrifice oneself and practice the Messages."

Five years earlier, on December 10, 1965, Conchita had written to Fr. Alba, a Jesuit from Barcelona: "There is no use believing in the apparitions if we do not comply with the Message, or rather, if we do not comply with what our Holy Mother Church asks of us." In Conchita's eyes the Message of Garabandal does not add anything to the teaching of the Church: "The Blessed Virgin affirmed here what she did at Lourdes and Fatima and not a single new thing—*no ha dicho ninguna cosa nueva*." We ourselves can unhesitatingly affirm that the Message is one which repeats itself in times of crisis, revives our minds, updates it for our generation, vigorously underlines particular points, and strikingly affirms its necessity. It is like the sound of a gong or the blowing of a trumpet.

Finally, we cannot but be impressed by the indefatigable devotion of the visionaries to the Church for so many years, in spite of numerous, serious and enduring difficulties. This must only make us ponder. We should be inspired to follow their example.

#### *Garabandal and the Liturgy*

The events that took place at Garabandal often had a pronounced liturgical character. For example, the story of Garabandal began on a Sunday, the Lord's Day. The first visit of the Blessed Virgin also took place on a Sunday, the feast-day of the Visitation, celebrated at that time on the second of July.

The singing of the Rosary occurred on the feast-days of the Annunciation and Our Lady of the Rosary, and we should remember that the Blessed Virgin reminded the visionaries on September 8, that it was the feast-day of her nativity.

Her last apparition during the period of intense and frequent apparitions (June 1961 to January 1963) took place on January 20, 1963, feast-day of St. Sebastian, patron saint of the parish.

The feast of Corpus Christi in 1962 was preceded by two nights of screaming by the girls which incited all but one or two of the villagers to go to confession before receiving Communion at Mass on that feast-day.

It is interesting to note that the Hail Holy Queen was sung in ecstasy on a Saturday in May 1962, bearing in mind that Saturday and the month of May are consecrated to Mary, and in addition that the numerous visits to the cemetery in November coincided with the month that prayers are especially said for the deceased.

Finally, we should recall the extraordinary way in which Mari Loli conveyed the message of the Blessed Virgin to Mercedes Salisachs whose son Miguel had been killed in France in a motor accident. Mercedes had arrived at the village on April 21, 1962, on the day preceding Easter Sunday. She was deeply grieved and wanted to know her son's fate in the after-life. Mari Loli was given the answer by the Blessed Virgin, but instructed not to let it be known before one o'clock on Easter night. The message Loli gave to Mercedes was "The Blessed Virgin says that your son is in Heaven." It was indeed proper for Mercedes to share the Virgin's grief of Good Friday and her *soledad* (solitude, grief, nostalgia) of Easter-eve before feeling the immense joy of Easter night.

### 13. The Eucharist—Communion, Presence and Visits, Sacrifice

The subject of the Eucharist has been treated by Fr. Pelletier in chapter nine of *God Speaks at Garabandal*. Here are presented certain aspects telling how the visionaries answered the call of the Blessed Virgin, and presenting briefly the main biblical foundations for the Eucharist.

#### *Communion*

We know that St. Michael the Archangel prepared the visionaries to receive Holy Communion from his own hand through the teaching of the common prayers and by first giving them unconsecrated hosts. In November 1967, Conchita told Isabel de Daganzo that she and Mari Cruz received their first Communion every day at the time of the apparitions, except when they worked in the mountain pastures, either from the hand of a priest or from the hand of the angel. The exceptions were rare. These little Eucharistic ecstasies never lasted more than ten minutes.

When their parish priest, Fr. Valentin Marichalar read the first account of the apparitions of St. Michael as given by the young visionaries, he must have been quite surprised. The angel had asked them to show their teeth. "How strange!" he could have said. "What an angel says, when he speaks to us, is always said in the name of God. But this demand seems odd. If it is really an angel of God who is appearing to them, we may understand later but, for the time being . . ." So could have reasoned Fr. Valentin. Though not a Doctor of Theology, he has sure theological insights. The little report which he presented at the In-



*An invisible Communion of Mari Loli*

ternational Congress of Marian Studies held at Lourdes in August 1978 showed this clearly. This Congress drew workers of Garabandal from 26 nations of all continents, a bishop, renowned theologians and men of science.

A well founded explanation can be given to this saying of the visionaries. Jesus said in His sermon on the Bread of Life: "Whoever chews My flesh enjoys eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day . . . whoever chews My flesh . . . remains in Me and I remain in him. Whoever chews this Bread will live eternally." If, through respect for the Eucharist, translators have hesitated to use this realistic verb and have rendered it by that of eating, one must not forget its full and original meaning.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, may we not think that, in a way still hidden to them, the angel was preparing the children for the Communions for which he would be the exceptional minister, as at Fatima? These "teeth of the communicant" are clearly mentioned by St. Augustine and more pointedly by St. John Chrysostome who spoke of "planting our teeth into the Flesh of Christ" (homily on St. John, 46:3; P.G. 59, p. 260).

It was stated earlier that the Blessed Virgin told them that it

1. Zerwick, Young, Hoskins, and the *Traduction OEcuménique de la Bible* (in a footnote) all attribute to the greek verb *trôgô* the sense of "to chew."



was a greater grace to receive Jesus in Holy Communion than to see her. Mari Loli and Conchita understood perfectly this little lesson of spiritual theology. Fr. Luis Lopez Retenaga asked them both separately in July 1963 which they would rather choose, a locution or a Communion. They both answered unhesitatingly "a Communion!" although, they said, that the locutions and apparitions filled them with bliss, and that their Communions were not necessarily accompanied by side effects on their sensibilities.

It seems that, at the end of 1962, only Conchita and Mari Loli received Communion from the angel's hand and the reason is not clear. It would seem that they had more troubles and sufferings to endure, and for this reason they would have had greater need to receive Communion.

It has been noted that the first miracle at Garabandal was of a Eucharistic nature. Jesus confirmed that He is present in the Host at Holy Communion. This is vitally important. "At Garabandal, everything converged toward the Eucharist" (GSG, p. 95). We know that the miracle (of the visible Communion) was announced beforehand, seen by many witnesses, and filmed by Mr. Damians from Barcelona. On August 15, 1963, he went through a deep spiritual experience which he discussed with another important witness at Garabandal. The conversation is here recorded word for word.

*Dr. Jean Caux, a specialist doctor from Paris*—Was it you who made the film of the visible Communion? I have been hoping to meet you and have a talk.

*Mr. Alejandro Damians, a businessman from Barcelona*—I am happy to meet you also and I will willingly answer any of your questions.

*Dr. C.*—I have read your report about the film and would like to have more details, if this is possible.

*Mr. A.D.*—You must take into account that the report is incomplete for there are some things which I could not put into it, perhaps the best parts. It was that I felt certain things deeply and felt I could not really write about them.

*Dr. C.*—Please tell me, was the host really thicker than usual?

*Mr. A.D.*—I do not think so. What I did see was that it seemed to fall away at the sides, so that from the profile it appeared thicker than usual, but it really was not. At any rate, I would swear that it was not.

*Dr. C.*—Were you watching all the time?

*Mr. A.D.*—As long as I stood close to the girl I did not stop looking at her tongue, and I assure you I did not stop looking for a single instant; of course, I may have blinked, but this does not take more than a tiny fraction of a second. What I did see is that, with the speed of light, the host took shape on the tongue. It could be said more exactly in an instant.

*Dr. C.*—Why did you not film the event from the beginning?

*Mr. A.D.*—I was dumbfounded, absorbed, and I did not grasp what was happening. Truthfully, it did not enter my mind. I don't even remember why I was photographing. I took out the camera and caught the last seconds of the miracle.

*Dr. C.*—Do you think there is a possibility of deceit?

*Mr. A.D.*—If this were demonstrated to me, I would not believe any more in Garabandal. My faith would not, however, be changed. At the most, I might be of the opinion that some unscrupulous persons might have speculated on holy things. But, I say, there could not have been any deceit.

*Dr. C.*—Did you think of touching it (the host)?

*Mr. A.D.*—No.

*Dr. C.*—Was the tongue in normal position?

*Mr. A.D.*—I would say it was held out more than usual.

*Dr. C.*—Allow me to ask you a question that I have desired to ask you for a long time. Did you feel at that moment a joy so enormous, so far out of this world, that you couldn't share it with anyone and that you wouldn't exchange it for anything in this world, not even for a billion pesetas? And, if such is the case, did you share it with anyone?

*Mr. A.D.*—You are asking me a question which I have asked myself in nearly the same words. I would not exchange the bliss which I felt in those moments either for a billion pesetas or for anything in the world. It was a joy, deep and intense, which I cannot explain nor share with anyone. Something utterly different from the ordinary; *something for which I would give my life*, and which prevented me afterwards from following the young girl in ecstasy, or my wife or anyone, but forced me to go into a corner and weep in silence.

*Dr. C.*—Thank you. I am delighted, for this is what I was thinking. There are still two things I would like to know: why was

might save itself. I anxiously work toward that event as if I were the only one to know of it. Eight days before the Miracle I shall spend my time bringing my parents, my wife, daughter and my brothers to Garabandal. They intend to come anyway. Believe me, my family was first to think I was mad. My brother, for instance, has just visited the village and he now believes. It is a grace of God that people no longer think me mad, but you can be sure that I do not mind what they think of me.

*Mr. A.D.* —I shall tell you something more. The film is at your disposal. We have only four copies for four friends and no one else. And I think that it should now be shown abroad. You give me the impression of not being an ordinary person, so I want you to know that you have it at your disposal.

*Dr. C.* —Thank you. I shall remember that.

Back in France, where he went to confession, Dr. Caux recovered his peace and a new life. He also remembered a startling fact: after the miracle of the host, Conchita came toward him walking backwards, even though he had hidden himself from the crowd, and with her back to him, she gave him the crucifix to be kissed three times.<sup>2</sup>

This story gives us a rare insight into an uncommon and double experience concerning the Eucharist and also God, sin, hell, heaven, confession, grace, inner peace and joy.

The Eucharistic events of Garabandal form a practical lesson that Conchita understood as such (interview of April 25, 1970, in OL, p. 94) and with which the Blessed Virgin concurred. She has been asked through the visionaries, "What does the Virgin ask above all from Spaniards who wish to mend their ways?" The answer was: "That they go to confession and receive Communion" (AGSI, p. 36).

### *Presence and Visits*

When the apparitions began, the Blessed Virgin often led the visionaries to the foot of the main altar of the church, where the Blessed Sacrament is kept. This happened, for example, on August 22, 1961. On this occasion they came to the first step leading to the altar, very near to where an excellent witness, the parish priest of Barro, was standing. He turned slightly, watch-

2. Translation of a mimeographed leaflet distributed in Barcelona and details given by Dr. Caux to the author.

ing them carefully. "They prayed with fervor and in a low voice in front of the tabernacle" on their knees. After the church had been closed, the Blessed Virgin drew them to its door where they knelt, or she drew them nearly every day and sometimes several times a day, in procession around the church, so that it may be said that "the girls were drawn to the church."

When the visionaries moved in ecstasy, they never turned their backs on the Blessed Sacrament. When they moved away from it or out of the church, they did so walking backwards. It was under the church's portico that most of the ecstasies ended. They were asked why when in ecstasy they went so frequently to the door of the church, although it was closed. They answered candidly, "It pleases the Virgin to go very near her Son, Jesus."

Fr. Ramon Andreu has noted that they often recited the *estación a Jesús Sacramentado* beginning with the salutation "Long live Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament." Once on the night of October 12, 1961, Mari Cruz recited the "Station to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament" in ecstasy, once at the pine grove, and once again at the *cuadro*.

The Blessed Virgin in her last apparition gently chided, "Conchita, why don't you go more often to visit my Son in the tabernacle? He waits for you there day and night."

### *Sacrifice*

The sacrificial aspect of the Mass appears as a watermark in the Second Message, where both the Eucharist and the Passion of Jesus are mentioned, the Eucharist to which "less and less importance is being given" and the Passion of Jesus about which we "must think." And what better way to think about it than by attending Mass, the memorial of Jesus' Passion, as is shown further in the New Testament and in the teaching of the Vatican Council?

Communion was only given by the angel when there was no Mass which had an important sacrificial aspect. This was underlined by the Blessed Virgin to Mari Loli in one or more locutions: "The Virgin makes me understand the crucifixion in the Holy Mass; I understand humility and sacrifice for the world" (Letter to Fr. Luis Lopez Retenaga of October 13, 1963, quoted in G III, pp. 221-222).

The visionaries always attended Mass when it was celebrated in the village, whether it was on Sundays, or rare funerals or on other occasions, such as visits of priests.

### *How Did the Visionaries Respond to Practical Guidance?*

On the first day of the apparitions, the visionaries went to the church after their ecstasy to pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament, then again the next day and on June 27, at first they recommended that the Blessed Sacrament should be visited: "The tabernacle is the best thing we have in the churches," they said (SV, p. 113). Jacinta, after having said her Rosary at six o'clock at the *cuadro* normally went to the church door, still shut, to visit the Blessed Sacrament.

Conchita grew conscious that the Eucharist was at the centre of the Messages. In October 1968, she was asked, "What was the main emphasis as given by Our Lady at Garabandal?" She answered, "Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and prayer for priests." On August 5, 1969, she wrote on the back of a holy card: "May the Holy Eucharist be our comfort and our strength."

In Spring 1970, some French visitors were edified by Jacinta's solitary presence in the church, visiting the Blessed Sacrament. Conchita seems to have made her daily visit to Jesus in the tabernacle in spite of the numerous people coming to see her. Mari Loli, on the other hand, was obviously overburdened with work and did not go to church except for the Mass and the Rosary. All the visionaries received Communion simply and piously.

An attentive Frenchwoman noticed one very significant detail. The visionaries, when entering the church, differed from other people in one important respect: their gaze fell first upon the tabernacle.

During her six or seven retreats in 1970, Conchita spent seven or eight hours per day in silent worship before the tabernacle (OL, p. 180).

And now? Conchita attends evening Mass daily with her husband. During an interview given on February 7, 1974, she said that it was her opinion that what offends Our Lord most is "indifference . . . In too many ways, people forget that it is Jesus on the altar and in the tabernacle . . . Besides daily Mass and Communion, we must often go to pay a visit to Our Lord in the churches where He is alone."

On February 2, 1974, Mari Loli married Francis Andrew Lafleur. They receive Communion every day, a practice she surely approves of heartily, having often said "that it is far better to go to Mass and receive Communion than to have an apparition" (*The Vigil*, First Quarter 1974). This shows her sound judgment, her humility and her worship of Jesus in the Eucharist.

### *The Eucharist in the New Testament and at the Council*

In chronological order are here listed a series of references the reader is invited to look up in the New Testament.

In 57 A.D.: I Cor. 10:16-21; 11:23-24.

Around 65 A.D.: Mark 14:22-25.

Around 67 A.D.: Heb. 13:10.

Before 70 or around 80 A.D.: Matt. 26:26-29; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11.

Around 98 A.D.: John 6:25-65.

An exhaustive study of these texts goes far beyond the scope of this book but four aspects should be highlighted; the first three attributed to the remarkable theologian Y. Brilioth.<sup>3</sup>

a. In the three first gospels, the mystery of the personal presence of Jesus as host, commensal and priest.

b. In St. John, the mystery of Jesus present in the elements of the Sacred Meal.

c. In St. Paul, the presence of Jesus in the Mystical Body, the Church, through Communion.

d. The sacrificial aspect which stands out from the whole context of its very institution, its timing (the immolation of the passover lamb), its place (near the Temple where the lambs were sacrificed), the words "for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28), "the blood of the New Covenant" (ibid.), the body "given" and the blood "shed" (Luke 22:19-20), the sacramental separation of the Body and Blood.

Moreover, whoever is familiar with the Bible can see that the gospels and epistles are so to speak impregnated with the Eucharistic spirit: thanksgiving, breaking of the bread, banquets, sacrifice, the covenant, participation, and communion are often mentioned.

The Second Vatican Council has tied the Eucharist to ministerial priesthood and to Christian life by declaring:

a. "It is through the ministry of the priests that the spiritual sacrifice of the Christians is accomplished, in union with the sacrifice of Christ, unique Mediator, offered in the name of the whole Church in the Eucharist by the hands of the priests, sacramentally and unbloodily, 'until the Lord comes' [at His second coming] (I Cor. 11:26)" (Presb, No. 2). This very dense text should be read more than once.

b. "The holy Eucharist contains the whole spiritual treasure of the Church, e.g., Christ himself, our real passover, our real

3. *Eucharistic Faith*, London 1930.

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b. "The holy Eucharist contains the whole spiritual treasure of the Church, e.g., Christ himself, our real passover, our real

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living bread, He whose flesh, quickened by the Holy Spirit and quickening, gives life to men, inviting them and leading them to offer, in union with Him, their own life, their work, the whole creation. We thus see how the Eucharist is really the source and the summit of the whole evangelization: . . . Christians . . . through the receiving of the Eucharist are fully inserted into the Body of Christ" (Presb, No. 5).

c. "No Christian community can be built without finding its root and centre in the celebration of the Eucharist" (Presb, No. 6).

When the Blessed Virgin said at Garabandal that "less and less importance is being given to the Eucharist," she invited us to consider and venerate the Sacrament of the New Covenant *in all its numerous closely knit aspects*, which together constitute a sublime reality.

#### 14. The Priests

As has been said in the last chapter, according to Conchita, Our Lady stressed above all "devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and prayer for priests." There is a correlation between the Eucharist and the priesthood, both in themselves and in the Messages of Garabandal.

The Council teaches that the fundamental function of the priest is to be minister of the Eucharist (Presb, Nos. 2 & 5).

The Blessed Virgin often spoke about priests to the visionaries. She said that if they met an angel and a priest, they should salute—*venerar*—the priest first, because he consecrated, while the angel did not.

The priests are also responsible for instruction, and that is why she told the girls to ask them the meaning of the word "sacrifice" which they did not understand (Memor, p. 23; G I, p. 164). This suggests that the Blessed Virgin was perhaps also hinting that a good priest is sacrificed, consecrated, "eaten," as the Curé of Ars would say. If such is the case, we can understand why she so often talked about them, encouraging the girls to pray frequently for priests. She expressed a special concern for priests, notably in the Second Message, because if they do not give a good example and demonstrate qualities of leadership, some of the faithful might be tempted to venture on "the road to perdition." Their task is to help us to live saintly lives, each of us in our own individual state of life and calling. This special concern of the Virgin, and of God who sent her, is absolutely positive. On July 20, 1963, Our Lord told Conchita, "May they make Me

known to those who ignore Me, and may they make Me loved by those who know but do not love Me."

The Second Message recommends us all to pray for priests, bishops and cardinals.

It is well known that the Virgin gave the visionaries the power to recognise priests in lay or military attire, thereby hinting that they were marked with an invisible "character" or "seal" as taught by Catholic theologians.

We are now able to understand why the visionaries treated priests with a special consideration, even though some treated them badly or questioned them indiscreetly. For example the girls questioned the Blessed Virgin about them with an eagerness close to anxiety. No subject seemed to preoccupy them more, except their own vocation. Conchita once asked the Virgin if all priests were good, and she was quite surprised to receive a negative answer (G II, p. 57). Mari Loli often prays for them, especially for those who wish they were no longer priests. She went so far as to ask the Virgin in a locution, for a cross to carry for them. Whence came these thoughts and feelings of Mari Loli?

*Fr. José Ramon Garcia de la Riva with Jacinta. He is considered one of the best witnesses of the events.*



She confided once to a priest, "The Blessed Virgin told me to make sacrifices for priests, because if there are many saintly priests, many more souls are led to Christ and to love God. She told me to pray especially for those who want to abandon the priesthood . . . that a priest continue at least to celebrate Mass, because he is priest forever." The notion of the indelible "character" of the priest is found anew in these last words.

In order to let guests use her beds, Conchita's aunt, Maximina, had put her two boys, aged five and four, on a straw mattress laid on the floor. In order to hide it, she had surrounded the mattress with chairs covered with sheets. Conchita entered the house in ecstasy, crossed the beds, and left. She went down a few steps, her head drawn way back, her hand holding the crucifix. She began to laugh, seemed to speak to someone, then came back, walking up the steps backwards, reached the spot where the children were hidden, removed a chair, knelt and, without looking at the little boys, uncovered their feet, crossed them and said to one of them: "Oh! . . . This one will be a priest?" This was seen and heard by many people amongst whom was Maximina who does not hide the confusion she felt at that time, whenever she narrates this episode (LVP, p. 122).

A pious, ascetic priest was Conchita's first confidant regarding the miracle of the Host, and she notes his name in her *Diary*: Fr. José Ramon Garcia de la Riva. Another priest who was reputed to be saintly, Fr. Luis Andreu, S.J., was the only person to see the great Miracle beforehand, except Padre Pio, and the only one except the visionaries to see the Blessed Virgin at Garabandal.

At the time of the apparitions they often counted the priests who came to Garabandal and looked at the friars' habits. When they were asked whom they would prefer to see coming, they answered "the priests." Many came from the villages of the district. At the beginning, Pepé Díez counted as many as fifty. They discussed the events heatedly, even in public. They were far from seeing eye to eye. The girls were very sensitive to the way the priests celebrated Mass, and they noticed that the Andreu brothers said it very well.

After the time of the apparitions it was possible to observe that this lesson on priests had been fully assimilated by the visionaries.

At Burgos in 1966-67 Conchita often spoke of the priests and would pray that they try to be saintly. During her holiday at



*Fr. Luis Andreu, S.J., was a good and saintly priest.*

Garabandal on July 29, 1967, Conchita jotted down for a priest from Melun in France, on three pages of her notebook, what we consider is a little charter for the priests of our time. Rather than a revelation from Heaven, we see it as the fruit of her reflections on the priesthood.

What the Blessed Virgin wants from the priest first of all is his own sanctification.

He should fulfill his vows through *love*\* of God, and lead many souls to Him through example and prayer, for in our time it is difficult otherwise.

May the priest be sacrificed through love of souls in Christ!

May he retire from time to time in silence to listen to God who speaks to him continually.

May they think a lot about the Passion of Jesus so that their lives be more united to Christ the priest and thus invite souls to penance and sacrifice, and also make more tolerable to them the cross that Christ sends to us all.

To speak of Mary who is the surest one to lead us to Christ, and also speak about and cause people to believe that as there is a heaven, so too there is a hell.

I believe that is what Heaven wants of the priests.

—Conchita

\*The author has a facsimile of the original, from which the translation was made; Conchita underlined the word *love*.

At Burgos, Conchita wrote: "Let us pray much for priests who are the salt of the earth and the beloved of Christ.

—Conchita Gonzalez, November 15, 1967"

A year later in October 1968, she was asked by a theologian if she still thought that "many priests are on the road to perdition." She answered that she did, and that to those priests she would say: *Imitate Christ in the Eucharist*. This sounds theologically excellent, as Jesus in the host is perfectly consecrated to God and entirely eaten by men.

Of the many things the Blessed Virgin said, Jacinta remembers most vividly her words about priests: "I think that this was what impressed me most of all, and it leaves in my soul an esteem and a veneration for them that I am at a loss to explain."

On November 21, 1968, a group of visitors was taking leave of Mari Loli. They told her that they were going to pray for her at the pines. She protested and told them to pray first for priests.

In December 1968, Conchita was operated on for appendicitis. While under anaesthetic she was heard to say, "We must pray for priests . . . let us pray for priests . . . how we must pray for priests!" which shows it was one of her major preoccupations.

*Garabandal, July, 1967. On the right is the French priest who received the "message to a priest" from Conchita. One of the sisters translated it for him.*



In the autumn of 1969, in an answer to a question sent to her, she explained that Our Lady asked her and her companions to pray for priests . . . because the faithful would follow their example.

In 1970 Mari Loli wrote to an author of books on Garabandal that she would "ask the most Holy Virgin that you be a holy priest."

The frequent visits to Conchita by the Virgin, her numerous retreats, her life of prayer, her deep intuitive intelligence, perhaps a special charismatic gift, gave her the ability to provide profound and judicious answers. Mr. Walter J. Kushion and a group of Irish visitors asked her on September 13, 1970, "Why are priests leaving the Church today?" She replied, "Because they do not have a love for the Blessed Virgin." Whoever loves Mary faithfully, loves her Son faithfully and the Church that He loves (Eph. 5:25). Conchita considers that we are all responsible: "Let us pray a lot for priests. We ourselves are to blame for many priests who are on the road to perdition, because we do not pray enough for them, because we do not sacrifice ourselves, and also because we should be giving an example to those priests who are consecrated to the Blessed Virgin . . . . We have to help those priests . . . that they may rise and pursue their course" (message of August 7, 1971 to American Garabandal workers, in OL, p. 221). Other such words and writings could be quoted.

This prayer for priests became contagious, particularly in the village when Conchita's aunt and godmother, Maximina, began to pray daily for priests.

Since she learned that the Blessed Virgin asked us to pray for priests, Señora Julia Mazon, Mari Loli's mother, has never spent a day without praying for them, for their sanctification, while milking the cows or when she takes the animals to graze. She declared this to Mrs. Maria Carmela Saraco who published it in her periodical *The Vigil*.

This example is followed to a great extent in the United States where friends of Garabandal promote vigils of prayer for priests, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The Holy Father [Pope Paul VI] knew of and approved them.

Through his sacerdotal prayer (John 17), Jesus meant to consecrate his apostles for a ministerial priesthood:

"Consecrate—*hagiazó* (set apart for a sacred purpose)—them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou has sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And





for their sakes I consecrate Myself, that they also may be consecrated through the truth" (John 17:17-19). As underlined in a note on these verses in the Ecumenical Translation of the Bible into French, to 'consecrate' or 'sanctify' a being is tantamount to separating it from the profane to introduce it entirely and forever into God's sphere of existence.

The apostles were thus fully conformed to Jesus, Priest and Victim of the new cult of the New Covenant, "in truth" (John 4:23-24), that is to say in conformity with the divine revelation given by Jesus. That is also to say: in Jesus, Truth (see John 14:6), through the operation of "the Spirit of Truth who will guide them into all truth" (John 16:13).

This consecration of the apostles to the ministerial priesthood of the New Covenant receives a complement at the end of the gospel: "As My Father has sent Me, even so send I you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said: "Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whose ever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them" (John 20:21-23).<sup>4</sup>

These ministerial priests will have successors who receive "a gift—*charisma*—of God by the laying on of hands" (II Tim. 1:6), conferred by the College of Presbyters:

"Reading, preaching, instruction, let these be thy constant care" wrote St. Paul to Timothy. "Do not neglect the gift that is in thee, which was given to thee by prophecy<sup>5</sup> with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery . . . Continue in these things: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee" (I Tim. 4:13-16).

The priests are "ministers of Jesus Christ, with God's gospel for their priestly charge, to make the nations an offering worthy of acceptance, consecrated by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16). This verse indicates the end, the goal of the ministry of the New Covenant.

Such is the teaching of the Council: "God . . . wanted . . . to consecrate priests who would share Christ's priesthood in a special fashion . . . Through the celebration of Mass, they offer sacramentally Christ's sacrifice" (Presb, No. 5).

< *Fr. Valentin Marichalar (left), pastor of Garabandal from 1942 to 1965, stands in front of the church door of Cosio with Fr. Alfred Combe from Lozanne, France.*

4. Cf A. Feuillet, *Le Sacerdoce du Christ et de ses Ministres*, Edit. de Paris 1971, pp. 177-188.

5. That is to say by those possessing charismatic gifts speaking in the name of God under the guidance of the Spirit (see Bible of Jerusalem, Note on Acts 11:27).



This ministerial priesthood differs in essence and not only in degree from the common priesthood of the faithful (LG, No. 10).

"Set apart for God's gospel (Rom. 1:1) . . . , they are totally dedicated 'to the work to which' the Lord 'calls them' (Acts 13:2)" (Presb, No. 3).

### 15. The Religious

The Blessed Virgin asked that we pray for men and women consecrated to God through vows (GSG, p. 99; OL, p. 177; interview with Conchita on April 25, 1970).

She recognized that they played a special part in the Church and in society. Before the second ecstasy on July 29, 1961, the visionaries had said, after a previous apparition, that the Virgin had asked them to walk up to the pines, with their parents, the priests, the nuns, and the policemen, but to keep their distance, the others to remain further away.

On September 23, 1961, Jacinta, in ecstasy, stopped in front of a man to present him with a crucifix to be kissed, and she was heard saying, "How fine you look dressed up in white!" After the ecstasy Fr. Valentin, the parish priest, asked her who this man was, and she replied, "A Dominican!" He then said, "Who told you so?" She replied, "The Blessed Virgin!" This fact is well attested and shows that the Virgin let the visionaries know Br. Faustino Varona's religious condition and drew their attention to it.

On another occasion on January 18, 1962, a young woman from Segovia who had gone on an excursion to Garabandal made a silent prayer during one of Mari Loli's ecstasies in which she promised to forego the worldly life and to become a nun if such was God's will. Without being a bad girl, she was prone to lead a worldly life; among the first to go dancing or to the swimming pool or to other pastimes for girls of her age. She says that the divine will made itself known to her in a locution with the Blessed Virgin: "I listen to you, I listen to you. Yes, yes." However, fearing an illusion, she asked for a sign of confirmation: "If all this is true, if all this comes from you, let the child come to me and give me the crucifix to be kissed, to me first." She said this in her secret heart. The little girl, Mari Loli, immediately rose from her knees, opened a way for herself among the spectators, twice gave the crucifix to the young woman to be kissed, and twice again as she tried to hide herself. As if this were not enough two of the other visionaries fell into ecstasy the same day and

went looking for her, also to give her the crucifix to be kissed. The young Segovian was considerably moved by her emotions. She has now been living for years consecrated to God through her vows (G III, pp. 45-48). This personal message proves that Our Lady who appeared at Garabandal eagerly encouraged this girl to become a nun.

*Conchita presents the Scapular of a brother of St. John of God to the Apparition. A Scapular is a blessed object and a symbol that the bearer is consecrated to the Blessed Virgin. Three of the pine trees are in the background.*



tor: "From one who unites herself to your prayers of intercession for consecrated souls."

The visionaries often asked the Virgin whether they would enter a convent, but she did not answer them. On the other hand, while at the Angelical College of Pamplona, the Lord informed Conchita very firmly that such was not her calling. She suffered long and deeply as a result of this.

"The evangelical counsels of chastity dedicated to God, of poverty and obedience being founded upon the Lord's words and examples, and having the recommendation of the apostles, the Fathers, the Pastors and Doctors of the Church, they constitute a divine gift that the Church has received from her Lord and that, with His grace, she keeps faithfully" (LG, No. 43).

The Council refers to the words and examples of the Lord: "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matt. 19:12). And Jesus did not marry.

The same with poverty: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matt. 19:21). Jesus was poor: "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20).

Jesus was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8).

The religious is one who, following these examples, endeavours to be like Christ.

## 16. Baptism

The necessity for baptism for our salvation was asserted by the Lord on the day of His Resurrection and appearance to the Eleven: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). St. Paul treated salvation through baptism in these terms: "[God our Saviour] saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Several historians of Garabandal have narrated what happened to Muriel Catherine, a 19-year-old girl from Paris who went up to the village on August 28, 1961, accompanied by a friend from Burgos. Dr. Gobelas does this in twelve pages of his work (G II, pp. 81-92), summarized as follows:

Muriel Catherine, whose father was Jewish and mother Protestant, had no faith in any religion when she met Ascensión de Luis who taught her some of the rudiments of the Catholic faith.

*A St. John of God brother closely observes Conchita in ecstasy.*

These separate facts show us that the Blessed Virgin has a special esteem for the religious calling. The visionaries reacted favorably from the beginning of the apparitions, wishing that both priests and religious believe in the reality of these visions. They exhibited a special warmth for the priests and the nuns, and they talked in ecstasy about the habits they wore.

They continued to keep this special interest in the religious. On August 8, 1970, Conchita wrote a little memento for a visi-

Having learned that there were "apparitions" at San Sebastian de Garabandal, they went there together. They witnessed an ecstasy of Mari Loli and Jacinta who spoke of Muriel Catherine to the Vision. The visionaries said: "She is not baptized, she is not baptized! . . . Well, help her . . . Oh! because of her parents! . . ."

Mari Loli stretched out her arm, took hold of a bottle of holy water that a priest had handed to her to be thrown toward the apparition. She uncorked the bottle and threw its contents upwards in front of herself. Instead of following its normal course, the water was mysteriously inflected and, after an unexplainable trajectory, fell as a little shower on Muriel Catherine, none of the water dropping on Fr. Valentin and Ascensión de Luis who were close by her. Muriel Catherine having felt this "washing" on her head, her clothes, and even her feet, cried out, "She has drenched me!"

Muriel Catherine already believed, but since her parents were opposed to it, she had to become of age to be formally baptized. She received baptism in the cathedral of Burgos, at the age of 21, under the Christian name of Maria del Carmen Catherine.

Some have considered that this washing or shower of Muriel Catherine was a symbol announcing the baptism she was to receive. It may also be noted that Lupita, mentioned in Chapter 1, No. 5, also needed baptism for the washing out of original sin. If this is not expressed directly, it is certainly clearly implied.

## 17. Marriage

The main texts in the New Testament which deal with marriage are very well known indeed.

Christ restored the indissolubility of marriage: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. . . . Whosoever shall put away his wife—I am not speaking of fornication—and shall marry another, commiteth adultery" (Matt. 19:6, 9).

The perfect indissolubility of Christian marriage is founded upon its sacramental character. It is the sign of another marriage, a mystical one, between Christ and his Spouse, the Church. St. Paul describes it as a 'mystery' (Eph. 5:32); in other words, a sacred reality bearing and communicating grace.

The Second Vatican Council dealt at length, in its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World, Nos. 47 to 52, with the holiness of marriage, its fecundity, and with conjugal love. To quote almost at random: "Genuine conjugal love is assumed in divine love and it is directed and enriched by the redeeming

power of Christ and the saving action of the Church, to lead married people efficaciously to God, help them and uphold them in their sublime mission of father and mother" (GS, No. 48).

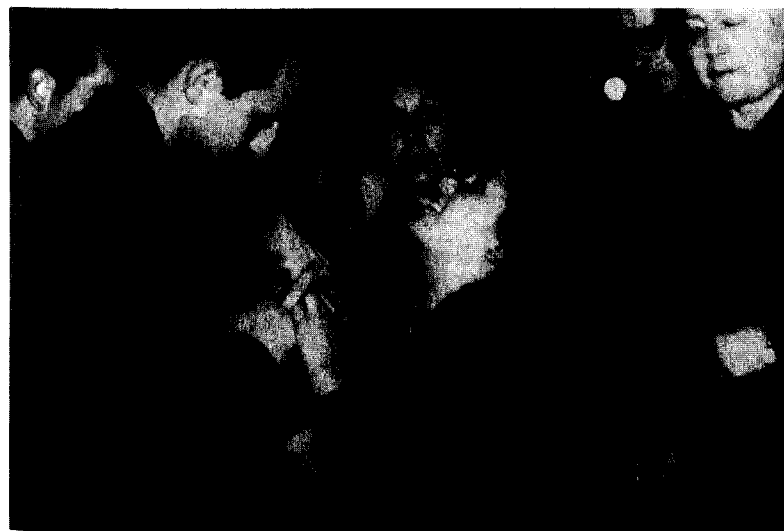
The holy and sacred character of matrimony was repeatedly manifested at Garabandal.

On several occasions, the visionaries guessed the false matrimonial state of certain spectators.

It is impossible to say, even to hazard a guess, how often wedding rings were kissed by the Blessed Virgin. A wedding ring is a blessed object, and moreover the sign of a sacramental union between husband and wife, and a sacred union between Christ and His Church.

The kissing of wedding rings seems to have begun in a strange way. One day Conchita's widowed aunt, Maximina, was at Conchita's house where Jacinta was in ecstasy. She has no idea how the thought came to her mind, but she told Conchita, "These rings are blessed. Maybe the Virgin would kiss them!" At that time Maximina did not know the word wedding ring—*alianza*—which she had never heard. Maximina then put her wedding ring into Conchita's hand who in turn moved up to Jacinta and gave it to her, saying, "Take this ring and give it to the Virgin!" Jacinta was then heard saying to the Vision, "Take this ring! Kiss it! Oh! it's Maximina's?" Maximina says that Jacinta could not possibly have known this. Jacinta then held up the ring to the Vision, came over to Maximina without looking at her, took her hand and put it on her finger (LVP, p. 125).

*Mari Loli returns a "kissed" wedding ring to its owner.*



On one occasion, Mari Loli had ten wedding rings on her fingers. After the Blessed Virgin had kissed them, she returned them to their rightful owners, among whom was a widow who received two rings, her own and her late husband's.

On October 18, 1961, Cecilio Gonzalez had stayed quietly at home with his wife, while the visionaries had gone to the pine trees to communicate their Message. A number of unknown people had left their wedding rings on the kitchen table, hoping that one of the visionaries would present them to the Virgin to be kissed. Late at night, Mari Cruz suddenly arrived in ecstasy, grasped the bunch of rings and began distributing them without the slightest hesitation or mistake to the people who had come to the house with her or had stayed there (LVP, p. 293). Cecilio did not say whether these rings had in fact been kissed, but Our Lady certainly kissed a great many at a time.

The girls were guided by the Virgin in returning the rings to their owners, usually unknown to them, hidden in the crowd, with husbands and wives often widely separated.

As the four visionaries entered the state of matrimony one can see in this a disposition of divine Providence to enhance the dignity of Christian marriage. All, except Jacinta, have seen their marriage blessed with children. And these young women live their motherhood with Christian joy. Conchita has declared that, since coming to the United States, it is in her husband that she has found her "main source of inspiration." Those who know them, see them leading with their husbands a life which radiates love.

We can report here what a person living in the area said at the beginning of the apparitions: "Oh! The Blessed Virgin appeared at San Sebastian of Garabandal? This is not surprising. The women of that village have never committed a mortal sin." The remark is naive, and difficult to check, but meaningful as such. At least, one never hears of divorce, nor unfaithfulness, nor misconduct of the young. The folk-lore dances end with sunset, at which time everyone goes home.

## Chapter 5

# Piety as a Means of Salvation

### 18. Prayer

Prayer played an immense part in the story of Garabandal, and of that there is no doubt whatsoever.

Even before the apparitions, Garabandal was a village of prayer. The villagers recited the Rosary every day, an immemorial tradition. They still do, to this day, following it with the recitation of various prayers such as the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, the Creed, three Ave Marias each followed by the invocation *Nuestra Señora bien aparecida, Reina y Madre de la Montaña, ruega por nosotros*—Our Lady well appeared, Queen and Mother of the Mountain (a name given to the province and diocese of Santander)—pray for us. Half the village then meets in the church, and many more for mass on weekdays, whenever it is celebrated. Women may be seen visiting the Blessed Sacrament or reciting the hours of a tertiary's prayer book. In 1961, the people recited the Angelus at noon.

The prayers the visionaries recited spontaneously were the Rosary, the litany, the Lord's prayer, the Hail Holy Queen, and the Creed; in short, the prayers they knew. Then, on August 8, the Blessed Virgin began to teach them to say the Creed properly and very slowly, and then the Hail Holy Queen. She also taught them the new act of contrition. Hearing Jacinta saying it is very impressive indeed. We have a tape recording on which she is heard saying it very slowly, with an inexpressible conviction and emotion.

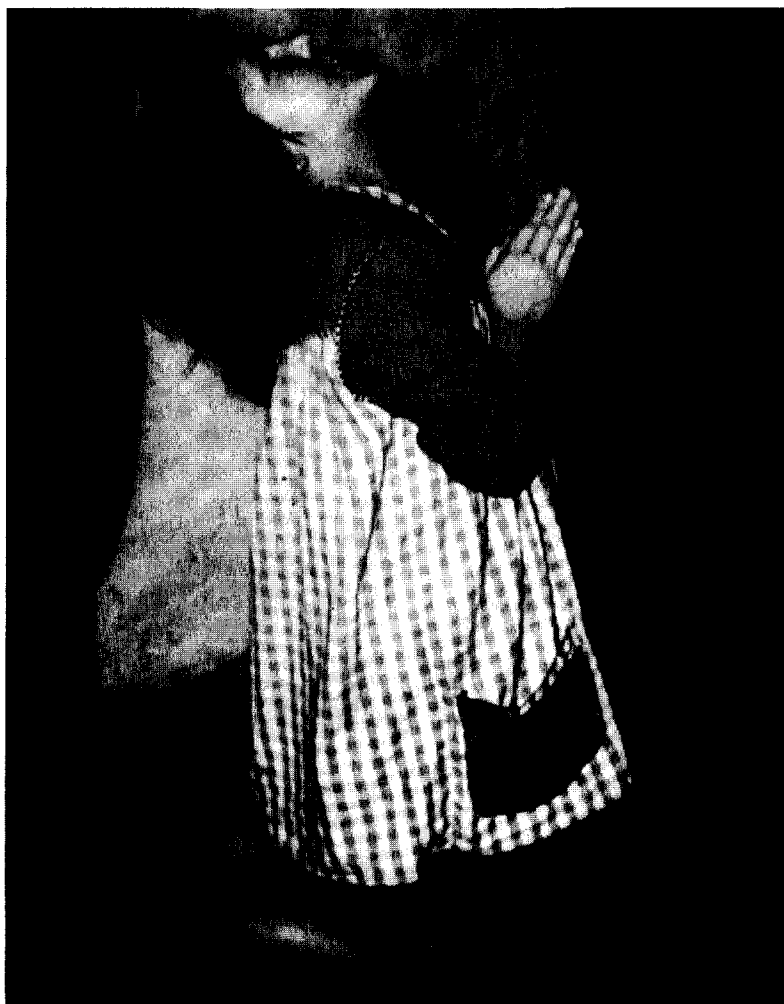
St. Michael the Archangel taught them to recite the "I confess" before Communion and "Soul of Christ" afterwards. They

also recited the *estación* (six Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glorias, beginning with *Viva Jesús Sacramentado!*) in honour of Jesus as Host.

The visionaries spent a great deal of time in prayer, often saying three Rosaries on the same day, or even four: in the early morning; while waiting for the apparition; very slowly during the apparition; at the church with the congregation.

But what strikes us most is the 'quality' of their ecstatic prayer. It is prayer filled with 'presence', a deep and extremely

*Mari Loli in ecstasy.*



moving meditation, something close to a slow and pitched recitative, so inspiring for anyone hearing it for the first time that simple words such as, Mary—blessed—grace—Jesus, assume a far deeper meaning. Anyone listening is bound to think hard about these words. Fr. Pelletier has written about this in his books and pamphlets on Garabandal. Their prayer was so beautiful that the villagers never tired of saying the Rosary with them, and listening to the tape recordings made by visitors from Santander.

The Blessed Virgin taught them to make the various signs of the cross properly, as practiced in Spain. They therefore crossed themselves with an incomparable dignity. The films which were made at the time are an eloquent testimony.

Their behaviour in ecstasy incited people to prayer. When they knelt it was in the fraction of a second. When they walked in prayer it was in an attitude of supplication. When they begged, implored, their faces looked to the sky, their arms formed crosses, the palms of the hands turned upwards, "the most beautiful image of a beseeching soul" (G II, p. 118).

It is said in France that to sing is to pray twice. The visionaries often sang the canticle *San Miguel Arcangel, Noche de Paz*, the Rosary or the Hail Holy Queen, all recorded on tape by the Marquess of Santamaria, or various canticles which they improvised, sometimes as sacred serenades sung in rapture to those asleep or hymns extolling the Rosary, recorded by Placido Ruiloba, or modesty, or expressing sorrow caused by death. Their songs scanned perfectly and had, according to witnesses, a strange sweetness and a beautiful harmony. Here is an example of an ecstatic couplet:

Oh! Virgencita del Carmen  
Cuanto gusto nos has dado  
Con aparecerte a nos  
Con tu niño tan salado.

Oh! Little Virgin of Carmel  
What joy thou hast given us  
Showing thyself to us  
With your Babe so beautiful.

The girls were conscious that Our Lady came to teach them to pray.

On August 8, Mari Cruz was heard to say to the Blessed Virgin: "Now, I know better how to pray, but before, I was better

at playing" (Memor, p. 28). Her devotion showed itself in her letters to a priest. She would write: "Long live Jesus the Christ . . . Beloved Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . your humble handmaid in Jesus Christ . . . your daughter in Jesus and Mary . . . I resign myself to [God's] holy will . . . I want you to pray the Blessed Virgin that I become better every day" (QP, No. 334; Mém, pp. 141 sq.).

As early as in her second apparition, the Virgin had said, in a deep and lapidary formula: "Remain with God and with me also." This suggests that the children were receiving an elementary education on meditation. Conchita, a highly perceptive girl, understood this from an early age, as we can see when we read her *Diary*: "This is how 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—*con ella estamos todas, siempre que queramos*."

Older people who witnessed these facts were drawn by them to meditate or pray. As the apparitions often took place at night, the prayers of people staying overnight at the village after the departure of the daytime crowds was thus facilitated. Those who stayed behind were generally the most devout, and the silence and obscurity in this mountain village eliminated many causes of distraction. There was an overwhelming desire to contemplate, as was experienced by Doña Maria Herrero de Gallardo on the night of September 12, 1961, feast-day of the sweet name of Mary, when the girls slowly recited the Rosary at the old wooden bridge.

Our Lady's invitation to prayer to the whole world became more pressing in the Second Message: "I love you very much and do not want your condemnation. Pray to us with sincerity and we will grant your requests." It was like an echo of Jesus' words: "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7).

Jesus continually prayed. The New Testament mentions this 31 times. St. Luke tells us He prayed a whole night (6:12), and describes Jesus bending His knees while praying in the garden of Gethsemane (22:41). He continually exhorts us to pray: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Luke 22:40). This particularly concerns us today, as we live at a time when temptations are becoming more numerous, as the Holy Father Pope Paul VI noted.

The first Christians were "giving themselves up to prayer"



Notice the onlookers.

(Acts 1:14; 2:42). They prayed "kneeling down" (Acts 9:40; 20:36; 21:5), even outdoors. St. Paul thus exhorted his correspondents: Use every kind of prayer and supplication; pray at all times in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:18). There are conditions of life which suggest a calling to assiduous prayer: "The woman who is indeed a widow will . . . spend her time, night and day, upon the prayers and petitions that belong to her state" (I Tim. 5:5).

From the beginning of the apparitions, the visionaries followed the advice and "orders" of the Blessed Virgin. They recited several Rosaries each day, and never missed a Mass celebrated in the village, except when they were in the fields.

Conchita's aunt, Maximina, noticed in February 1963 that when it was not necessary for Conchita to work in the fields, she spent a large part of her time in the church, and she was not in the least bored there.

In August and September 1967, Conchita gave details of her life of prayer to Dr. Porro, canon of Tarragona. At that time, she was happy to pray at length with Mother Maria Nieves. She

asked for God's forgiveness. She prayed for those who relied upon her prayers, for the general intentions of the Church, and asked that God's will be done, and the Blessed Virgin's.

She practiced spiritual exercises, at Pamplona in 1966, at Alcañiz in Teruel at the end of May 1968, under the direction of Dr. Porro, author of several books on Garabandal. In 1970, which was perhaps a crucial year for her, Conchita made six or seven private retreats in a Carmelite convent in the province of Santander, chosen by her for its extreme poverty. At the end of 1973 she made at least one retreat with her husband.

We shall have more to say about this later, but we do know that she engages others to pray "every day, at every moment."

We do not know much about the life of prayer of her companions. We have seen Jacinta attend Mass on weekdays and pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, as Conchita does. At Garabandal, Mari Loli went to church for Mass and the Rosary, except when her work at the inn prevented her from doing so. It would be interesting to know if Mari Cruz, a very busy housewife and mother, also prays alone, or with her husband.

All have made pilgrimages to places where the Blessed Virgin appeared in the past. Mari Loli and Mari Cruz have both been to Lourdes, Jacinta has been to Lourdes two or three times as a practical nurse, and she was driven once to Fatima by Gerald Ryan, a Londoner. Conchita has also been to Lourdes and Fatima two or three times, and once to the Holy Land with her mother.

On these occasions the visionaries of Garabandal mingled with the other pilgrims without revealing their identity.

## 19. Religious Objects

We shall deal now with a subject on which the wise, the learned, and people of taste have long felt a sort of allergy, shared by the author. A French bishop has even written a memorandum describing the ambiguous aspects of medals, scapulars, etc. as the last vestiges of an imperfect religion where religious objects were treated as if they were talismans.

But precisely because the Church's living tradition takes man as he is and not as he ought to be, the Church deems it more proper to purify and Christianize religious objects than to condemn them. So that without denying the problems raised by this common practice, especially among teen-agers whose faith

is weak, we consider that from a realistic point of view of religious anthropology, the Church should bless everything, absolutely everything, except sin. Moreover it is a fact that numerous healings and conversions have been made by the Lord through these religious objects blessed by the Church. We are thinking especially of the Miraculous Medal. In the broad sense of the word there exists a scriptural basis for the use of blessed religious objects: When handkerchiefs or cloths which had touched his skin (St. Paul's) were applied to the sick, their diseases were cured and evil spirits departed from them." (Acts 19:11-12).

Many objects kissed by the Blessed Virgin at Garabandal have produced numerous graces, spiritual as well as corporal, healings, inner lights, numerous conversions both moral and to the Catholic faith, especially in America where a priest well



*Hundreds of thousands of people have kissed this medal said to have been kissed by Our Lady and given to Joey Lomangino by Conchita. Many have received extraordinary graces.*



placed to know about these things has said that they are countless (OL, pp. 192-194). Let us give an example, related in some detail by Dr. Porro:

On February 8, 1962, a chauffeur from Segovia was driving some devout people to Garabandal. His wife had entrusted him with a medal to be handed over to the visionaries that it might be kissed by the Blessed Virgin. As it happened, it was Conchita who received it without knowing from whom it came. She presented it to the Blessed Virgin, then returned to the secluded place where the chauffeur was standing, and passed its chain around his neck. The chauffeur, who "had been living away from God for years" made a sort of public confession. Weeping with emotion, he declared that it was the first medal he had ever worn and that he would wear it until his death.

In numerous cases medals, images, beads, crucifixes, etc. kissed by the Virgin have glowed with a strange luminosity or given a delightful perfume. (SV, p. 120; DS, p. 64; GP, p. 369; QP, No. 299).

At the age of 16, Conchita wrote Fr. Morelos that she had had a locution of the Blessed Virgin in the church, who told Conchita, "Come on Saturday to the pine trees where you will see me. Bring many religious objects and I shall kiss them all. You will distribute them and through its medium my Son will work prodigies." The apparition took place on November 13, 1965, and almost all authors have related how Conchita has recounted this apparition (e.g., OL, p. 185).

The extraordinary acts of healing mentioned briefly in Chapter 8, No. 42, were performed through the imposition of such objects.

Of all the kissed objects that Conchita presented to the Blessed Virgin she kept only one, her own ring bearing a crucifix which she intended to keep for herself throughout her whole life, but some Americans have told us that she gave it to her husband. This is a touching gesture.

Of all the religious objects which are part of the Garabandal story we must mention the scapular of Mount Carmel, the Blessed Virgin having worn it on her wrist at every one of her apparitions. Fr. Pelletier discussed the matter in Chapter 8 of *God Speaks at Garabandal* and the reader is invited to read it.

We should note, as does the author, that the Virgin considered her kissing of objects so important that she made it the principal purpose of her last visit to Conchita at the pine trees. We

should be careful lest intellectual pride causes us to despise these humble mediums of salvation and, indirectly, these contemporary apparitions of Our Lady.

## 20. The Rosary

This section is introduced with a stanza from an ecstatic canticle, already quoted:

Hombres, mujeres y niños  
Rezad el Santo Rosario  
Para alla en el otro mundo  
Hallar el eterno descanso.

Men, women and children  
Pray the Holy Rosary  
That in the hereafter  
You may find eternal rest.

According to Conchita, "the Rosary is a very important part of the Message of Our Lady at Garabandal." This is no surprise. The Blessed Virgin had recommended it at La Salette (through symbols), at Lourdes, Pontmain, Fatima, and Banneux. It has been recommended by all the Popes of modern times. Saint Pius X wrote in his testament that it was the most beautiful prayer and the fullest of graces; Pope Pius XII, in a letter dated August 31, 1946, to the Bishop of Manila, wrote that the Rosary was "the breviary of all the gospel." As soon as he had been named Patriarch of Venice, Pope John XXIII recited the whole Rosary every day. Pope Paul VI recommended the Rosary in "The Month of May," "The Marian Cult Today," and last but not least on October 7, 1969, on the occasion of the third centenary of the Rosary as instituted by St. Pius V.

At Garabandal, the Blessed Virgin's recommendations regarding the Rosary were developed in several ways:

a. The Blessed Virgin appeared in the only village of the diocese of Santander where the Rosary is recited daily in the church. Clearly therefore, she encourages this common recitation or celebration.

b. She 'ordered' the visionaries to recite the Rosary. She ordered them—*mandó*—to recite it whenever they saw her, which they did except on brief apparitions.



c. She led them in everything. She indicated when to say the "Glory" by bowing her head; and above all how to recite the Our Fathers, Ave Marias and Glorias.

From the first apparition she made them recite their beads properly, and on August 18, 1961, she took upon herself the sole responsibility for teaching the recitation of the Rosary.

"[On August 18, 1961, at 8.00 or 9.00 p.m.] 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' . . . very slowly" (OL, pp. 87-88).

d. The result, recorded on magnetic tape, was remarkable, and its practical lesson, for them and for us all, is very important. They took as long as 42 minutes to recite the Rosary. To Spanish ears this recitation was like heavenly music. The unrolling of the Our Fathers and Ave Marias, very slowly, deeply, rhythmically with a slight vocal tremor, each word excellently pronounced with a feeling of 'presence', was extraordinarily impressive. On hearing it, a priest said, "I don't need another proof. Nowhere, in any seminary or religious institution, has anyone seen or heard the Rosary prayed like that" (Fr. Valentin Mari-chalar's testimony of August 10, 1975). In Chapter 6 of *God Speaks at Garabandal* Fr. Pelletier has outlined the practical effect of this on our daily prayers. To sum up:

We must think hard about what we are saying, and to do this we must recite the words slowly. Think about them, think of Mary, think of Jesus, think of the Mysteries, think of anything which can help us to say the Rosary well. In short, the quality and not the quantity of words should be our continual aim.

e. They used a rhythmic style that the Frs. Andreu (brothers) had taught them and which they sometimes 'sang' in the common formula (Memor, p. 21). They did so before October 1961. Conchita and Mari Loli sang it in the evening of January 29, 1962, and later Conchita again sang it and then Mari Loli. The singing of the Rosary of March 25, 1962, feast of the Annunciation, greatly impressed Jacinta's father (see Chapter 4, No. 12). He himself sang "like a nightingale." Everybody participated and was deeply moved. They sang three canticles, im-



*The visionaries present Rosaries to the Apparition.*

providing both the music and the lyrics.

On one occasion, on July 28, 1962, the people witnessed a moving scene. The four visionaries sang the Rosary together in spite of the distance separating them as two of them were at the pine trees, and the other two in the village. Later Maximina wrote to a family in Barcelona that the impression that this gave was truly extraordinary. Many people were thus able to join in the Rosary of the four children.

On October 7, 1961, the feast of the Rosary, the visionaries sang canticles which they made up themselves. The same day a year later Conchita walked through the village for an hour singing the Rosary in perfect pitch, although her mother remarked that she did not have a good voice.

f. At this time the visionaries, encouraged by the Blessed Virgin, recited or sang the Rosary everywhere throughout the village, even at night and in bad weather *announcing the mysteries*.

It would seem that this is an invitation to say the Rosary everywhere, even in the streets, as Polish women do.

g. Later, in February 1966 when she was almost 17, Mari Loli was led to understand, through a locution of the Blessed Virgin, that she should say the Rosary daily (SM, p. 172). In fact she had always done so.

How did the girls interpret the Virgin's request?

Immediately after the July 29, 1961 ecstasy Mari Loli and Jacinta began reciting their beads. In the winter of 1961-62 Jacinta wrote the parish priest of Barro that they recited several Rosaries a day "to see if the Virgin would perform a miracle that the whole world may believe." Mari Cruz wrote down the times they recited it. In the mountains in the dead of winter she and Jacinta said it at six o'clock in the morning at the *calleja*, Conchita at seven o'clock in the same place, and Mari Loli in the church at 8.30 A.M.

The villagers understood the lesson well. Even the men who had come a long way only to mock, finally said the Rosary with them; one of these men specifically told Dr. Ortiz that not once was he distracted whilst he said it (G I, pp. 64-65).

We know that Patrick Keena and his wife Conchita, and Francis Lafleur and his wife Mari Loli, recite the Rosary at home. Mari Loli, in an undated letter, once wrote to an American, William A. Nolan, that the Virgin asked them to say the Rosary at home.

Let us therefore bear in mind that the Blessed Virgin particularly asked us that before anything else we should say the Rosary well.

## 21. The Passion of Jesus

The last words of the last Message of Garabandal were, on June 18, 1965: "Think about the Passion of Jesus." On the following December 11, Conchita, echoing these words, wrote to Fr. Alba: "We must think about the Passion of Jesus and meditate upon it. Not only should we do it ourselves, but get others to do it as well. Then shall we feel ourselves at the doors of God's bliss and we shall accept our crosses with joy for the love of God" (J, p. 89). Conchita knew that Fr. Alba was a chaplain to students in Barcelona and that he led a prayer group, and that the contents of her letter would be divulged. Her letter's heading bore

the words "+Ave Maria . . . For Fr. Alba's group of Barcelona."

Conchita also knew from the Angel's words that "we should make more sacrifices" because an exhortation on these lines came just before the sentence on the Passion. The two are tightly linked as shall be shown in Chapter 7, No. 31.

Photography played an important part in the story of the apparitions, and the photos themselves are forcefully eloquent. One cannot but be struck by the importance of the crucifix and the sign of the cross in most of these photographs.

It was in August 1961, according to Fr. José Ramon that the girls began the habit of holding crucifixes during their ecstasies. When they received their first call, they found crucifixes and hid them in their clothes. They held them out at their third call. During the ecstasy, they presented them to be kissed, sometimes kissing them themselves, or crossing spectators with them. When interviewed later, the villagers recall again and again seeing the visionaries presenting their crucifixes to be kissed, or crossing people with them, these people often being those who had asked for certain 'proofs' in their secret prayers (LVP, pp. 233, 237, 245). The visionaries crossed people in bed asleep, the foreheads of the sick, the tops of beds (twice if the bed was shared by two people), and the cars of the visitors. Once they spent a whole hour presenting a crucifix to be kissed by a certain woman, Clementina Gonzalez, who was in bed with her baby Tonin in a cradle beside her. The good woman wondered why this was and whether it was because she was good or bad, and she did not stop weeping (LVP, pp. 168-169). Perhaps it was because she was nine months pregnant, for we know that childbirth is both distress and joy, as is the Passion of Jesus (John 16:21).

One night Conchita stretched out her arm through the bars of her kitchen window, thus showing her arm and hand holding a crucifix for all those outside to see and kiss. She only withdrew her arm when a married couple came up to kiss the crucifix. They had hidden themselves, thinking they were unworthy (QP, No. 287).

It is in fact recorded that the visionaries nearly always held crucifixes.

They usually offered the crucifix to be kissed without looking at anyone except the Vision. On October 14, 1961, Jacinta offered the crucifix to be kissed over and over again to the six or eight persons following her, and they stopped to do this every ten yards. Sometimes the girls scoured the village, continually



*There are several photos such as this of Jesus on His cross being presented by the young visionaries.*

presenting the crucifix to be kissed. On January 29, 1962, in ecstasy, Mari Loli and Conchita did this in spite of the cold, from 7.20 to 9.30 in the morning and again from 8.00 to 9.00 o'clock in the evening. On February 2, Mari Loli and on February 3, Conchita, both did this, even entering houses to present crucifixes to the sick. Mari Loli did this for her father on September 24, 1962. A startling photograph shows Conchita giving the crucifix to her mother to be kissed.

The custom of kissing the crucifix at Garabandal was so well established at the time of the apparitions that after the Second Message was given on June 18, 1965, everyone wanted to kiss the one that Conchita had held during her ecstasy, and she held it out to be kissed when returning home. She then returned it to its owner who continued to present it for the same purpose at the door of Conchita's house.

At her last apparition on November 13, 1965, the Blessed Virgin suggested to Conchita that she should place her crucifix in the hands of the Infant Jesus Whom she carried on her arm. Conchita did this and later she stressed to Paul P. Scott who was interviewing her, that the Infant stretched out His arms in the form of a cross, and when she presented Him with the crucifix, He folded His tiny hands over it (*Needles*, Winter 1975, p. 19). This gesture of the Infant Jesus shows that He embraced the cross from His birth: in fact He appeared at Garabandal as a new-born baby. "Jesus' first act, when entering into the world, was to give Himself up to God and take the place of all the victims, whatever be their nature, to accomplish His will, whatever it be" (Bossuet, *Elevations on the Mysteries*, Oeuvres, 2, p. 336).

The visionaries shared Jesus' Passion, thus suffering deeply. They were accused of being sick or insane. Stones were thrown at them from the very beginning. Some threatened to put Conchita into an asylum. A doctor of the Commission repeatedly told Conchita, "Listen, Conchita. If you don't deny all this we'll think you are mad, and you'll be locked up in an asylum. As for your parents, they'll be put into prison" (testimony of Maximina who was present, LVP, p. 130). For a while her mother was influenced by this doctor and told her, "You nasty little girl, don't you see your ecstasies are not true?" (ibid., p. 132). They were subjected to unpleasantnesses such as being forbidden to talk to each other except on Sundays, or to go to the pine trees. Most of all they suffered deeply from the unbelief of those to whom they spoke of their visions. One day about June 20, 1961, they entered the church crying and were heard to say, "My God, they don't believe us!" (LVP, p. 347). Mari Cruz in ecstasy was heard telling the Vision, "Oh my God, how I suffered when the others were telling me I couldn't see you." Her mother was there and said, "Oh my child! My child! How she suffered" (LVP, p. 352). The parents shared in the visionaries' sufferings. For instance Jacinta's father Simon admitted he had suffered greatly from the contradictions of certain men in Santander, to such an extent that he went alone up to the mountain so that no one would see him crying. He even thought that he was going mad.

They went through a mysterious trial similar to the 'nights' of the great mystics. During one ecstasy, darkness overcame the four girls and an unknown voice called them. Mari Cruz, more than the others, suffered deeply. She said: "What? . . . Tell me who you are, or else I shall go back home. Tell me who you are

...” They were frightened. They moved from one side to another, and back and forth. Even some of the spectators were frightened. It was easy to see that this ‘night’ was horrifying, especially for Mari Cruz. When the Blessed Virgin reappeared they cried out: “Oh thank God, we see you!”

Conchita went through awful doubts in matters of faith, even when very young (testimonies of Fr. José Ramon and Fr. Alba). She lost her father and her best-loved brother. She suffered a lot from certain priests. She has not given details, but we know that two of them accused her of having simulated the miracle of the host. Another declared she was under the devil’s influence. Another priest, set unjustified conditions for granting her sacramental absolution.

At Pamplona on February 13, 1966, in a locution, Christ told her, “The remainder of your life will be a continual suffering.” On this same day Jesus told her that she was not called to be a nun, and this caused her to suffer greatly.

Mari Cruz suffered from experiencing fewer apparitions than her companions. This is clearly apparent in one of her letters (J, p. 72, note 88).

On October 24, 1965, in a locution with the Blessed Virgin Mari Loli was warned that “she would have much to suffer in this world and that she would endure many inner ordeals, but that she [the Blessed Virgin] would help her.” She bears the name Maria Dolores, Mary of Sorrows. She lost her father on June 4, 1974.

The seers suffered both from the indiscretions of the curious and the fanatics, which has been admitted by Jacinta. It seems that Conchita and Mari Loli suffered more from their doubts and negations than Mari Cruz, who was still very young when she began to deny her visions as early as 1963, and Jacinta, because of her extreme humility.

Conchita finds much religious satisfaction in making the Way of the Cross, spending about forty minutes “thinking about the Passion of Jesus,” and she invited young French people to think too about the Passion of Jesus.

The Cross was at the very centre of Jesus Christ’s life and mission. Let us sum up this doctrine.

Jesus was crucified for the forgiveness of sins insuring us Salvation and Redemption, manifesting His love for us, leading us to Himself, showing us the way to the Father, communicating

to us a power and a wisdom from on high. This was preached by Jesus Christ’s apostle (I Cor. 1:18), compelled by his love for the Crucified One, exhorting us not to live for ourselves but, as he did, for Christ’s sake (II Cor. 5:14).

Suggested reading: The Passion in the Gospels, Chapter 53 of Isaiah, the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*, Book II, Chapters XI and XII, and the Summer 1974 issue of *Needles* which is dedicated to the Passion of Jesus.

## 22. The Sacred Hearts

The Sacred Hearts is how Spaniards speak of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Our Protestant brethren find the devotion to the Sacred Heart particularly difficult. As Fr. Congar notes, however, there is no doctrinal novelty in this devotion, and its biblical foundation is solid. In the Old and New Testaments God’s love for us is widely expressed and sung, notably in Deuteronomy, the Psalms, the Prophets, and the Song of Songs.

There is an anthropological and biological basis in the veneration of a loving heart, and when that loving heart is God’s Son’s, this veneration becomes a worship which, through the heart, reaches in fact the loving and lovable person of Jesus.

The veneration of Mary’s heart differs; she is but a mere creature, yet nevertheless comparable (see Chapter 3, No. 10). As a mother loves her children, she has the motherly ‘heart’ for her children, in the first place for the Son she bore in her womb.

Jesus is meek and humble of heart. He says so (Matt. 11:29). He loves those who are His own—all men (see the parable of the good shepherd). He particularly loved a young, rich man, and Lazarus and his sisters, and John “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

Shortly before His crucifixion He said, “Whoever loves Me . . . I shall love him” (John 14:21). It is certain that the blood which flowed from His side, pierced by a spear, came from His heart.

St. Paul and St. John both understood and spiritually experienced this love. They testified to it. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom. 8:35). “He loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20). The epistles of St. John are imbued throughout with this love: for God, for Jesus, for all men.

If the Second Vatican Council assures us that “the Virgin Mary

... associated herself with a motherly heart to her only Son's sacrifice" (LG, No. 58), which comes from Simeon's prophecy: "a sword shall pierce through thy own soul" (Luke 2:35), all the more grievous is that sword which burns with her love of her son Jesus and of her other children, we ourselves, we who have been the cause of His Passion.

The Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary were present at Garabandal. One night in January 1962, at two o'clock in the morning, Mari Loli arrived in ecstasy at Clementina's, her purpose being to present one of Clementina's sons with an image of the Heart of Mary to be kissed by him. This boy was a godson of Mari Loli (LVP, p. 169).

On July 20, 1963, Conchita had a long and impressive locution with our Lord in the village church. I quote from two passages: "Will Russia be converted?" asked Conchita. "Yes, it will be converted, and thus everybody will love *Our Hearts*," answered the Lord.

"Shall I go to heaven?" "If you love much and pray to *Our Hearts* . . ."

Jesus also told her that now there are more people who love *His Heart* (OL, pp. 144-145).

In what might be called a report on the apparition of the Blessed Virgin at the pine trees on November 13, 1965, Conchita tells us that: "[the Blessed Virgin] said to me, 'You will recall what I told you on the feast-day of your patron saint [December 8], that you would suffer much on earth? Well, have confidence in Us and offer your suffering generously to Our Hearts for the welfare of your brethren. In this way, you will feel how close We are to you . . . Conchita, I have not come for your sake alone. I have come for all my children, so that I may draw them closer to *Our Hearts*'" (OL, p. 186).

After a careful reading of these five sentences in which Jesus and Mary speak of Their Hearts, we are led to the conclusion that they are pronounced in a climate of love, that Jesus and Mary love us, that They manifested Themselves at Garabandal for love's sake and so that They might be loved, that They love each other to the point that, except once, Jesus and Mary say "Our Hearts." The two Hearts are perfectly united by mutual love, the love of God and the love of men. A Father of the Church said, "Paul's heart is Christ's heart." If this is true of the great apostle, isn't it truer still of the Immaculate Mother of Jesus?

The medal that Mary asked St. Catherine Labouré to have

coined bore on its reverse the two united Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

We now know from Fr. Rodrigo, Señora Gallardo, a nun who wishes to remain anonymous, and from Maria (Jacinta's mother, speaking to Jaime Garcia Llorente in the presence of her daughter) that Jacinta was favoured with an apparition of the Sacred Heart at the *cuadro*. On this matter Jacinta said, "May the Blessed Virgin forgive me, but what I shall never forget is having seen the Sacred Heart." An unforgettable experience for the visionary, and yet *no me habló* (He did not speak to me).<sup>1</sup> This silent vision took place shortly before July 2, 1961, before the first apparition of the Blessed Virgin. Jesus pointed to His heart with His left hand, and beckoned Jacinta to come to Him with His right hand. She said of Him, "He was the handsomest of all men. He had a penetrating look that made me feel as though it would tear my soul right out of my body."

The fact that this apparition occurred is interesting. It corroborates that the events of Garabandal are meant to show men that they are loved by Heaven, as was said in the Second Message: "I love you very much [I, your Mother] and I do not want your condemnation."

Jesus' and Mary's words on Their Hearts were not lost on Conchita: "I have ceased seeing [my heavenly mama and my best friend, and the Infant Jesus] . . . They have left my soul filled with peace and joy and a great desire to overcome my faults and to love with all my strength the Hearts of Jesus and Mary that love us so much" (OL, p. 188). She wrote this on December 10, 1965. On August 24, 1970, nearly four years later, she invited some young French people to repentance, sacrifice and prayer "to satisfy the Sacred Heart of Our Mother." Her devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary bore fruit for herself, and brought her to bear witness unto young people of her own age.

### 23. Prayer for the Dead

It was a common practice in the primitive Church to pray for the dead in the form of suffrages, supplications, almsgivings, and orisons. This practice was mentioned by all the Fathers of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

1. We also know from a copy of Jacinta's letter that she denied in writing having seen the Blessed Virgin, the angel, and the Sacred Heart, but retracted her negations in 1971.

2. Cf Michel, *Les Mystères de l'Au-delà*, Téqui, pp. 100-101.

There is evidence of this custom in the Old Testament (II Mach. 12:41-45). In one particular battle, all soldiers found dead wore amulets. "So they fell to prayer, pleading that the sin might be unremembered. Judas . . . had a sacrifice made [in Jerusalem] for the guilt of their dead companions . . . A holy and wholesome thought it is to pray for the dead."

Prayers for the dead were said daily at Garabandal. Maria, Jacinta's mother, walked through the village in the evening, carrying a lantern in one hand and a bell in the other. She would ring it to invite the villagers to pray for souls in purgatory. This custom made quite an impression on Juan Alvarez Seco (LVP, p. 402).

The visionaries of Garabandal in ecstasy entered houses to pray for the deceased who had lived in them. One of the first things they did when entering a house was to kneel in front of their portraits and pray for them. On one occasion, Mari Loli went unhesitatingly toward a bed where a man had recently died and laid her crucifix on the pillow. She continued talking. The man's widow Avelina Gonzalez and daughter were present, but they could not understand what she was saying as they were weeping and sobbing. She would no doubt have been praying for the dead man. When someone had just died, the visionaries would visit, in ecstasy, and recite a 'station' by the corpse (LVP, p. 378).

*The gate of the village cemetery bears a date, 1915, on its stonework.*



One night in very bad weather, Conchita, in ecstasy, went to the cemetery accompanied by her mother and stayed a long time, praying for the dead (G I, p. 126). On July 21, 1962, Conchita knelt at the gate of this cemetery.

It is an annual devotional tradition among Catholics to regard November as a month for remembering the dead. It would not be surprising, therefore, if the visionaries went to the cemetery more often than usual during the month of November 1962, although they went there often anyway, sometimes to make the sign of the cross, either alone or several together.

It has been remarked that Spanish people do not visit cemeteries as much as the French, often as not their village cemeteries are closed. The villagers of Garabandal were afraid to go to the cemetery which is isolated and very damp. In 1961 it was extremely ill-kept, covered in tall, rank weeds, and containing only a few plain wooden crosses without engravings or inscriptions of any kind. It was a wild place. Miguel Angel, brother of Jacinta, confessed he dared not accompany his sister there, although he did so later. Her father was surprised to see the visionaries go there so often, fearlessly, especially at night and even in rain or snow.

The following episode, the significance of which was not clear to witnesses, seems to illustrate that the "communion of saints" forms a fellowship between the quick and the dead and that it is fostered by prayer. In the first week of November 1962, Conchita and Mari Loli went to the cemetery together, in ecstasy. They sang the Rosary and it was sung by others too, then recited with great devotion at the gate, which was opened by Conchita. They went into the cemetery instead of remaining at the gate as they always did. Once inside, they knelt at the graves of Conchita's father, Maximina's husband and mother with what Maximina called "a terrific devotion," putting the crucifix on the tombs, then handing it over to be kissed, first to the Virgin and then to Maximina, Conchita's aunt (G III, p. 188). One very dark night, Conchita, in ecstasy, ran so fast that neither her mother nor her aunt, who were taken aback, were able to follow her. She soon disappeared out of sight. It suddenly occurred to them that they might look for her at the cemetery, an unlikely place to visit particularly at night and especially by children. There she was. Why, if not to pray for the dead of the village? (LVP, p. 128).

With regard to prayers for the dead, certain facts now seem

quite startling. There were plenty of witnesses, among whom were Juan Alvarez Seco, Miguel Angel Gonzalez and Angelina Gonzalez. After reaching the cemetery by a very muddy lane filled with large puddles, Conchita stood against the locked gate, passed her whole arm through its upright bars and held out her crucifix. She then made gestures as if she were handing it over to perhaps as many as 100 invisible people there beyond the gate, making precisely the same gestures as when she presented it to the crowds who came up to the village (see Chapter 5, No. 21). She moved her hand up and down and left to right, then having left and reached a point 50 yards away, she returned to repeat the same gesture, "as if one of these invisible persons had not come to the gate or had not kissed the crucifix" (LVP, pp. 267, 350, 417). It is indeed perplexing and there is no easy interpretation of the facts, but we can infer from them that the world of the living and the dead are not separated and that they are united by one and the same Redeemer. "Death is only a horizon. Lift us up, strong Son of God, draw us closer to Thyself that we may know ourselves to be nearer to our loved ones who are with Thee" (Fr. Bede Jarrett, O.P.).

Before November 1961, Mari Loli had already prayed in ecstasy for the dead. While waiting for an apparition, on the night of November 1, 1961, she was probably moved by this lesson of the Virgin to begin reciting prayers "for the blessed souls in purgatory."

In the prayer that Conchita composed for herself on January 1, 1967, she wrote, "Lord, I pray for the souls in purgatory."

It may be assumed that she was taught by the Blessed Virgin to pray like this, not an ordinary way of praying, after all, for so young a person.

## Chapter 6

# The Fundamental Virtues

### 24. The Fear of the Lord

The fear of the Lord is dealt with here as both 'filial' and 'servile' fear. They are indeed commonly differentiated. When one thinks of God as the avenger of sin, the fear then felt is called servile or slavish. It is the fear of the servant in front of his master, of the sinner confronted with God's justice. This kind of fear is nevertheless salutary, for although lacking in nobility it inspires the horror of sin. It is not often found in the Bible, even in the Old Testament where it is generally presented as a pagan fear (Isa. 44:11; Soph. 3:7). It is the fear of the Ninevites in the Book of Jonas. They said, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" (Jon. 3:9).

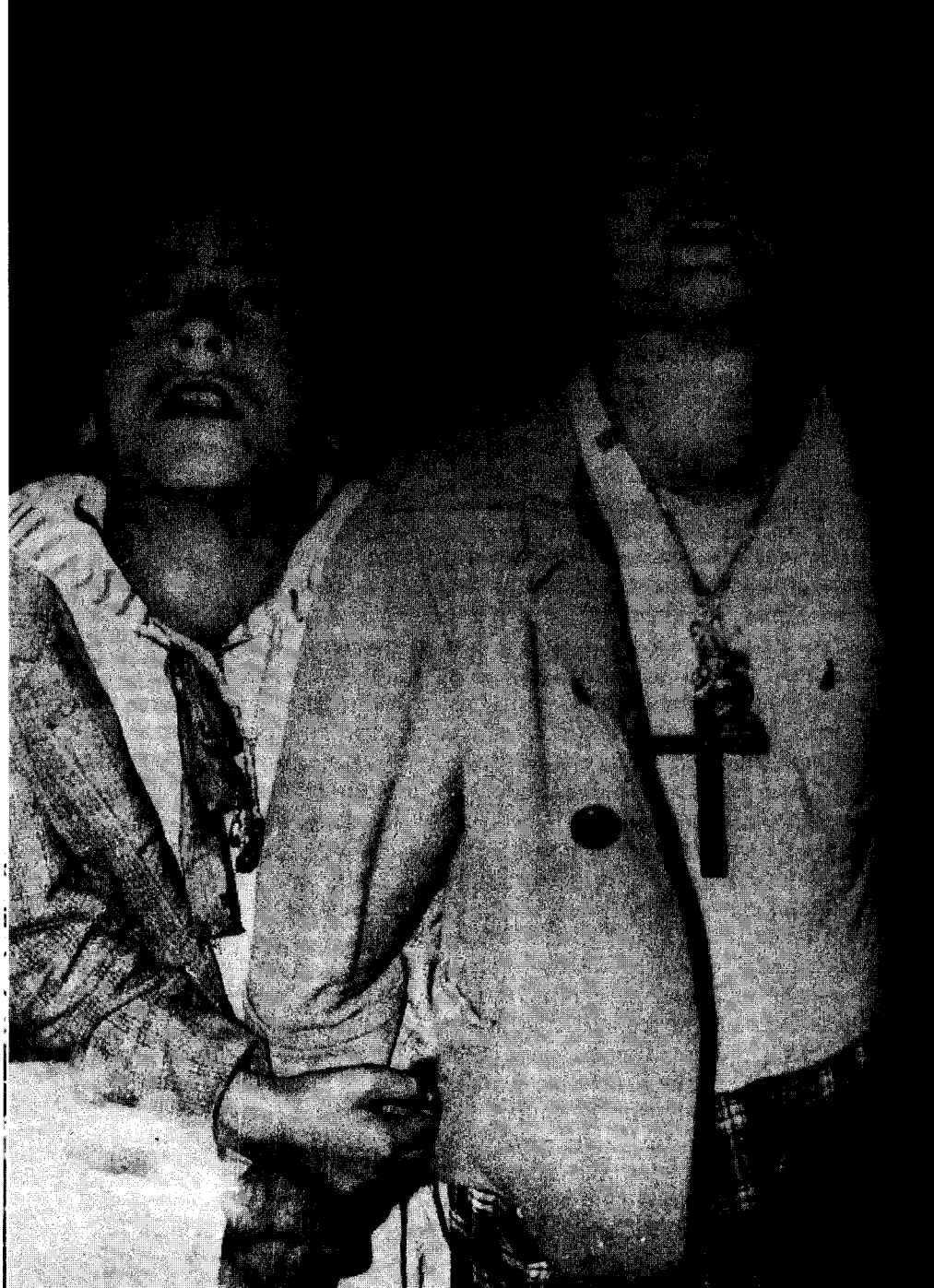
In the New Testament, purely servile fear is that of the devils who "tremble" (James 2:19). When Ananias and Sapphira died suddenly, after having deceived the apostles, "a great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many who heard these things" (Acts 5:5, 11). It seems that this fear was for some servile, for others filial, depending on one's inner disposition.

Filial fear is the sentiment which makes us dread being separated from God by sin. Its source is love. We call it filial because it is the fear of the child who is frightened of displeasing his father and being separated from him.

There is nevertheless no reason for rejecting servile fear absolutely, particularly since filial fear does not always totally banish all servile fear.

The two formal Messages of Garabandal may now be better





*The visionaries were sometimes frightened.*

DR. CAUX

understood: "The cup is already filling up and if we do not change, a very great chastisement will come upon us" (First Message) and: "Before, the cup was filling up. Now it is flowing over . . . You should turn the wrath of God away from yourselves by your efforts" (Second Message).

This double message was strengthened and even, one might say, staggeringly reinforced by a kind of knowledge of the nature of the Chastisement, perhaps symbolic, experienced by Mari Loli and Jacinta, and then again by Conchita, Mari Loli and Jacinta, during the two nights preceding the Feast of Corpus Christi in 1962. They were heard screaming, the first time for an hour and the second time for an hour and a half. Between their awful screams they were heard beseeching, "Oh, let it not come! Let it not come! May everybody have time to go to confession before! . . . Forgive us! Forgive us! . . . Let it not come!" (Maximina's testimony, in LVP, p. 129). They also said, "Wait, wait, first take away the little children, give to all time to go to confession!" They called for help, bewailing. They thrust their arms forward and seemed to want to push something back.

After the ecstasy they said, "We have seen the Chastisement. It will be something horrible!" They wept and wept, as well as the spectators. Even in 1971, Jacinta's mother would say, "Blessed Mother, did the people cry!" Their cries impressed the villagers so much that they shared their fear to the point that their knees shook, and nearly all went to confession (interview with Pepé Diez of August 23, 1974).

There are Christians who regard the warnings contained in these messages as not conforming with the words of the gospel. To this one might answer that fathers warn their children to behave properly, and that such threats are salutary warnings, not absent from the gospel. Jesus said, "You will all perish if you do not repent" (Luke 13:3, 5). Moreover, one can quote from the epistles of St. Paul and the Apocalypse, in the same sense, for example: "I will cast [Jezebel, a false prophetess] into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds" (Rev. 2:22). Let us not forget who its author was, St. John, who wrote so much about God's love, notably that "perfect love casts away fear" (I John 4:18), that fear called servile. Filial and reverential fear remains, being the fruit of love. One might think that it was this fear which certain witnesses felt while contemplating the visionaries in ecstasy.

According to Conchita, the Warning she will announce in the name of the Virgin will inspire a salutary fear: "God wishes that through this warning we amend our lives and commit less sins against Him . . . . It will be like the revelation of our sins . . . . Even the unbelievers will feel the fear of God." It is understood that a preceding and accompanying grace of repentance will be offered to those who will see and feel it.

## 25. The Sense of God and of Sacredness

The Old Testament being a long education in the perception of God, it is not easy to choose a suitable quotation, but was it not said of God's omniscience: "Are not God's eyes a thousand times more piercing than the sun's rays?" (Eccles. 23:19).

A verse in the New Testament echoes it: "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

It will be recalled that, at the first apparition of the Blessed Virgin, the little girls saw a very large eye which seemed to them to be God's, and Conchita cried out, "Oh! What an eye!" (G I, p. 74).

Every witness was startled to see them staring into the sky during their apparitions, with a sudden motion at the moment of entering into ecstasy. We all recall that the Jews prayed likewise (Luke 18:13), and that Jesus lifted His eyes up to heaven at the first miraculous feeding of thousands (Mark 6:41), and at the raising of Lazarus (John 11:41). This gesture of Jesus assumed a grandiose relief and significance during His sacerdotal prayer, because He was then speaking as half way between this world below and His Father *Who is in heaven* (John 17:1).

The ecstasies of the children of Garabandal gave a feeling of holiness to the spectators. As early as June 21, 1961, when there were only four witnesses, all women: Clementina, Condesa, Aurelia and Oliva (though they were later joined by a boy, Manolin, and two girls, Angelita and Serafina), they realized the children's attitude and behaviour inspired respect (LVP, pp. 167-68). A few days later, a witness of extreme perspicacity, Pepé Diez, the village mason, said that, "I noticed an enormous difference in the children. The vicar, Fr. Valentin, was dumbfounded, very pale, incapable of uttering a word. The minute I was living was extraordinary. I stepped back. Something moved within me . . . I cannot explain it. I spoke up and said, 'Something strange is occurring here!'

"I was watching the ecstasy from a distance. Most witnesses of the ecstasies who saw them for the first time went through the same deep feeling of respect" (LVP, p. 146). Existing photographs, better than any witnesses' declarations, bear witness to it, and superabundantly. Their transfigured faces testified in a visible and verifiable way the transcendence, the greatness, the beauty of the things, especially the persons they beheld. The witnesses were fully aware of it. A priest said, "I have enjoyed seeing Conchita and Mari Loli in ecstasy, their faces transfigured, angelical" (AGSI, p. 78). Their facial changes were considerable, and their beauty sometimes unspeakable (*ibid.*, pp. 106-107). The photographs make us think about heaven.

The astounding way the visionaries fell on their knees, in less than one twenty-fourth of a second, for the films taken at that time do not show any image of an intermediate position, as eminent psychiatrist Dr. Sanjuan Nadal has ascertained and shown us, is a lesson to us all. The loud noise made by their knees hitting the floor was similar to that of a board loudly clapped on a tile flooring. Fr. Laffineur has demonstrated this to the author with a board 80cm long. Witnesses to this were numerous. The

*Conchita in ecstasy.*



girls showed no signs of pain: "Conchita fell on her knees very noisily, suddenly, and without showing any pain" (Dr. Jesús Ubalde, letter of Torrelavega of July 10, 1962, p. 3.) A Passionist Father from Barcelona was very impressed (AGSI, p. 88). It made one shiver. It seemed that their bones were breaking.

How can we explain these facts without taking into account the intervention of some almighty force beyond the scope of human nature? Moreover, was it not appropriate to draw our attention to the simple act of bending one's knees in front of God? It is a simple physical act often mentioned in the Bible, and, today, practiced by many believers, Christian or non-Christian.

Conchita loves praying on her knees. We have seen her doing so for long periods with her village companions following her example.

When the children walked in ecstasy, they had such strength that no one could stop them. Fr. Valentin tried it in vain and said, "The strength they have while walking is enormous. They marched like soldiers, vigorously, with a sharp, firm step."

October 18, 1961, the day of the First Message, was a day of pouring rain, hail and snow, a stormy day with thunder and lightning. Was this a coincidence? Or was it a way of reminding us of the theophanies of the Old Covenant, especially that of Exodus at Mount Sinai?

The taxi driver José Luis says that Conchita gave a number of objects to the Apparition to be kissed. Among them were some which had already been kissed. When Conchita came out of her ecstasy she gave these back, unknissed, and said, "The Virgin says one doesn't play with her" (QP, No. 349). It was perhaps a gentle reminder asking for the respect due to her.

The respect for heavenly realities was inculcated by the Virgin Mary when one considers what happened when young people came to the village to sing, dance and drink. No apparitions appeared on such occasions; so it was on August 15, 1961. Another time, Jacinta had only a brief apparition at Mari Loli's, and the Virgin told her that she was going away quickly "because they are singing and have come to have fun—*romeria*." This happened at least five times before October 1961, as far as Fr. Ramón Andreu could ascertain, and at each of these five times the bad behaviour and the irreverence of the people were evident.

Conchita told Señora Gallardo, "When the Virgin recites the 'Gloria' (at the end of a decade of the Rosary), she does it with extraordinary reverence."

Finally, it is well known that the visionaries recognized sacred persons or things (Memor, pp. 25-26).

Conchita, whom we know far better than her companions, has kept her sense of God. On the evening of June 18, 1965, when asked if the Message was good or bad, she answered, "What comes from God is always good." She could not say better. Theologically speaking, it is perfect.

## 26. Life of Faith

Fr. Guérard des Lauriers has noted that apparitions cannot bear fruit if they occur in a faithless environment. When the environment is a religious one, apparitions can be understood by visionaries and the messages correctly understood and communicated.

San Sebastian de Garabandal is a village where the people share intense religious belief, including Mari Cruz's family, as testified by Fr. José Ramon Garcia de la Riva who knows the family well, thus correcting contrary assertions. Fr. Valentin Marichalar, parish priest of Garabandal at the time of the apparitions, pointed out on August 10, 1975, that Spain is regarded in Europe as a Catholic country, the diocese of Santander being considered in Spain as extremely Catholic (Bishop Eguino y Trecu even told Dr. Porro that it was the most Catholic in Spain), and that San Sebastian de Garabandal has always been considered the most religious village of the diocese. It was presented as an example, for thirty years, by its Bishop, Eguino y Trecu, who died a few weeks before the apparitions.

Fr. Valentin has also said that he never knew of anyone who died there without receiving the sacraments during the twenty years he was in charge of the parish. There is no point in enumerating examples of piety. The lesson of faith is given by the whole village, provided that one spends several days there. The visionaries were upheld by this environment, and as far as they could, at their age, they understood what was happening to them.

Indeed Conchita, as we have stated, confided to Fr. José Ramon that she suffered from terrible doubts—*dudas espantosas*—concerning the Real Presence and the Eternity of God. However, her faith was not injured, not even when she reached the point where she doubted everything, including the very existence of God, as she confided to Fr. José M. Alba at the end of 1963.

No one doubts that faith is the cornerstone of Christian life.

When Jesus expressed His admiration it was always for the faith of the people He met, for instance the centurion's (Matt. 8:10). Faith is God's way of justifying us (Rom. 1:17); through faith we have become God's sons (Gal. 3:26); the obedience of faith is preached by the apostles (Rom. 1:5); faith justified the saints of the Old Covenant (Heb. 11:2-39).

The Blessed Virgin taught the children to recite the Creed properly and Mari Cruz received a private lesson on how to recite it very slowly. Another remarkable thing was their way of saying the Apostles' Creed, when in ecstasy. After the words "the Holy Catholic Church" they added, on June 30, 1962, and on the following July 15, the words "apostolic and Roman" which drew Fr. Luis Navas Carrillo's attention immediately. He thinks that it was their custom to say this in rapture.

Faith, in the strict sense of one of the theological virtues, has as its object the assertions enunciated in the creeds and professions of faith, assertions motivated by God's revelation. These are known as the articles of faith. They are many though simple in the 'Reality' at which they aim, and this Reality is God Himself as Revealer.

Among these manifold articles we must count the apostolic nature of the Church (Nicene Creed) and what we may call Peter's regency among the apostles, which remains to this day as his successors' full regency over other bishops, successors of the apostles.

Moreover, as the Bishop of Rome is Peter's successor, we can say that the Church of Christ in which we believe is 'Roman'; it is the Bishop of Rome who is Pope.

The villagers of Garabandal are Catholic, and their Catholicism is firm and inflexible. One day, for example, a certain Fr. Collin came to Garabandal. He claimed to be the real pope under the name of Clement XV. This French priest had a few followers. He wanted to see Conchita, but her mother did not allow him in. In the end he was expelled from the village.

Another day a woman arrived who persisted in demanding from Conchita that she write something for her on the back of a holy card. Conchita wrote, extempore: "Pray that God bless our unique Pope, His Holiness Paul VI" without knowing why she chose those words. A little later, a well-known priest came up to ask her: "What did you write for this lady? She is a Freemason and a follower of Fr. Collin" (G II, p. 229). Fr. Collin died in 1974 or 1975.

The startling way in which the visionaries expressed their faith by adding two words to the Apostles' Creed is not such that it should discourage ecumenical work in our time. Among such work is the necessity of presenting Catholic doctrine on the papacy and living up to it in an open, loyal and fervent spirit.

It is likely that the visionaries' faith was stimulated by their apparitions, but it did not depend on them. Conchita understood that "we are always with [the Blessed Virgin]," even outside the apparitions, as long as "we desire" it (OL, p. 38). This has already been mentioned with regard to prayer.

One day a priest told the visionary, Conchita, "If Garabandal is not true, then I shall not believe in anything." She told Mother Maria Nieves that she was sorry to hear a priest say such a thing, and we may infer that Conchita well understood that perfect faith does not need new miraculous signs. She knows it is wonderful to believe without seeing anything (G II, p. 225). But she and her companions knew well enough, even at the time of the apparitions, that there are many unbelievers. That is why they asked repeatedly for a miracle "so that the people will believe." "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" (OL, p. 113). We understand that, far beyond the belief in the apparitions, faith is at stake here.

It is curious that Conchita has never doubted the Miracle to come except for a moment in her room when a doubt came to her mind. She then perceived an inner voice that said, "Conchita, do not doubt that my Son will perform a Miracle!" (OL, p. 119).

## 27. Hope

Hope is a theological virtue. We hope for God, glory, eternal life, supreme goodness, our own beatitude. These are the 'objects' of our hope. The motive of our hope is that we hope *in* God, we confide *in* God. This motive was expressed in the old Belgian catechism in these words: "Because You are infinitely good to us, almighty and faithful in Your promises." Indeed, "We have a promise from one who is true to His word" (Heb. 10:23).

But, if so expressed, Christian hope lacks a universal and cosmic dimension. It really has a double 'object': *our* eternal life with God, and also the full and perfect accomplishment of the whole divine plan, of God's entire design for the *salvation of the world*. Because of the love which imbues our hope, we love our

neighbour, we love all men, we love Jesus Christ, "the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42) and not only our personal saviour. "In Him shall the gentiles hope" (Isa. 42:4, quoted in Rom. 15:12). This hope, as we can see, is universal. It is also cosmic: "Creation is full of expectancy, waiting for the sons of God to be made known, . . . with the hope that nature in its turn will be set free from the tyranny of corruption" (Rom. 8:19-21).

Hope is not, so to speak, individualistic. When writing about it to his correspondents, St. Paul generally uses such phrases as "our hope," "your hope," "the hope which is in you," "the hope set before us."

The apparitions of Garabandal, its messages, its prophecies, revive if need be our hope in its personal aspect and, even more, in its universal aspect. We learn through them with a striking force that God is at work to save us all, through the ministry of the angel and the Virgin Mary, and later, through Him without any intermediary. If our hope has weakened, it is revived, comforted, strengthened, especially from the point of view of its universal 'end' which will be considered at greater length in Chapter 8, No. 47, and Chapter 10, No. 49. Therefore, at this point the new impetus is noted, that such apparitions, messages, prodigies, prophecies can communicate to the hope of many; we experience through them the faithfulness of a saving God.

A frequent, repetitive and converging phenomenon raises the hope of the promoters of the Messages of the Blessed Virgin who, they think, appeared in this village. When they work on their disclosure to the world they very often make unexpected, favourable and happy encounters, to the point that they feel like pawns on a chessboard, as one of them said. Another prefers to say that one feels like a workman making a net or a tapestry whose design appears little by little. Mere chance? It is difficult to believe it. The convergences are so numerous, sometimes so surprising, that the cumulative phenomenon becomes highly improbable without the intervention of a mastermind.

Moreover, when considering the photographs of these young ecstatic girls looking up at the heavens, could it not be an illustration of one of Jesus' sayings: "Look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:28).

## 28. Love of God and One's Neighbour

Everyone knows that loving God and one's neighbour form the two commandments of the New Testament: "Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-39). These two commandments are rooted in the Old Testament (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). Jesus, St. Paul and St. John have profusely treated the subject. It is an evangelical theme.

At the end of July 1967, Conchita wrote a note hastily for a French priest to encourage him and other priests to "fulfill his vows through 'love' of God." She underlined the word 'love'.

Being a realist, she realizes rather sadly that we think of heaven and hell more through fear than through love of God. On the other hand, she thinks it is wonderful to love God without seeing Him (G II, p. 225).

Referring to the Warning, she said that it would draw the good closer to God through a greater love. Speaking privately to a friend, she told her that "after . . . she would love God far more" (AV, p. 4).

Her love of the Virgin Mary whom she called "her heavenly mama and her best friend" came second only to her love of God. She wrote that her love for her, or at least her "desire to love her and sacrifice herself for her love's sake" was increased by her apparitions. According to St. Thomas Aquinas it is proper to love with predilection those who are closer to God—and such is the case of the Blessed Virgin—as well as those who are closer to us.

This love of God and of the Blessed Virgin as well as love of us all was often manifested by the visionaries in many ways considered later in detail. But here are two examples.

On August 18, 1962, Conchita was heard telling the Apparition, "Why don't you let yourself be seen by Mari Cruz? See how sad she is! . . . Be half the time with me and the other half with her!"

In the long letter of October 13, 1963, Mari Loli wrote that she told the Virgin about a mysterious episode: "One day as I was walking along a path, a man with long hair, dressed in long clothes, appeared to me suddenly and told me, 'I am hungry'. I was carrying my lunch in my hand; I gave it to him and he disappeared—I don't know how—and I remained greatly frightened. I asked the Virgin who this man was and she smiled, and she didn't say anything." We shall probably never know who the

man was, but we know that about 800 million people live in a state of malnutrition, and many millions are dying of starvation.

## 29. Conscience, the Sense of Good and Evil

### *Conscience*

The visionaries once asked the Blessed Virgin what they were to do to practice penance. She answered, "At every moment do what conscience dictates to you." That is what Conchita told Mother Maria Nieves on January 27, 1967.

Conchita had an upright conscience, even at the age of 13. On July 18, 1962, the day of the miraculous Communion, some men wanted to persuade the lads to stop dancing; it was the patron saint's day of the village. They were promised that the orchestra would be paid for three consecutive Sundays if the dancing stopped. A young man left the dancers, came up to Conchita and asked her, "Did the Virgin tell you that we couldn't dance?" Conchita answered, "No, you may dance, as long as you don't offend Our Lord God."

In October 1968, Conchita declared that the prophesied Warning will be "a correction of the conscience of the world." St. Paul tried "to have a conscience clear of offence towards God or man, at all times" (Acts 23:1; 24:16) and he often urged his correspondents to live up to their conscience; for instance, when he wrote to the Christians of Rome to submit to the civil authorities "for conscience' sake" (Rom. 13:5).

Conscience is nothing else but human reason applied to the realm of morals. God has given it to us as a light to show us what is right and what is wrong.

### *The Sense of Good and Evil*

St. Paul exhorted his disciples to "abhor evil and cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9). "Scrutinize all things, retain what is good, reject all that has a look of evil" (I Thess. 5:21-22). "The full-grown are those whose faculties are so trained by exercise that they can distinguish between good and evil" (Heb. 5:14).

In the First Message of Garabandal there is a key sentence: "First, we must lead good lives" which was addressed to every man, whether he be a believer or not, and because of the depth of meaning of the word 'good' in Spanish. It has in Spanish a meaning both complete and precise, namely the perfection of virtues and, when uttered by a Christian it refers to Christian

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Hay que hacer muchos sacrificios mucha penitencia y hay que visitar mucho al Santísimo. Pero antes tenemos que ser muy buenos y si no lo hacemos nos vendrá un castigo. Ya te está llenando la Copa y si no cambiamos nos vendrá un castigo muy grande. ¿O harás señor? no se como te llamas aquí y así que lo agan. Adios *Conchita*

El mensaje que la Santísima Virgen a dado al mundo por la intercesión de San Miguel. El Ángel hadicho como no se ha cumplido y no se ha dado a conocer al mundo mi mensaje del 19 de octubre os dije que este es el último. Antes la Copa estaba llenando ahora está revesando. Los sacerdotes van muchos por el camino de la perdición y con ellos más almas. La Eucaristía se da menos importancia. Debemos evitar la ira de Dios sobre nosotros, con nuestros esfuerzos. Si le pedis perdón con nuestras almas sinceras Él os perdonará y a vuestra Madre que por intercesión del Ángel San Miguel os quiero decir que os enmendéis ya estáis con los últimos avisos os quiero mucho y no quiero vuestra condenación. Pedidnos sinceramente nosotros os lo daremos. Deveis sacrificaros más. Pensad en la Pasión de Jesús

19-11-1965

*Conchita González*

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The First and Second Messages. These copies were written by Conchita for Plácido Ruiloba Arias from Santander, Spain.

virtues, as explained by the excellent translators G. and M. du Pilier. That is the way the mother of four Jesuit priests used the word while speaking to the author and other visitors on May 11, 1974, telling them that her son Luis (Andreu) was "good." An inn-keeper's wife in Oña understood the word in the same sense.

Mari Cruz, the night preceding the Feast of the Assumption 1961, heard an ecstatic canticle sung by her companions:

Levantate, Mari Cruz  
¿No hueles las azucenas?  
Que te las trae la Virgen  
Para que seas muy buena.

Get up, Mari Cruz  
Don't you smell the lilies?  
The Virgin brings them to you  
That you may be very good.

On June 23, 1962, Mari Loli and Jacinta told visitors with one voice, "Be all good that the Blessed Virgin be happy. Be good, all of you."

Through its exhortation to make an effort to turn away from the wrath of God, the Second Message echoes the First.

### *The Sense of Sin*

The word sin, a major biblical theme, is found 800 times in the Bible, without counting its synonyms like transgression or iniquity. The Old Testament is imbued with the sense of sin just as it is literally filled with a feeling of the holiness of God.

The Temple was a place where innumerable victims were slaughtered in atonement. This is repugnant to us. Through these rites, God wanted us to understand the gravity of sin and the sanctity of God Who wants an atonement.

God is offended by our sins. It would be not only tedious but beyond the scope of this book to quote all the prophets.

In the words of Jesus: "If you do not repent, you will all perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). This repentance implies a conversion, in Greek, *metanoia*, a moral change of mind and heart. The books of the New Testament dealing especially with sin are the epistles to the Romans (Chapters 1-8), to the Hebrews, and the first of St. John (Chapters 1-5).

According to St. Paul, the Law was a tutor which made the people conscious of sin (Rom. 7:7; Gal. 3:24), and according to

the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, only Christ was really able to atone for the sins of the people, as High Priest and perfect Victim of the New Covenant. And as no one may say he is sinless (Rom. 3:10; I John 1:8), we all need Christ's expiation.

The announcement of the conditional Chastisement forcefully expresses what His Excellency Beitia Aldazabal, Bishop of Santander at the time of the Apparitions, called the doctrine of God "offended by our sins." He was referring to the Messages of Garabandal.

This doctrine was also expressed by a biblical metaphor, that of the 'cup,' filling up in the First Message and overflowing in the Second. Cups are often mentioned in both Testaments, but with various meanings. In the Messages of Garabandal, the word "cup" can have had but two significant meanings:

1. Either that of "the cup of the wrath of God," as mentioned thirteen times in the Apocalypse; for instance: "If any man worship the Beast and his image . . . he shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation" (14:9-10).

2. Or "the cup full of the abominations and filthiness of the fornication [of the Harlot]" which is Babylon, a symbol of Rome which in turn symbolizes the city of Satan (once in the Apocalypse, 17:4).

It could also be both (18:5-6), this cup containing both "her sins" and "the anguish and sorrow" she deserves for her sins.

We thus have a choice of three ways of understanding the cup: cup of the wrath of God, cup of the sins of men, or both. When the Blessed Virgin explained this to the visionaries, she showed them a large cup into which fell a dark liquid, looking like blood. When she spoke of it, her own aspect dimmed and she would lower her voice (G II, p. 167). Blood being red, and red being the colour of sin in the Bible, we are inclined to think that this cup was that of sins. But as they provoke the wrath of God, expressly mentioned in the Second Message, the two are closely knit together, so that the debate has little importance.

This part of the Message must however be counterbalanced by those passages of the gospel (and of the whole Bible) where God is said to be "ready to pardon, full of compassion, slow to anger, plenteous in mercy" (Neh. 9:17; Luke 9:55).

The horror of sin was instilled in the visionaries firstly through the Messages and the announcement of the Warning (whereby



of an apparition. Once while she was in rapture at the church door, she asked, "What is wrong with me? . . . Oh, good." And coming out of her ecstasy she ran home and took off the earrings and watch. She ran back and no sooner had she arrived at the church door when she fell once again into rapture. Her companions did not wear jewelry.

Incapable of provoking an ecstasy, they said, "I don't know when . . . where she says . . . I don't know . . . we don't know." This exercised their humility.

It is difficult to choose from among the mass of documents, those which best reveal the humility of the visionaries. But beginning with general observations recorded in the *Memorandum*, it will then be related all that is known of each of the girls.

They were not prone to make a show of themselves. They obeyed the Vision when she told them to stay at home. As soon as an apparition ceased, they went home. One day, on returning from the fields and reaching a hillock from which they could see the village, Mari Loli and Jacinta said, "What a pity, we've been so happy alone and now we must meet people again!" On the other hand, they wished people to come, but so that they would believe, not just simply to be noticed. If there were no apparition, they showed no sign of distress. They paid little attention to the public, worked on humble household tasks, or played, in front of everybody.

They showed no desire to become famous. They lived in the fields, or at home, or at school. This characteristic humility of the visionaries, also noticed by Dr. Ortiz, indicated that they were not neuropaths; such patients strive to dominate or show off.<sup>2</sup> This doctor, a pediatrician at Santander was the most assiduous medical observer of the facts of Garabandal.

The ecstasies often began after the public had left. One of the girls might sometimes be found, alone on the mountain, in ecstasy. (Dr. Puncernau's lecture of June 18, 1966 at Barcelona, in Neg, p. 131).

### *The Humility of Conchita*

Humility shines in Conchita's demeanour, her words, and her writings. She is elegant in her bearing. The same Dr. Puncernau quoted above questioned her on this matter. She answered, "The Lady who appeared to me was elegant." It seems that some have reproached her for being too winsome. This is not the opinion

of Dr. Apostolidès, an eminent French pediatrician who, when still a young man, observed that her smile was absolutely chaste, "the opposite of anything vain." What is probable is that Conchita, like any young girl, is aware of her beauty. But it was noticed between 1967 and 1970 that she would mix in a spirit of friendliness and simplicity with girls of her age, or with children, or stay with her mother, and that when visitors came to meet her she received them with simplicity; she was not talkative, but when she spoke she did so with propriety, her voice being very sweet and reserved, but direct and frank.

She was heard in ecstasy to ask the Blessed Virgin that she might not be alone in announcing the Miracle, but that the four visionaries be together. She was once asked why she received Communion from the angel more often than the others. She answered, "It is that I am the worst of all." On December 3, 1966, Conchita confessed to Mother Maria Nieves that she had been a little girl with many defects and that she realized that, at the time she spoke, she did not have much love of prayer. She thought she sometimes misbehaved, and had not been generous enough.

There are some revealing lines in one of her notebooks: "I am nothing at all. But as . . . I have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus crucified, I am nevertheless something." On November 15, 1967, she showed her love of humility when she wrote: "Pray for us, ask that we be humble" (revealed by the late Fr. Laffineur). A little earlier she had written Fr. Alba a long letter. The following extracts need no comment:

"I feel many desires to love God and Mary, but I do not attain it, the temptations being numerous and the falls pretty numerous as well, hinder me from abandoning myself in the Father . . . And, as for me, I remember [your students] in my poor prayers."

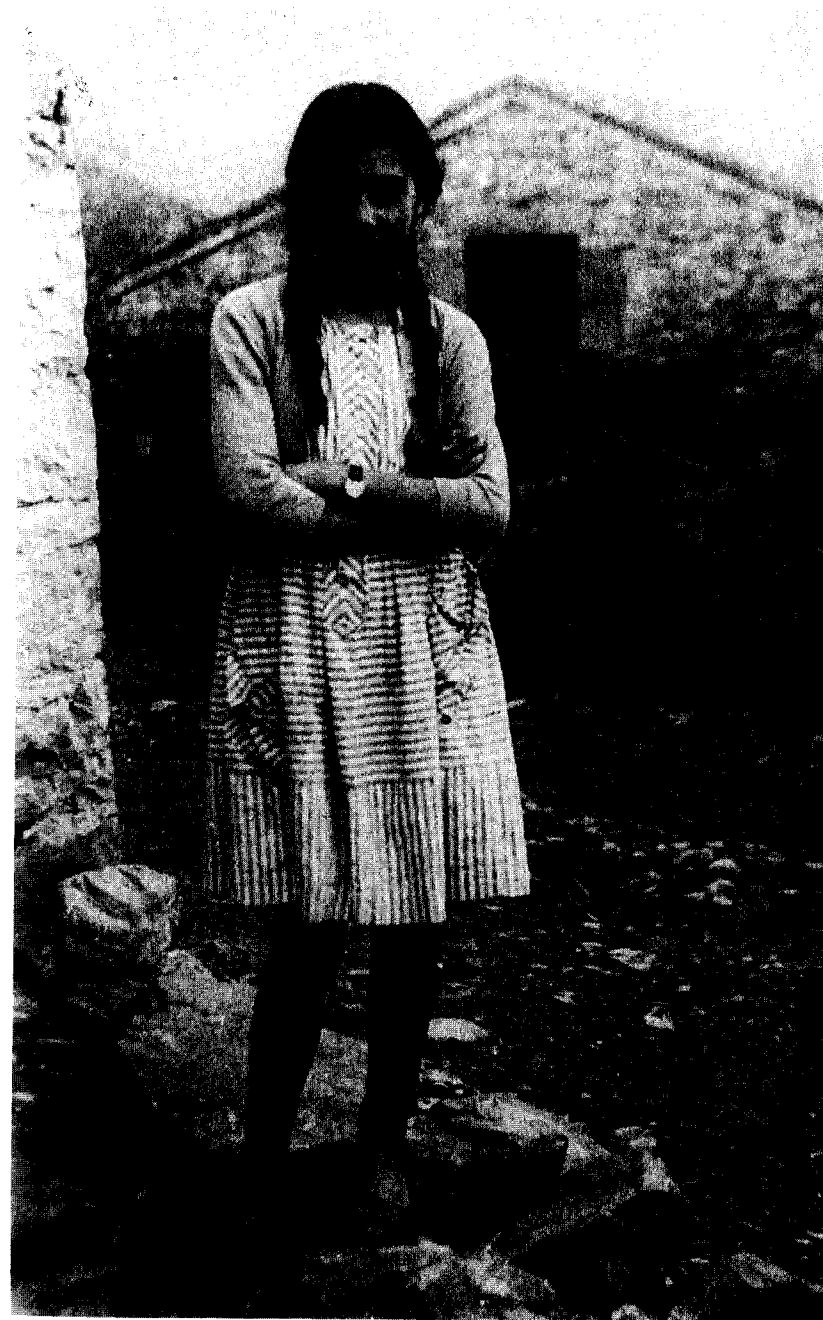
In her message to the Americans of August 7, 1971 she wrote: "Pray for us four, who owe so much to the Blessed Virgin, who are instruments but do not conduct ourselves like true instruments . . . We allow ourselves to be carried away at times by excessive pride, and very often by vanity. Pray for us . . . We need it very much."

Conchita feels that humility is a fragile virtue. As an adult living in the United States, she was twice asked to speak on television. She wisely refused. She explained later, "If I were a holy person, I wouldn't mind going and saying something. But since I am not and am proud, what can I say? So, I didn't accept."

2. Dr. Celestino Ortiz, *Estudio sobre las Cuatro Videntes de S.S. de Garabandal*, p. 6.



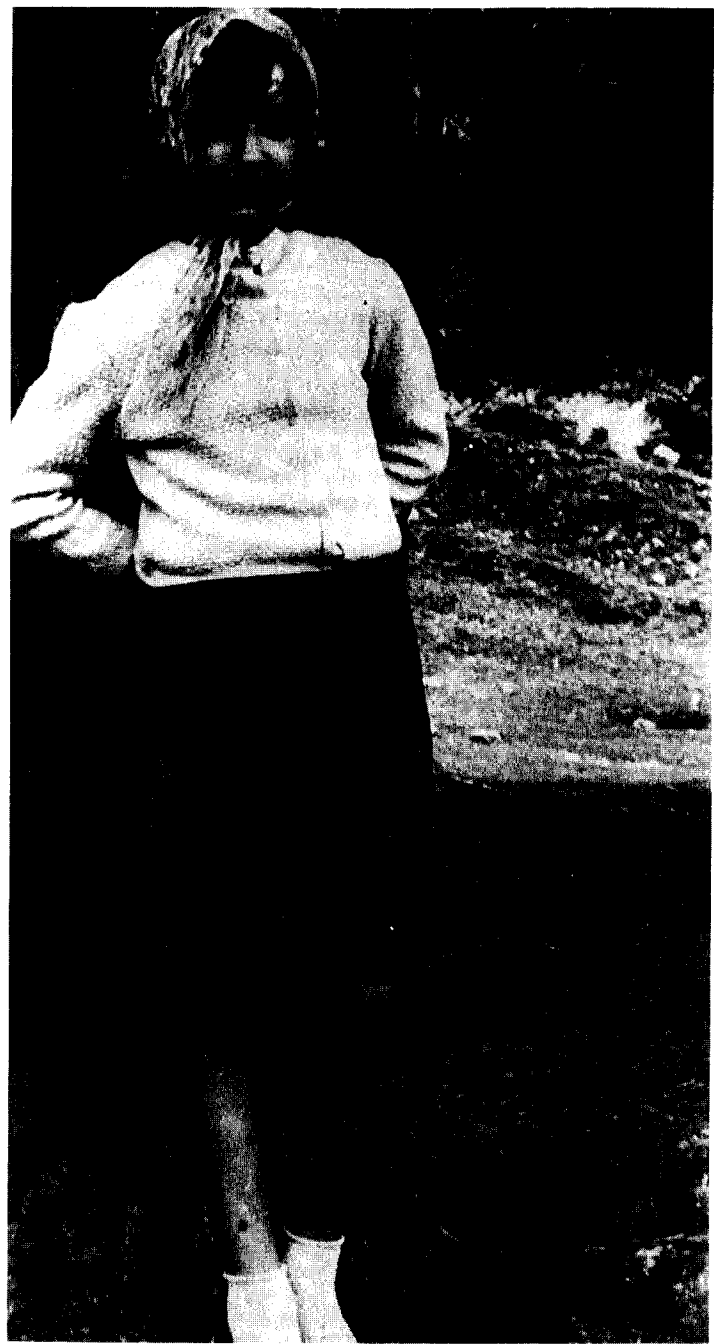
*Mari Loli at the time of the first apparitions in 1961.*



*Conchita in 1961.*



*Jacinta.*



*Mari Cruz.*

*The Humility of Mari Loli*

More than anything, it is Mari Loli's humble behaviour which is particularly striking. A great worker, very active, she gave assiduous and uncomplaining attention to the menial tasks of an innkeeper's daughter, continuing with this work until she left for the United States of America.

*The Humility of Jacinta*

Of all four, Jacinta is the one who most avoided the curious, the photographers, the people who seemed important. It would appear that her humility is natural to her, that she did not have to acquire it, and that it is part of her personality.

She explains her negations in this way: "I thought that if the others denied having seen the Virgin . . . what was I to say to the contrary?" (private letter). Since retracting her negations she has become self-assured again, but still remains quite reserved with strangers.

*The Humility of Mari Cruz*

Mari Cruz, who had fewer apparitions, was content to ask her companions to tell the Virgin to appear to her soon. There was a humility in her desires, as well as in her companions', that was quite charming.

On July 25, 1964, Mari Cruz's mother declared that her daughter did not wish to be seen by the people, that she wanted to be alone.

Fr. José Ramon is one of the priests who has known the visionaries best. He considers that Mari Cruz was very humble.

In conclusion it must be said that in spite of inevitably attracting the notice of the public, the visionaries remained humble in their words and behaviour, and did not wish to seem like actresses on a stage. Immediately after their ecstasies they went back home and came out again only for errands. Later, Dr. Apostolidès was greatly surprised to see that, as teenagers, "they did not try to draw attention to themselves or play a role, even though they were aware of being the focus of attention."

# Chapter 7

## The Other Personal Virtues

Among the other personal virtues, repentance and conversion will first be dealt with, then penance and "sacrifices," and the sacrament of reconciliation. These virtues are of course intimately related. They are related to sin, the Passion of Jesus, heaven, hell, and purgatory. It should therefore be understood that some overlapping will occur in the following three parts: 31, 32, 33.

### 31. Repentance and Conversion

The Gospel began with the proclamation by St. John the Baptist of the baptism of repentance (Mark 1:4). Jesus began His preaching likewise (Mark 1:15).

The apostles' preaching began with a pressing invitation to repentance: "Repent . . . Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 2:38; 3:19).

It should be pointed out that the Greek word used in the New Testament means three things:

1. Repent and break away from a past evil;
2. Expiate this past evil through penance, notably by accepting suffering;
3. Enter into a new life.

St. Thomas Aquinas analyzed the process of conversion this way: "Its first principle is the work of God who changes the heart, as expressed in the Book of Lamentations: 'Turn Thou us unto Thee, oh Lord, and we shall be converted' (5:21). The second act is a motion of faith, the third a motion of servile fear which draws us away from our sins through fear of pain; the fourth is a motion of hope that we form, hoping to obtain for-

giveness, the resolution of making amends; the fifth, an act of charity such that sins begin to displease us as such and not because of their punishment; the sixth is a motion of filial fear such that we willingly offer amends to God, through reverence toward Him. We thus see that the act of penance proceeds from servile fear as its first motion leading to repentance, and from filial fear as its immediate and proper principle" (*Summa*, IIIa Q 85 a 5).

At Garabandal on June 18, 1965, the Blessed Virgin and St. Michael both urgently invited the world to repent: "If you ask Him forgiveness with sincere hearts, God will pardon you . . . I, your mother, through the intercession of St. Michael the Archangel, ask you to amend your lives."

These demands not being sufficient, the Miracle to come will convert the sinners who will see it, as well as the previous Warning which will be like a purification of our sins, an occasion or cause for sinners to make amends, a correction of the conscience of the world.

The visionaries sometimes wept quietly during an apparition and were heard to say, "Forgive us . . . oh! mercy! . . . oh, we won't do it again . . . oh, we will tell them . . ." On one occasion, they were still weeping when they came out of their rapture, and they explained that Our Lady had told them that the people had behaved with little respect for the church (Memor, p. 9).

On March 11, 1962, Jacinta, during a rapture which began at 9:35 p.m., went to Ceferina's and begged forgiveness, and then to the schoolteacher's where she also begged forgiveness. The reason was that the four girls, in a perfectly normal state, had played a practical joke on the teacher, and Ceferina had taken them by surprise while they were doing it. Two hours later, Mari Loli also fell into a rapture and also begged the teacher's forgiveness.

On another occasion, before October 1961, the girls, in rapture and kneeling, recited in front of every person present the *Señor mio Jesucristo* (act of contrition) except for children under the age of seven. For them they recited the *Salve* instead. The reason is clear.

The act of contrition recited by Jacinta in ecstasy has been recorded on tape. Anyone knowing the Spanish language and who already has a sense of God and sin is deeply struck with a feeling of admiration, at the same time being strongly persuaded to enter into a spiritual communion with this act of contrition.

The visionaries were thus educated to repent their sins.

On November 13, 1965, when Conchita went up to the pine grove to see the Blessed Virgin for the last time, she went with feelings of repentance: "As I was walking up to the pines alone, I was overcome with sincere repentance for my faults and I told myself that I wouldn't commit them any more. Indeed, I felt ashamed to present myself before the mother of God without first having rid myself of them" (OL, p. 185).

According to Dr. Porro and Fr. Bernardo, who was parish priest of Garabandal around 1970, there were many conversions in the village, often after a crucifix had been kissed. Other conversions followed personal messages communicated to sinners in the name of the Virgin (see Chapter 6, No. 29). Others have occurred during lectures on the apparitions given in France, America and elsewhere.

One particular conversion was related at a congress in 1975 by Dr. Ricardo Puncernau, an esteemed man of science, a highly trained observer of human behaviour (being a specialist of international repute in psychopathology) besides being a Christian who has held highly responsible positions dealing with the spiritual life of adults in the diocese of Barcelona.

One day Dr. Puncernau was having a soft drink in the little inn belonging to Mari Loli's father, and he met there a young woman with whom he struck up a conversation. He soon discovered that she was from Uruguay but working at the time at the Folies Bergères in Paris, and he quickly discovered that not only did she not believe in the apparitions, but that she did not believe in anything at all. She said she had come to Garabandal simply out of curiosity.

The doctor suggested that they should go outside to see what was happening to the four girls. She agreed. They hid themselves in the shadow of a house and observed from a distance that the girls were in ecstasy and reciting the Rosary while walking toward the church. Standing by the wall of the house in the shadow, they continued to watch the girls, and noticed that Conchita, still in ecstasy and holding a small crucifix in her hand, was leaving her three friends and walking toward them with unusual speed. The doctor immediately wondered how the girl could have noticed him standing in the shadow, and thought to himself that she must have heard he was a doctor and was coming over to impress him, especially since it was his first visit to the village. He soon discovered that his surmise was wrong. Conchita

went straight up to the young woman from Uruguay and placed the crucifix with force against her lips for her to kiss, once, twice, three times. Her mission accomplished, Conchita, still in ecstasy, departed to rejoin her friends and to continue reciting the Rosary with them.

The dancer from the Folies Bergères began to cry profusely, with great, deep sobs. She seemed inconsolable. The doctor feared she was having an attack of some kind and made her sit down on one of the benches along the outside wall of the inn. People gathered around as the doctor attempted to comfort and calm her.

Finally she was able to speak, and she told the doctor what had shaken her so profoundly. She had secretly asked for personal proof of the reality of the apparitions, and had thought to herself: "If it is true that the Blessed Virgin is appearing, may one of the girls come and give me proof of it."

"The thought had hardly crossed my mind," said the dancer, "When Conchita came quickly toward me to give me the crucifix to kiss. But I did not want to kiss it and I held her hand back. However, with unusual strength she placed the crucifix against my lips and there was nothing I could do but kiss it, once, twice, three times. I, the incredulous, I, the atheist, I, who believe in nothing at all. I was exceedingly moved by this."

The doctor wrote to the dancer occasionally and eventually learned that she had left the Folies Bergères and returned to her family in Uruguay.

Another conversion has been recounted by Laura Gonzalez, a villager of Garabandal. A wealthy married couple from Barcelona had come to the village. He was a meatpacker by trade. The wife made a public confession. They only went to church for marriages and funerals, and led a very worldly life, spending up to 10,000 pesetas in one evening (nearly \$400 in 1977). They declared that God had changed them and that they had decided to change their lives (LVP, p. 140).

### 32. Asceticism, Penance, "Sacrifices"

Christian asceticism is founded upon many striking sayings of Jesus such as: "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:33).

Repentance is manifested by fruits of penance (Luke 3:8), such as those of the Ninevites after hearing Jonas' preaching.

They fasted, put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes (Matt. 12:41, quoting Jon. 3:6-8).

Zacchaeus the publican gave half of his goods to the poor (Luke 19:8). At Ephesus, "a number of those who used magic arts made their books into a heap and burned them in public" (Acts 19:19).

St. Paul often urged the disciples of Christ to crucify themselves, that is, to mortify their passions and their lusts in order that they live a life led and animated by the Spirit (Rom. 8:24).

At Garabandal the Blessed Virgin used other expressions, but the meaning was the same: "We must make many sacrifices, perform much penance" (First Message). "You should make more sacrifices" (Second Message). As they did not understand the word 'sacrifices,' the Blessed Virgin told the children to ask the priests for an explanation of the word, which was logical not only because the priests represented to them knowledge and authority in the Church, but also because they are men 'sacrificed' for the evangelical sacrifice. This is well illustrated by a locution of Fr. Luis Andreu who had died a few days previously. He told the visionaries to convey to his brother Ramon, also a Jesuit priest, to "make many sacrifices" (G II, p. 23).

Scepticism amongst witnesses at Garabandal was a cause of grievous penance for the visionaries who suffered from it from the very beginning. Many of the women who accompanied them were sceptical and carried on such detailed discussions of the children's dialogues with the Virgin, that, after their ecstasies, the girls would sit down on the ground and cry because they were not believed. They would then get up and go to the church, still crying (LVP, pp. 276, 284).

Fr. José Ramon has observed that the visionaries accomplished many sacrifices. Some were due to their living conditions. In September 1962, they could be seen working hard, cleaning up, washing, at home or at the outdoor washing-place. It was a considerable penance for them to wait for the Blessed Virgin's visit late at night or very early in the morning, awake or half asleep on a chair or a stool propped up against a wall.

Other sacrifices were voluntary, such as reciting the Rosary at dawn or earlier at the *calleja*, even in winter. They sometimes inflicted extreme penances upon themselves, by putting nettles into their shoes or walking barefoot on thorns. Occasionally hair-cloth was worn. One day Conchita showed a six year old



girl a sort of chaplet of sharp points circled around her back and asked her if it bled. She feared that her blouse might be stained and that her mother might thus know what she was wearing. She asked the child not to tell it to anyone. But the Blessed Virgin did not encourage them in these practices. On November 1, 1966, Conchita recounted to Mother Maria Nieves that one day, during an apparition, they felt their waists from time to time as they were wearing loose hair-cloth. The Virgin told them, "Yes, I know what you are wearing; but this is not precisely what I

*August 15, 1966, the day Conchita entered her third phase of doubts, the deep doubts. Notice how sorrowful both Conchita and Mari Loli look.*



*People arriving in Garabandal, October 18, 1961.*

ask of you, nor what I like best, but rather *faithfulness in ordinary life.*"

The lesson of the Virgin was well understood by Conchita. On November 27, 1964, she wrote Fr. Ramon Andreu that, just seeing the Blessed Mother, created the desire to sacrifice oneself for her. A year later on October 24, 1965, at Borja in the province of Zaragoza, Mari Loli heard Our Lady in a locution tell her that she would have much to suffer, that she would go mostly through inner ordeals, but that she would help her.<sup>1</sup>

A day of great suffering for Conchita and Mari Loli was on August 15, 1966, when they decided to let the bishop know that they doubted their apparitions, and that they did not think they had seen the Virgin. A photograph exists showing them both weeping on that day, holding handkerchiefs.

The visionaries were not the only ones to practice penance during the apparitions which took place more and more frequently at night. The people who wanted to stay in the village to see them had to stay up also. Very few could go to bed because of the complete lack of hotels.

On October 18, 1961, going up from Cosio to San Sebastian de Garabandal was quite a penance for the visitors due to the bad weather, rain, mud, and slippery ground. It meant a three hour walk instead of a little over an hour. The waiting, the walk-

1. According to *Star on the Mountain*, p. 110, No. XLII and p. 172, No. LXI, the Blessed Virgin warned Mari Loli on another occasion, before that date, that she would have to suffer. It was shortly before her departure for the boarding school of Borja, which took place on September 30, 1965.



ing up to the pine grove in rain and hail, the almost general disappointment, all played a part in turning this day into one of penance.

### 33. The Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation which grants God's forgiveness to well disposed sinners, is due to the infinite merits of Christ who suffered His Passion and was resurrected for us, and it is proper that it was instituted immediately after His resurrection. This is what happened:

"In the evening, being the first day of the week, . . . Jesus came and stood in the midst [of the apostles] . . . He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained'" (John 20:19-23).

The new name for this sacrament is well founded in the New Testament. "God . . . has reconciled us to Himself and has given us the ministry of reconciliation . . . placing in us the word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18-19). Of course St. Paul did not have this sacrament particularly in mind but rather the apostolic ministry as a whole. However, the ministry of this sacrament came to form part of it.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is practiced more in Spain than in France. A visitor to that country was surprised, in 1977, to see a priest sitting for long periods in a confessional of the Jesuits' chapel in Santander on an ordinary week-day; and it is a regular practice in Garabandal, notably before Mass. On June 17, 1961, eve of the first apparition, the children went to confession as usual before the catechism lesson (DS, p. 81).

The second night of the screams—*gritos*—which preceded the 1962 Feast of Corpus Christi (which that year took place on June 21) the girls had a vision of the Chastisement threatening us, and they were heard to say, ". . . may people have time to go to confession beforehand!" All but two of the villagers went to confession on the feast day. One of them had to look for a stray calf—*jatu*. He went about saying, "So here am I! The whole village has been there [to confession] and I have not. What will become of me? And all this due to a *jatu*" (LVP, p. 327). The lads—*mozos*—told each other the previous day, "To be sure, it won't be long tomorrow before I go to confession."

In January 1963, when the visionaries had doubts that they had seen the Virgin, but "without thinking, without believing

that it was a sin" they nevertheless confessed it to Fr. Valentin who gave them a serious penance. One day when Jacinta had answered back to her mother, the angel did not give her Communion, though he gave it to Mari Loli and Conchita. Although Jacinta's sin was certainly not serious, the angel did not give it to her until she had been to confession. Her parents were keenly interested and observed her with care. As soon as the church bell started ringing, she ran there hoping to be able to go to confession before the priest had begun to say Mass, but she had to make confession afterwards. Later her parents saw her receive Communion from the angel.

It is curious that Mari Cruz asked the angel to confess her. He answered that he had no such power. As certain persons had told Mari Loli that the Blessed Virgin had that power, which surprised her, she soon afterwards asked her to hear her confession. She answered the same as the angel.

We may be certain that the visionaries continued to go to confession. Conchita confessed to Fr. Rodrigo<sup>2</sup> on her way back from Rome at the end of January 1966, soon after to the confessor of the Angelical College of Pamplona, and later and regularly to Fr. Garcia Nieto.<sup>3</sup>

The apparition spoke at least twice of confession. Dr. Porro asked the Virgin through the visionaries what she urged the Spanish people to do above all to amend themselves. The answer was: "Let them go to confession and receive Communion." That was on September 8, 1961. Mari Loli confided that on Sunday, October 7, 1962, the Blessed Virgin asked "that all go to confession and receive Communion."

Many sinners have fallen on their knees in front of confessors after having kissed a crucifix which a visionary had presented to their lips. Sanchez-Ventura quotes the example of a farmer from Potes who went to confession after 23 years of total indifference.

### 34. Modesty, Decency

Feminine decency is mentioned twice in the New Testament: "I will that . . . women adorn themselves in decent apparel, adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety" wrote St. Paul to Timothy (I Tim. 2:9). "Let their apparel," wrote St. Peter about

2. He died on Good Friday 1973.

3. He died on Good Friday 1974.

women, "not be outward . . . but in the incorruptibility of a quiet and meek spirit" (I Pet. 3:3-4). St. Peter seems to have been more exacting than St. Paul.

The prophet Isaiah launched a severe satire against the coquettes of Jerusalem (Isa. 3:16-24).

It is becoming to dress well and in good taste. Let us remember that Dr. Puncernau once asked Conchita if she considered it decent for a girl who had seen the Blessed Virgin to dress up elegantly. She answered that the Lady who had appeared to them always looked elegant.

However, the Virgin paid attention to the way the visionaries dressed, asking them, for example, not to wear jewelry during the ecstasies. She maintained that the wearing of jewelry with all its worldly implications was improper during those moments when she appeared to them.

The formal messages say nothing about decency, though the Blessed Virgin often spoke to them of modesty in dress, as Conchita has divulged in a written answer to a question sent to her in the autumn of 1969. She underlined to Fr. Pelletier on April 25, 1970, that the Blessed Virgin wanted them to wear long sleeves.

On August 31, 1961, the Blessed Virgin advised Mari Loli, with a smile, to lengthen her dress a little. During the night of September 9, 1961, Conchita, Jacinta and Mari Loli, in rapture, returned to their respective homes, still in rapture, to change their clothes and put on longer dresses. Conchita was heard to say: "We must always dress in long skirts, especially to come to see you." One day on December 8, 1961 or 1962, when the Blessed Virgin made them play hide and seek in ecstasy, Jacinta was seen wearing such a long dress, perhaps a nightdress, that she had to lift it up a little when walking. The spectators, remembering what had just been said, thought that Our Lady had told her to dress more modestly. The modesty lesson was so well known that a girl from the village who had emigrated to France, and who had heard from her mother in Garabandal that the visionaries spoke in ecstasy of dresses being too short, told her mother: "I am going to lengthen my dress" (LVP, p. 184).

Dr. Porro, Fr. Ramon Andreu, Fr. José Ramon Garcia de la Riva, a woman from Leon, and many other people noticed with astonishment that, whatever they did, the visionaries' knees were always covered by their clothes. Angelita Cosio often saw them in unusual attitudes but decency was never offended, es-

pecially in the case of Mari Loli who once fell down the staircase of her home, on her back, headlong, her feet in the air. In spite of this, her skirt covered her knees properly. On another occasion, Conchita was lying on the ground, under the portico of the church, in front of a door used mostly by women. She began to move backwards and forwards but her dress never changed position whether she went one way or the other. Benjamin Gomez, who witnessed the scene, had an impression that only her heels touched the ground.

In September 1961 the Blessed Virgin upbraided Jacinta who had lacquered her nails and Mari Loli who had put on lipstick.

Lessons on modesty were given at least twice to other people. On one occasion among the onlookers were two girls rather scantily clothed. The four visionaries, realising this, began saying that they would like an overcoat to cover them or even a blanket, and they then began singing:

"Si quereis salvar,  
Vestid con decencia.  
Las modas os arrastran  
Al fuego infernal."

"If you want to be saved,  
Dress up decently.  
Fashions lead you  
To infernal fire."

According to Maximina, aunt and godmother of Conchita, the two girls who wore mini-skirts, bare arms and deep décolletés, put on coats to cover themselves. On another occasion a woman wanted to be photographed with one of the girls, but the child fled and said, "Our Lady does not want me to be photographed with people who wear low décolletés" (Memor, p. 24; QP, No. 306). Fr. José Ramon, who has studied them closely and knows them well, noticed their reserve and extreme modesty in the way they dressed, sat or arranged their clothes.

Years later, in 1969 or 1970, some women noticed that the visionaries did not use any make-up, while other young villagers did as young Spanish people often do, including the devout.

In her *Diary*, Conchita relates that once on a visit to Santander she went to the beach, and the Blessed Virgin did not appear to her. According to Fr. Ramon Andreu, it was in a locution that

Our Lady told her, "I do not come to see you again because you go to the beach." Conchita told Fr. Ramon, "But now I have been to confession." On April 25, 1970, she said to Fr. Pelletier that she saw no evil in it, that she did not see any connection between "going to the beach" and "not seeing the Virgin."

If this point needs elucidating, perhaps another event will make it clearer. In the summer of 1969 or 1970 a group of girls from Barcelona asked Conchita, "Is it right or wrong to go to the beach?" This is how she answered, according to a letter from the leader of the girls, Señorita Angela Guillen, Padilla 154, Pral la, Barcelona 13, dated August 5, 1970: "For my part, I have never been to the beach except when they took me there at Santander. It is my sentiment that we cannot go to the beach because it is an occasion of sin.' One of the girls then commented, 'But if we go without the intention of sinning, we don't sin.' Conchita then answered, 'No, because though you don't have the intention of sinning, you may cause others to sin because of your presence.'"

If the reader finds Conchita's opinion too rigorous, one can nevertheless only admire the refinement of her conscience. One day in 1969 she expressed her preoccupation to Jaime Garcia Llorente. He was driving her to Comillas, and she told him, "We must pray that we are not an occasion for sin for anyone, that we are not a scandal to anybody."

### 35. Purity, Chastity

Having lived for about ten months in Spain at intervals between 1964 and 1970, the author has noticed that the behaviour of young Spaniards, both boys and girls, in the streets was always correct, at least in the provinces visited.

At that time a serious censorship was imposed on all media—the press, the radio, the cinema and television—and there was nothing noticeably reprehensible in them. This is important when trying to understand the moral climate of the village of Garabandal, which was by any standard very isolated.

Purity or chastity is one of the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5, 8). Jesus taught that whosoever looked at a woman with desire had already committed adultery in his heart.

St. Paul severely condemned sins against chastity in his enumeration of grievous sins. These condemnations are justified by the fact that "the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord,

and the Lord for the body" (I Cor. 6:13). He even advised the Ephesians not to speak of it: "But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph. 5:3).

We may thus understand that the Blessed Virgin never spoke directly about these things, especially to these four innocent young girls. However, the three facts which follow show the gravity of these faults in the eyes of the Virgin whom Spanish people often call *Maria Purísima*.

On September 8, 1961, the visionaries asked the Apparition the answer to twelve questions formulated by Canon Porro.<sup>4</sup> Among them were the following:

Question: What are the sins of the girls which wound and offend her most?

Answer: *You* know it already.

Question: What are the sins of the boys which wound and offend her most?

Answer: *You* know it already.

One very dark night, Conchita went out in rapture to make the sign of the cross on everybody who was outside her home, only omitting a man and two girls. Returning to her normal state, she told the girls, "I haven't crossed you because you sin with this man." They burst into tears (interview with Maximina on May 7, 1974).

One day, before going into rapture, Conchita had received quite a number of pious objects for the Virgin to kiss. She carried them in the pocket of her apron or around her neck, except for the wedding rings which she wore on her fingers. After going into rapture she presented all the objects to the Virgin, returning them afterwards to their owners except for two wedding rings. Returning to her normal state, she gave them back to their owners—a man and a woman—telling them, "The Blessed Virgin told me that she cannot kiss these rings because they are not wedding rings." So it was. After staying two more days at Garabandal, the man went back to his wife (testimony of a well-known Madrilén woman, given at Garabandal on August 5, 1970). It was a beautiful conversion, and an impressive lesson for the witnesses.

4. Canon Julio Porro Cardeñoso is a doctor of canon law and theologian at the Cathedral of Tarragona, Spain.

### 36. Patience, Endurance

Patience, endurance, and long suffering are often listed among Christian virtues in the epistles of the New Testament. Here are just a few examples:

“Walk with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity” (Eph. 4:2); “charity . . . endures all things” (I Cor. 13:7); “the servant of the Lord must be . . . patient” (II Tim. 2:24). Our endurance follows the example of Jesus Christ: “Let us look on Jesus . . . who endured the cross . . . . Think diligently upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself” (Heb. 12:2-3).

As already stated, the Virgin told the visionaries to be *modos*, or well-behaved. It seems that it greatly encouraged them to be patient. They preferred to keep away from crowds, but as Our Lady had told them to answer when they were able, they did so willingly, in spite of often being exasperated by the curious visitors to the village who would kiss them repeatedly, touch them, or cut their hair. They even intruded into their houses. When the girls grew tired of this avalanche of people they simply kept silent and smiled. When Fr. Ramon Andreu asked them why they didn’t get angry, they answered, “Our Lady told us that we should be well-behaved and that we should reply if we could.”

They showed no signs of anger when they were prevented from seeing the visions because the Virgin would not appear when there was singing, dancing and revelling in the village.

They underwent the numerous tests made upon them with gentle good humour in spite of sometimes experiencing pain from blows, pinches or pricks.

They never lost their patience with the thousands of people who asked them for explanations. They showed an extraordinary patience when contradicted by doctors, priests, bishops, and many people even in their own family and in the village, who did not believe they had seen the Blessed Virgin. Except at the beginning they were not upset by these contradictions, being content to ask the Virgin for a miracle “so that they [the people] may believe.”

In her letter of October 13, 1963, to Fr. Retenaga, mentioned in Chapter 4, No. 14, Mari Loli wrote that she had asked for a cross that she might suffer for priests. The Blessed Virgin answered her to bear all things with patience and humility, and

this would please God more than anything else. Mari Loli also asked that her parents might be brought to believe in her apparitions. The Blessed Virgin’s answer was: “They don’t believe, that you may suffer more. Bear it patiently” (G III, p. 222).

After the apparitions had ceased and the girls were then teenagers, they remained just as patient with visitors, who were often tiresome. This happened thousands of times (GP, p. 139). Indiscreet demands were made of Conchita, or she was asked eccentric questions.

It was not until 1970 that Conchita let it be known that, during her stay at Santander, she was forbidden to receive Communion or go to confession or to Mass, while she was under interrogation by priests and doctors. It is known that Bishop Vicente Puchol Montis interrogated her at Pamplona for seven hours. She did not complain.

Last but not least, they were patient with themselves; their doubts, their contradictions, their negations are a cross that they carry day after day, at least in the case of Conchita and Mari Loli.

### 37. Meekness

Jesus was meek: “Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart” (Matt. 11:29). He preached meekness, placing it among the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land” (Matt. 5:4).

St. Paul exhorted meekness: “Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering” (Col. 3:12). He invited Titus to admonish the faithful “not to be litigious, but gentle: showing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:2). Finally, he strove to share Christ’s meekness in his own conduct, beseeching the brethren “by the mildness and modesty of Christ” (II Cor. 10:1).

The Lady who appeared to the *niñas* of Garabandal was very sweet and gentle, and usually smiling. Simply by listening to what the children said in ecstasy, the onlookers were able to perceive the extreme condescension of the Vision. The girls could talk to her about anything they had on their minds.

The apparition of the angel seemed to have induced a striking sweetness in Conchita. On April 8, 1967, her mother Aniceta confided to a priest from Argentina that Conchita’s voice became very sweet—*muy dulce*—when she came back home from the evening of the first apparition.



*The sweetness of the visionaries tempered all their actions.*

This influence of the angel and the Blessed Virgin who appeared to them so often seems to have had a durable effect on the four visionaries. When those who had talked to the girls at the time of their adolescence were questioned afterwards, the words “she is . . .” or “they are . . . very sweet” were often repeated. Those who served as interpreters between the girls and foreign visitors had to admire their patience and mildness on several occasions, especially when the questions asked were indiscreet, irritating or disagreeable.

The same held true at the time of the ecstasies. “Calm and smiling, they answered the questions of those who surrounded them” (Mém, p. 48).

## Chapter 8

# The Social Virtues

Having considered the education of the visionaries by the Apparitions in the fundamental or personal virtues, we shall now consider those virtues which deal more directly with social life, not forgetting that all virtues have an impact upon it.

### 38. Obedience

Jesus’ life was a life of obedience to His Father, “becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). St. Paul wrote Titus to admonish all his disciples to practice obedience (3:1) and to the Romans “to be subject to higher powers, for there is no power but from God” (Rom. 13:1).

Obedience is the main touchstone of the genuineness of mystical experience.

The Blessed Virgin herself gave two examples of obedience to the Church. On August 25, 1961, Fr. Valentin, the parish priest, went to Conchita’s house at about one o’clock in the morning and said, “Look, it isn’t possible for all of us to be kept waiting at this late hour, so I shall give you a quarter of an hour. I shall give you three warnings, and the last will mean that you must go to bed.” Two minutes after the second warning, Conchita went into rapture. That same day, and without their knowing what had happened to Conchita, something similar happened to Mari Loli and Jacinta.

The Blessed Virgin told them to obey their parents and the priests, and to obey their parents and superiors before obeying her. On one occasion this lesson was severe. The Virgin did not appear to Jacinta for a month, and when she finally appeared

Jacinta candidly asked, "Why haven't you come?" and according to Jacinta the only answer was: "Because of your bad attitude with your father that night. How many times have I told you that you must obey your parents, even more than me?" Jacinta remembered that several weeks prior to this she had been alerted that she would have an apparition at four o'clock in the morning. She wanted to stay up to wait for it, but her father sent her to bed, which she did complainingly and with tears, believing she would miss the apparition, which in fact happened, as the Virgin would never wake up the children. This incident occurred at the end of the winter of 1962. The 'punishment' lasted a month, but the lesson still lives on.

Fr. José Ramon Garcia de la Riva has related in detail how, on August 23, 1961, in the name of the bishop and in place of the vicar, he forbade the four visionaries to enter the church in ecstasy. They obeyed punctiliously, after showing their regret.

There are other examples of their education in obedience by the Virgin.

During the night of August 31, 1961, Conchita, in a normal state, persuaded Jacinta and Mari Loli to ask Our Lady if the priests could come up to Garabandal. Our Lady answered, "If the bishop doesn't want them to, he must be obeyed." She was also asked if the parish priest was right in locking the church. Again she answered, "He cannot open it without the bishop's permission" (AGSI, pp. 34-35). On September 5, 1961, they went into rapture in the church. The priest, without knowing whether he would be heard, ordered them, in the name of the bishop, to leave, which they did. It seems that the Apparition wanted to put them in a situation whereby they would once again have to obey the ecclesiastical authorities.

The Church authorities of Santander wanted Conchita to be sent to Santander to be cured of her "obsession." According to her *Diary*, Our Lady did not oppose it. Conchita thus went there, staying from July 27 to August 3, 1961. The visionaries obeyed the Church authorities in the matter of the way in which the First Message should be announced, complying fully with the recommendations of the authorities, in spite of the Vision's precise indications.

The girls obeyed conscientiously. As early as the end of September 1961, Fr. Ramon Maria Andreu noted the following facts:

1. Mari Cruz was ordered by her mother to go to bed, while her companions went to the pine trees where they had an apparition.

*Conchita obeyed her mother (September 11, 1961).*

She obeyed saying, "Our Lady has told me I must obey." This happened repeatedly.

2. They were heard to ask the Apparition why the church was not open to them. And, a moment later they said, "Oh, then it is better so."

3. They fully accepted sometimes being shut in at home during their ecstasies.

4. They were heard answering Fr. Luis Andreu's voice, "You're not going, are you? . . . Well, whenever you wish, then it is all right."

5. On August 8, 1961, they repeated, "Yes, as you wish . . . as you say . . . if you wish . . . when you wish and how you wish . . . the boys are throwing stones at us . . . I heard him say that we are ill . . . but what do we care as long as you are pleased with us."

6. They all wanted to be Carmelites together, but if Our Lady told them to go separately to the convent, or do something else, they did not complain.

Conchita noted in her *Diary* that they went to school as usual, went about their affairs as usual, did their chores as usual; in



SERGE ROUSSEAU-VELLONE

fact lived their lives in the same way that they always did. "We went home to do the chores our parents had for us . . . we did the things our parents told us to do" (OL, pp. 40, 49). Dr. Ortiz, a pediatrician, noticed that "their obedience to their parents increased after the beginning of the apparitions." Joey Lomangino, blind apostle of Garabandal, noticed Conchita's great spirit of obedience during a visit he made in 1963 (OL, p. 155).

In an interview with some Americans on September 14, 1965, Conchita declared that "the Virgin would like us to work at spreading the Message, and it is what she wishes. But she wants us to obey the Church, and this will bring greater glory to God. She will allow time for the Message to be spread with the permission of the Church" (SM, No. XL, p. 106).

When Our Lord told her without hesitation in the locution of Pamplona on February 13, 1966, that He did not call her to enter the monastic life, she obeyed, albeit not without suffering.

The author, on the occasion of his annual visits from 1967 to 1970, noticed Mari Loli's obedience to her father and of Conchita to her mother. There is no reason to think that the two other visionaries were less obedient at that time.

### 39. Truthfulness

We know through the New Testament that God speaks the truth: "God is true" (Rom. 3:4). The Son of God is truthful. Jesus said over and over again that He speaks the truth. In such a discourse, He said, "My testimony is true . . . My judgment is true . . . I have spoken the truth to you" (John 8:14, 16, 40).

The same holds true, naturally, with the apostle Paul: "I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not" (Rom. 9:1).

#### *Conchita Is Educated by the Virgin*

It is mainly in her *Diary* that we are able to appreciate Conchita's truthfulness, going hand in hand with a candour which was very evident when she was thirteen or fourteen. We can see it in the way she relates the facts, without hiding those which do her no honour, without trying to discuss or move the reader or create an artificial suspense. She confesses having lied on one occasion or another, but on unimportant matters, adding that she regretted it bitterly and having admitted it in confession (J, p. 61, note 74). On this same page of her *Diary*, we read that she admits having simulated ecstasies with her companions, at the same time giving four precise details of the utmost impor-

tance, namely, a) that it was after having received two callings, b) in order that they might be able to meet together or persuade the Blessed Virgin to appear sooner, c) that they never simulated an entire ecstasy, and d) that the Blessed Virgin scolded them about this. The vicar of Barro realized it and he too scolded them. He gives a full account of it in his *Mémoires*, ch. XVII, in the following details, which also concern the other three girls:

Conchita indicated that they feigned their ecstasies but only for about half an hour before the apparition. "The Virgin punished us," she said, "by appearing later than she had said, and she always severely upbraided us for our behaviour."

Conchita was candid in her letters from 1961 to 1963 to Fr. José Ramon and in the one she wrote to Canon Odriozola in May 1963. She was also candid in her declarations to Dr. Porro in 1967 and to Fr. Pelletier in 1970. One can find in them no sign that she tried to hide the truth, or veil it, or embellish it.

As an adolescent, she kept the candour of her youth, together with the frankness of her sayings. On June 11, 1967, Mother Maria Nieves, headmistress of a girls' high school in Burgos which Conchita attended at the time, described her as "simple, ingenuous, candid, intelligent, normal, well balanced."

Soon after, Conchita, an attractive girl, asked Fr. Alba, whom she trusted, "When boys come to see me about these apparitions, it pleases me very much. Is it a sin?" (personal conversation).

Conchita has loyally admitted she first rebelled against the Lord when she learned from Him that He did not call her to be His spouse (as a nun), and soon after because of her brother Cetuco's last illness. She added immediately, "But I repented."

#### *Mari Loli*

Her childish candour was similar to Conchita's. On December 3, 1961, she wrote to Fr. José Ramon: "I am vexed because I no longer see the Virgin, As you know the Virgin does not lie, I hope to see her again in January . . . I am a little naughty, I don't know if she will take it into account, I don't think so, because I do it without being aware of it."

The care which Conchita and Mari Loli took in saying nothing but the truth came to a climax in 1966, when they entered into their deep doubts. For Conchita this was on August 15. They immediately decided to open their minds about it to their priest, Fr. José Olano, "asking him to let the bishop know and [seeking] an interview with him." For Conchita this interview



took place 15 days later. Both Conchita and Mari Loli felt they had deceived everybody. Their conscience led them at once to undeceive them.

Later, especially during 1966, Mari Loli and Conchita felt a real anguish at the prospect of talking about these apparitions, fearing they might again deceive the visitors who came up to see them and question them. We can therefore see that their will to communicate nothing but the truth was uppermost in their minds.

### *Jacinta*

Her letters, published in Fr. José Ramon's *Mémoires* are also strikingly candid. It is because of her concern for truth that, having come of age, she formally retracted the negations she

*The four visionaries, 1961.*



SERGE ROUSSEAU-VELLONES

had signed as a young girl. She did this through a letter of retraction in March 1971.<sup>1</sup>

### *Mary Cruz*

There is no reason to think that she was less truthful than her companions. Here are two excerpts from her letters:

"Saint Sebastian of Garabandal, December 13, 1961. . . . Only Conchita saw the Virgin on the day of the Immaculate Conception. So that I shall not see her before January 16, as I told you. I would like to see her always, but if she does not grant me this favour, it is because I am not worthy of it. I resign myself to [God's] sacred will."

We see in these words that Mari Cruz gave her correspondent exact details of the facts, and of her inner feelings as well.

She never hid her feelings. She wrote on September 19, 1962: "The fact is that the people do not love me, because I do not see the Blessed Virgin, and I want what she wants. Eighteen days have gone by since I last saw her, but I love her just as much as when I was seeing her."

To those who met her at the age of 17 and 18, she gave an impression of straightforward frankness.

We can see from this short sketch on the visionaries' truthfulness that it was natural to them, and almost complete. If it was sometimes at fault, it happened rarely and on points of little importance when considering their age. The Virgin educated them in that respect, as well as did the good vicar of Barro.

## 40. Welcoming and Serving

"Jesus received [the people]" (Luke 9:11), and we all know His saying: "Whosoever shall receive one such child as this in My name, receives Me. And whosoever shall receive Me, receives not Me, but Him that sent Me" (Mark 9:37).

St. Paul wrote to the Romans: "Receive one another, as Christ also has received you unto the honour of God" (Rom. 15:7).

In four oracles, the prophet Isaiah gave the Messiah the name of "servant." One of them is quoted by St. Matthew (Matt. 12:17-18) and by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 3:13, 26). Jesus said of Himself: "The Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28), and He stooped to the

1. Private letter; J.A. Pelletier, 1971, Year of Significance for Garabandal, *Needles*, Winter 1972, p. 16.

condition of a slave (Phil. 2:7), especially in the washing of feet and in the degrading punishment of the cross.

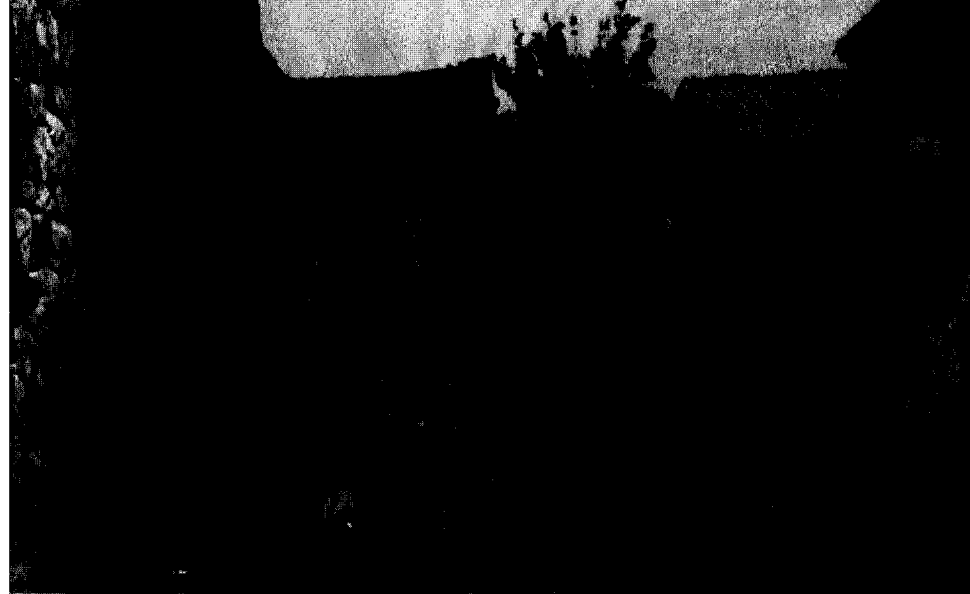
The apostolate is a service, the apostles are "servants" (Rom. 1:1). All Christians are invited by St. Peter to serve one another: "As every man has received the gift, minister the same one to another" (I Pet. 4:10).

Garabandal is a welcoming village, so much so that, according to Dr. Caux, some visitors were convinced without having been present at an ecstasy. One of them has said: "Garabandal is a Bethlehem of a few old houses, in the midst of grandiose mountains . . . Poverty, sobriety, honour, hospitality, affability, simplicity, religiosity, piety, tradition, solitude" (AGSI, p. 91). Everybody knows each other, everybody greets one another. The atmosphere is one of congeniality, of joyous agreement; everyone expresses his sentiments and his ideas (SV, pp. 193, 217). To be truthful, there had been a crisis: the Miracle being late in coming, the parts played by the visionaries being unequal, the families being jealous, there were dissensions, discussions, criticisms, follies, strong expressions of doubt among the villagers and even the parents. This seems to have arisen in May and June 1965, before the apparition of St. Michael on June 18. Conchita, in spite of it all, remained firm in her expectation of this apparition: "The Virgin does not lie" she told the vicar who had become sceptical. The crisis subsided without it being known when or how.

Up to 1970, Conchita's mother's home was open to all visitors except when this was impossible. Aniceta, a wonderful woman, greatly tested by this avalanche of extraordinary and often painful events, greeted everybody with a surprising patience and charity. The same held true with the house of Mari Loli's father, Ceferino Mazon, who owned the one and only small inn. He died on June 4, 1974. Fr. Laffineur, who died on November 28, 1970, noticed the hospitality of Simon, Jacinta's father, and his house at the time of the apparitions was extremely poor. Pilar, Mari Cruz's mother, is always ready to talk cordially with visitors at the door of her small, humble house. This has often been noticed.

The same could be said about all the villagers of Garabandal. Mutual service is a general custom. Thus whenever a woman is sick or has had a baby, her neighbours do her work in the fields or elsewhere.

At the beginning of the apparitions, the *niñas* fled the per-



*Conchita with Joey Lomangino and other visitors to the village. The visionaries were always gracious with the people who came to Garabandal.*

sons who came to see them. Then they said the Virgin told them not to run away and to answer the questions they were asked whenever they could. After that they did not run away. Also at the beginning, the Blessed Virgin expressed the desire to come close to the spectators, and she allowed questions to be asked of her through the visionaries. In short, she pulled down barriers. On other occasions, she answered questions asked in the secret of one's conscience and she resolved personal problems. The Apparition thus encouraged the girls to be attentive to the needs of the pilgrims and the curious who flocked by the thousands to Garabandal.

The Blessed Virgin led them to serve each other. When one's shoe came off, she told another to put it back: "and we would put on each others' shoe," wrote Conchita. This reminds us a little of Jesus' saying: "You ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14).

And in their normal state? Their generosity and their disinterestedness were evident from the beginning, in their sharing of what was given to them, such as sweets, to the point that they kept none for themselves. They were eager to fetch drinking water for other people, and other things for which they were frequently asked. Mari Loli was full of attention to the needs of her grandmother, and Conchita and Mari Cruz for a blind man (Memor, pp. 28-29).

After the time of the apparitions, Conchita talked little but listened much, and to all; pleasant and obliging to everybody, she liked to converse with simple folk, as well as those who were talented, the nobility, or those in a respected social position. All four girls welcomed the people, even when they were tried by their doubts or when visitors were indiscreet, irritating or troublesome, as sometimes happened.

They were always good and understanding, even with the doctors or theologians who examined them.

On June 18, 1965, before the Second Message, Conchita was very gracious with all those who wanted to talk to her, kiss her, communicate messages to her for the Apparition, or entrust her with objects of piety.

Apart from certain differences due to their diverse temperaments, they never swerved from their welcoming attitudes.

#### 41. Welcoming and Serving the Priests

"He that receives you, receives Me; and he that receives Me, receives Him that sent Me" (Matt. 10:40). Jesus was addressing not only His apostles, but also those who would succeed them, bishops and priests.

The Galatians received Paul the apostle "as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus" (Gal. 4:14). The Philippians served him in various ways, sending him either relief (Phil. 4:15-18), or one of them to serve him (2:25, 30).

The attitude of the Galatians and the Philippians was exemplary. Any messenger from God should be received as such.

After their vision of August 14, 1961, the little girls repeated that the Virgin wanted the priests to come, and indeed many came up to the village and witnessed the ecstasies.

The four children showed a predilection toward priests, in their prayers as well as in their way of receiving them. Whether in ecstasy or in normal state, they showed a special respect and consideration for them, even when the latter did not treat them well. Here are a few examples.

A certain village parish priest was tormented by terrible doubts on the validity of his priestly ordination. When he heard about Garabandal, he went to the village dressed as a *hombrin*, a poor little man. This was at the beginning of September 1961. When Jacinta was in ecstasy she gave him no less than three signs, among which were two which he had asked for mentally, that

he really was a priest, one of them being that the visionary should cross him three times. She added a fourth, for which she was not asked, and she told him clearly "yes." The episode is curious and has a touch of naïveté, but the outcome was that this scrupulous priest was fully reassured, and he gave thanks with emotion.

One dark night, already mentioned in Chapter 7, No. 35, Conchita went into ecstasy in her kitchen, while a crowd was outside in front of her house. She went out, took hold of the arms of five apparent laymen, and invited them one after another into her home. Back to normal, she told them laughingly, "You are all priests" (interview with Maximina of May 7, 1974). And so it was.

The vicar of Barro noticed that the girls not only had a great respect but also a real admiration for priests. When in ecstasy

*The four girls are happy with Fr. Valentin.*



they handed them a crucifix to be kissed, they would generally kneel in front of them.

Veneration, consideration, kindness, affection, the attitude of the visionaries never wavered concerning priests. Sometimes it happened that a priest was heard by the visionaries in ecstasy, or that the Apparition repeated what the priest was saying.<sup>2</sup>

The first time that the author conversed with Conchita, was in 1967 in the presence of her mother and another priest, a Mexican. The conversation which took place in the kitchen was simple and cordial and with special hospitality.

In the long message to the Americans of August 7, 1971, Conchita told them, "Let us pray a lot for priests. We ourselves are to blame for many of the priests who are on the road to perdition, because we do not pray enough, because we do not sacrifice ourselves, and also because we should be giving the example to those priests who are consecrated to the Blessed Virgin . . . . We have to help those priests." We can see that, in Conchita's eyes, we are called to sustain the priests through our example and prayer. This is a beautiful and generous thought, especially for a girl who was only 22 at the time.

#### 42. Visiting the Sick

We know that Jesus "went about Galilee . . . healing all manner of sickness . . . among the people" (Matt. 4:23) and that He sent His apostles to cure the sick.

He identified Himself with the sick in two ways:

Firstly, during His Passion, "He took our infirmities, and bore our diseases" (Matt. 8:17, quoting Isaiah 53:4).

Secondly, and more interesting from the point of view of this chapter, He said that whenever we visited a patient, it was Him that we visited (Matt. 25:36).

Although this is somewhat beyond the scope of this chapter, one cannot disregard the astonishing fact that patients have been 'visited' and healed after touching objects kissed by the Virgin, healings which doctors have not been able to explain by natural causes. However, no scientific and canonical investigations have been made on them. They are related in numerous publications.<sup>3</sup>

2. It is true, however, that something similar happened to some laymen (see No. 40).  
3. *¿Que Pasa?*, Nos. 273, 284, 285, 291, 294, 295, 296, 299. See also GSG, pp. 82-84; SM, pp. 176, 213, 218-220; SV, pp. 121-122; *Needles*, Autumn 1975, p. 8, Winter 1976, pp. 19-20.



*Mari Loli and Jacinta leave a house where they presented their crucifixes to be kissed there by a patient in bed.*

The patients present at the village on the day of the Miracle will be cured. It will also be a 'visiting' of the sick.

The Virgin led the girls, in rapture holding little crucifixes to be kissed, into houses where there happened to be sick people. They would stay for a while by them, or by an invalid or an elderly person. They did this for the mother of Daniela Cuenca Gonzalez, for a sick little girl named Beliz who, very surprised, repeated, "Oh! My God!," and once for an old man seated by a chimney (LVP, pp. 164, 239, 291, 309, 350). A foreign woman who had fallen ill in the village also received a visit in the house where she was staying. They often went two or three together on these visits. Conchita does not say anything about it in her *Diary*, as she was not conscious of her movements. "They say," wrote Conchita to Fr. José Ramon on December 13, 1961, "that I went out [on December 8, her feast day] and that I recited the Rosary in the streets and that I visited all the sick and that I gave them the crucifix to be kissed." The witnesses to this event were quite numerous.

The visionaries were thus encouraged to show interest in the patients. In a letter of May 24, 1966, Conchita showed a great love and pity for the patients she met in the hospital of Pamplona where her brother Cetuco had been a patient, and she felt a great compassion for the suffering children. Before leaving the hospital she visited the Blessed Sacrament to recommend to Jesus all the patients she had met. She visited patients in the hospitals of Burgos in 1966 and 1967. She later obtained a diploma enabling her to work as a nurse, firstly in a hospital in Bilbao, and later in New York where it is believed she has received another diploma. Mari Loli has worked as a practical nurse in Massachusetts.

The villagers of Garabandal receive the sick with a marked preference and with a special charity. Two little French girls with poliomyelitis were lodged with much affection, free of charge, though they were thought to be contagious.

#### 43. Forgiving Offences

Jesus closely related divine forgiveness to men's forgiveness.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

"If you forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences; but if you will not forgive men,

neither will your Father forgive you your offences" (Matt. 6:14-15).

Not only did He tell us to forgive, but He also forgave His judges, accusers and executioners: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

The Blessed Virgin told the children to forgive a priest who tried to force them to reveal their secret [the First Message], through a sort of cryptogram he had taught them and that they were to place near the high altar. They said many times, both in rapture and out of it, that they forgave him. They also forgave the doctors who had pinched them and carried out more or less painful tests. Simon, Jacinta's father, heard them saying in ecstasy, "They call us the four simpletons, but we forgive them."

After the second night of the *gritos*, the screams of the frightened children seeing the Chastisement, some people were impelled to beg forgiveness from neighbours or parents. Maximina asked her father to forgive her.

Many years later Jacinta met a certain priest in a street in Santander who asked her forgiveness for certain things he had done or said at the time of the apparitions. She did so wholeheartedly.

#### 44. Atoning Through Penance

Having treated the subject of the penitential practices of the visionaries, it must be treated anew under another aspect, that of the expiation and reparation of the sins of the world.

Christ fully atoned for all the sins of mankind. Nevertheless, as a member of the mystical body, the disciple of Christ can be called on to share in the sacrifice of Calvary. Thus it was for the early martyrs, whose blood, in the words of Tertullian, was a seed of Christians.

St. Paul was fully conscious of it: "I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh for His body, which is the Church" (Col. 1:24).

The four girls had learned, at the beginning of the apparitions, that "the sins of mankind" saddened God and Our Lady and this led them to make reparation.

Later on, but before the locution of the Lord on July 20, 1963, the Virgin told Conchita that the greatest cross had been her Son's, so that Conchita understood that we must imitate Jesus in suffering for Him and for the good of souls.

Two or three years later, the Second Message hints that “sacrifices” atone for other people’s sins, and urges its addressees to practice them; it says “you should make *more* sacrifices,” although the innocent girls were already “sacrificing” themselves, as we have seen in Chapter 7, No. 32.

The Lord clearly reserved for Himself His words to Conchita on February 13, 1966: “I chose you in the world so that you would remain in it, experiencing the many difficulties that you would encounter because of Me. I want all of this for your sanctification and *so that you may offer it for the salvation of the world . . .* Wherever you will be, the cross and suffering will be your lot.” The italicized words are particularly interesting. They shed light on what the Lord told her on July 20, 1963, namely that she would receive the cross she was asking for, and that by her sacrifices and her patience—*aguantes*—she would play a part in bringing about the Miracle, which would convert the whole world.

As already mentioned, the visionaries recited the Rosary outdoors at dawn, kneeling on the rough stones of the *cuadro*. They said, “The Virgin so ordered us for the conversion of sinners.” When they were recommended to say it again later, when it was

*People recited the Rosary kneeling in the snow.*



*Conchita carrying wood.*

a great sacrifice because it was very cold, they declared that “even if they are numerous, there are never enough sacrifices” (DS, p. 103). That was in November 1961. In Holy Week, at the request of the Blessed Virgin, Conchita recited the Rosary at five o’clock in the morning.

These penances, as well as those mentioned in Chapter 7, No. 32, were practiced in a village where the climate is harsh and where it sometimes snows during Holy Week, and were undertaken by children whose innocence was angelical, according to their parish priest. Hence, it can once more be said that they were undertaken “for the conversion of sinners” and the atonement of the sins of the world.

One would not want to fail in the discretion owing to them by saying anything about the present sufferings of the visionaries who are now, in 1979, about 30 years old. Let it be sufficient to say that it is likely that they continue to suffer deeply from their doubts and negations, at least in the case of Conchita and Mari Loli. Such sufferings are moral, of course, but nevertheless crucifying.

#### 45. Work and Duties

We know from the Book of Genesis that man was destined to work six days out of seven: “The Lord God took the man and put him in His garden of delight to cultivate and tend it”(Gen.





2:15). Jesus worked with His hands. Paul worked with his hands (Acts 18:3; I Cor. 4:12). It is honourable to work. Paul sharply rebuked those “who walk disorderly, working not at all” and he urges them to “work with silence” (II Thess. 3:11-12). Otherwise, “if any man will not work, neither let him eat” (II Thess. 3:10).

The Blessed Virgin taught the visionaries that it was not sufficient simply to avoid evil, but that they should also do good, and as we have seen in Chapter 7, No. 32, she frequently told them to be faithful in ordinary life.

We know through Conchita's *Diary*, through the girls' letters, and through the observations of Fr. José Ramon, Fr. Laffineur and numerous other witnesses, that the visionaries were hard workers. During the school year, as soon as they were back home they applied themselves to household work.

They were not lazy during their holidays. They had to collect firewood, they carried the midday meal in heavy baskets—*cuévanos*—strapped on their frail shoulders, to their fathers and brothers who were working three miles or more away.

A few years after the apparitions, Mari Cruz did needlework, and Conchita and Jacinta worked on the hay or in the fields, or washed the linen. There are photographs of them doing this kind of hard work. They also had to accompany donkeys carrying the farm loads. One should not forget that people get up early and retire late at night at Garabandal, as is customary in Spain.

Visitors often saw Mari Loli working so much that she hardly had time to go to the daily Rosary. She was busy in the kitchen, serving at the inn or taking care of her baby sister Lupita. She could be seen putting out the rubbish, or cleaning lambs that her father had slaughtered, always obedient to her father and oblivious of what people thought.

Mari Loli spent some time in Barcelona, where she worked and studied languages and learned to type.

#### 46. On the Way to Perfection

God said to Israel, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2). Jesus took up this teaching as His own in the Sermon on the Mount, which inaugurated His ministry: “Be perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt.

< Jacinta carrying leaves.



5:48). St. Paul echoed it faithfully: "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (I Thess. 4:3).

The Vatican Council has devoted a whole chapter to "The Universal Call to Sanctity in the Church" (LG, Ch. V).

But let us re-open the gospel to look at Jesus' teachings:

1. Christ confirms, albeit briefly, the commandments of God (Matt. 19:17-19).

2. He bestows upon His Church power to "bind," that is, to establish laws (Matt. 18:18). They are easy and very few.

3. He recommends, for those who are called to it, the way of the evangelical counsels, practiced in the Church under the form of religious vows.

4. However, the greatest part of Christ's teachings are made up of pressing and categorical recommendations that are beyond the scope of this book to enumerate. They are the teachings of a new wisdom, which go beyond the Old Testament and the Commandments. They form a charter of perfection and sanctity for all. Here are a few examples:

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

"Enter ye in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and straight is the way that leads to life, and few there are who find it" (Matt. 7:13).

"Every branch that bears fruit [in Me, My Father] will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2).

This wisdom, which goes beyond the Commandments, is the core of Jesus' teaching, what is most proper in it, newer, most explosive. It is 'the evangelical wisdom'. Its impulse is the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14) which "breathes where it will" (John 3:8) and grants freely, to whomsoever wishes it, its varied spiritual gifts or charisms. These gifts are to be used "for the good of men and the building up of the Church, in the freedom of the Holy Spirit" (Vatican II, Ap, No. 3), simple gifts as well as the most extraordinary (Cf I Cor. 12 and LG, No. 12), all intended for the common good.

This pressing invitation to perfection is expressed in the First Message of Garabandal in five very simple words: *antes tenemos que ser buenos*, which means: "first we must lead good lives." The Blessed Virgin insisted in a secondary message communicated and signed by Mari Loli and Jacinta on June 23, 1962, that we "all be very good." The word *bueno* has already been

explained using a note of two translators (see Chapter 6, No. 29). It would be better to use the word which they have used: "perfection."

The visionaries received great lessons in obedience, humility, mortification, and charity. Now nobody pretends that they have become perfect, but these lessons in Christian living were thoroughly understood and accepted by them, just as they understood that these virtues grow in the soil of a genuine piety. We should remember that when they were only 11 and 12, the Virgin, in her second apparition, told them, "Remain with God and with me also," which reminds us of Jesus' words to His disciples on Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday). Conchita, docile and intelligent, understood it well as shown in Chapter 5, No. 18.

She also understood, after her negations in January 1963, that a sure sign that the Virgin and the angel had really appeared to them was that they had brought to their souls "a great desire to love them more than ever with all our heart" (OL, p. 115), "the desire to become better, to love [the Lord] and sanctify ourselves for His love" (letter of Conchita to Fr. Ramon Andreu of November 27, 1964, Mém, p. 156). In short, the words uttered by the angel, or the Virgin, or the Lord, were accompanied by corresponding graces, graces which led them progressively "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

A theologian who observed them closely noticed that the effects produced in them were tranquility of soul, security, an increase in charity and humility, as well as peace and joy (AGSI, p. 322). The same observer estimates that they are simple, peaceful, well-balanced, penitent, obedient, pious, gentle, obliging, and without self-conceit or vainglory (DS, p. 119).

From the beginning of the apparitions, all the four visionaries talked to the Blessed Virgin about their respective vocations, but she smiled without answering. They all wanted to be Carmelites, for to their young and innocent eyes it was the best way to cling to Mary and her Son. Their vocation was, however, to be different, as Conchita learned through the locution of Pamplona, and the others learned through the ordinary course of events.

*Mari Loli* fasted and prayed for God's guidance before getting engaged. It has previously been mentioned how diligent and

helpful she is. The signs tend to show that she leads a deeply Christian life.

Fr. José Ramon, who knows *Mari Cruz* well, wrote in his *Mémoires* (p. 127) that she is very obedient, very virtuous, very humble and very good. Her childhood letters reveal her deep charity and disinterestedness. The same author says she has remained so and there is no reason to think that she would be less so since she married a workman of Aviles.

The case of *Jacinta* seems to be different from that of her companions. There are human beings, such as St. Pius X, who seem to have been hardly touched by the consequences of original sin. It has already been noted in Chapter 8, No. 38 that as a little girl she was once reluctant in obeying her father. It was also wrong of her to repeat certain displeasing words about Conchita after the miracle of the visible Host (G III, p. 136). She was probably sad not to receive Communion from the angel (G III, p. 137). Such are peccadillos. The venerable Fr. Rodrigo, a Jesuit theologian, knew Jacinta, and he told Fr. Laffineur and Fr. Combe that she was "like an angel before the Fall whom God has let down upon earth." Possibly an incident will illus-

trate this assertion by this illustrious theologian. One day when Mr. Bernard L'Huillier was driving her down to Cabezón de la Sal, she did not stop singing and praying for a full hour in order to dominate her car-sickness. Sometimes it was a spontaneous spiritual love song: "Lord, I want to see Your face, it's me who wants to see it, not my father, not my mother, not the teacher, it's me, it's really me who wants to see Your face," and sometimes it was a supplication for someone dead, for a parent, a sinner, priests, her own sins. It made a deep impression on the witness, as of a moment of sublime inspiration and extreme humility. Such were his own words.

We can therefore understand why the Bishop of Santander, His Excellency Juan Antonio del Val Gallo, has again and again manifested a great confidence and a great appreciation toward Jacinta, often conversing with her, giving her public tokens of affection, as when he placed her at his right hand when he was photographed in front of his diocesan pilgrimage at Lourdes.

In the same way as Jacinta, *Conchita* considered she was "nothing, nothing whatever." This is a well-known Carmelite attitude, as is also the one implied in her request to the Lord made in the village church, after communion on July 20, 1963: "I asked Him to give me a cross, for I am living without any suffering other than that of not having a cross. As I was asking this of Jesus He replied: "Yes, I will give you the cross.'" This dialogue might have come from the pen of St. Teresa of Avila.

These great desires of Conchita did not prevent her from being conscious of her shortcomings. On the contrary, she wanted to overcome them and not fall back into them. On November 13, 1965, she came down from the pine grove—where she had seen the Blessed Virgin—filled with a desire to amend herself and love with all her strength the Hearts of Jesus and Mary who love us so much.

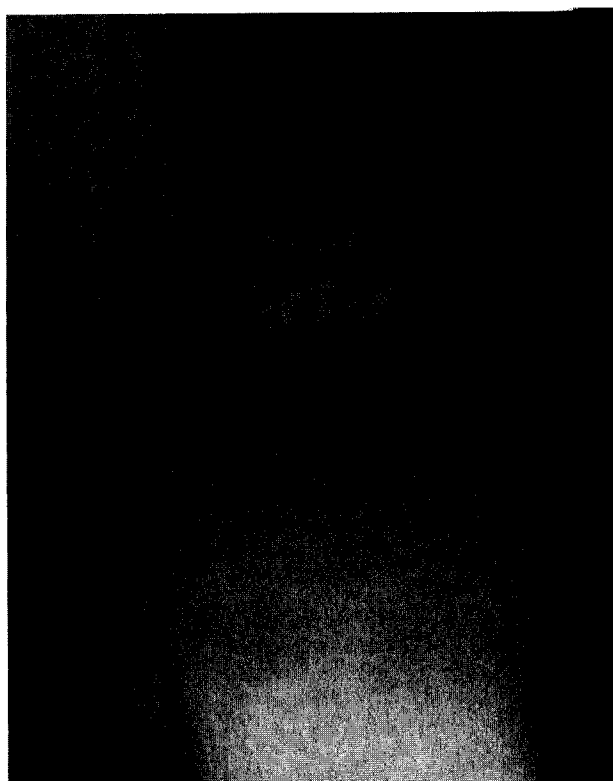
At Burgos, and later, she kept her great desire for perfection and of amending herself.

#### 47. Family and Society

More than ever before it is recognized that man has a social and political existence, both national and international. The Vatican Council recognized this: "Men depend more and more upon each other" (GS, No. 24). Man is groping for a more humane and just society trying fumblingly to realize it.

Man has also, of course, a family existence.

*Jacinta in September, 1961.*



Jesus came to save, not only man as an individual, but also human society. The family is in society what a cell is in a body.

He is really "the Saviour of the World" as recognized by the inhabitants of Sichar (John 4:42).

He sanctified families by coming into their homes, for instance that of Zacheus: "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:9), and by "house" we must understand those who lived in it; the household, the family. The apostles also went in to save "houses": whole families (Acts 11:14; 16:15, 31; 18:8).

Jesus came to lay the foundations of "a city, seated on a mountain" (Matt. 5:14). It is "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22). We long to enter into this holy city, prophetically described in the Apocalypse (Chap. 21) and to receive its citizenship.

San Sebastian de Garabandal is a small village of 80 houses sheltering as many families; 80 houses which have all been visited by the Saviour's Mother, as well as its squares, streets and alleys (interview with Pepé Diez, the village mason, on August 23, 1974), and this is altogether new and remarkable in the history of Marian apparitions. The Blessed Virgin seems to have had a predilection for homes sheltering little children. Pepé Diez's wife, Clementina, had several children, a baby, and was an expectant mother in May 1961. She received visits from Jacinta and Mari Cruz in ecstasy nearly every day for 18 months. Conchita's last ecstasy in the village took place in the only house which had not been visited, that of Domingo Cuenca, as he and his wife told Mr. Ramon Perez in 1971.

In these visits to the village lies the promise of an answer to the longings of the City of mankind, these obscure longings for a salvation which, according to Psalm 127, can only come from the Lord: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain."

Through these repeated "visitations" the whole village came to be blessed by the Virgin Mary.

Several facts emerge significantly.

Garabandal is built on the shoulder of a mountain, in a diocese known in Spain as "The Mountain." Jerusalem is built on a mountain, the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10) as well as the earthly.

< *Most stone carvings seen on the walls of the homes are religious.*

The patron saint of the diocese is the Blessed Virgin under the title of *Nuestra Señora Bien Aparecida en la Montaña*. Our Lady happily appeared in the mountain in 1605, near Laredo.

This small village was beloved and favoured by the “good bishop” Eguino y Trecu, who died on May 8, 1961, and is still noted today by the clergy for its piety and its good morals.

Who is to build the terrestrial City and engrave God’s law upon it? The answer must be the laymen, whose conscience must be formed (GS, Nos. 43 and 46). “Let men, in common agreement, build up the order of temporal realities, and make it more and more perfect. . . . Members of the city, [laymen] have to look for, everywhere and in all things, the justice of the kingdom of God” (Ap, No. 7). It is an obligation for them: “By failing in his terrestrial obligations, the Christian fails in his obligations toward his neighbour, and moreover toward God Himself, and he jeopardizes his eternal salvation” (GS, No. 43).

The visionaries who, in 1979 are now 30 years old, take their modest part in the building of this city, either like Mari Cruz as housewife and mother of four children; or like Jacinta as a home employee, then farmer, then housewife; or like Mari Loli as practical nurse, housewife and mother; or like Conchita as a trained nurse, then housewife and mother of four. From time to time and with discretion Conchita gives interviews which powerfully help in propagating the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mari Loli and Jacinta have both done this as well.

## Chapter 9

# The Fruits of Virtue

### 48. Peace and Joy

Peace and joy are the main fruits of the Spirit, the most often mentioned by Jesus and St. Paul. They are granted to us with the Good News and divine grace.

In his farewell discourse, Jesus openly told his apostles: Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you” (John 14:27) and, in the same discourse: “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled” (John 15:11).

These fruits come with justice, that is to say with godliness, and charity: “The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace” (Gal. 5:22), to which St. Paul adds patience, benevolence, goodness, tolerance, mildness, faith, modesty, continence, chastity. “The kingdom of God . . . is justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).

This peace and this joy do not vanish with suffering, and St. Paul abounded with joy in his tribulation (II Cor. 7:4).

From the beginning of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin, Conchita noticed that “the Blessed Virgin was smiling very much and so was the Infant” and always at the moment she appeared. She even laughed. The three calls that the girls felt, announcing an apparition, were “feelings of joy,” more and more intense from the first to the third.

During the apparitions, the children’s faces very often reflected a heavenly peace and an overflowing joy. Many photographs of the ecstatic girls are eloquent in this respect.

This peace and this joy were contagious. A lawyer of Valencia,



*The visionaries, happy children at the beginning of the apparitions in 1961.*

Don Luis Navas Carrillo, wrote that when they saw Mari Loli in ecstasy on July 21, 1962, he and his companions were “filled with serenity and peace” as if they themselves had been “quite close to Our Lady.”

After their doubts and negations in 1963, Conchita noted in her *Diary* with a remarkable appropriateness and a shrewd sense of spiritual reality that they knew for certain inside themselves that the angel and the Blessed Virgin had appeared to them because they had brought to their souls a deep peace and joy.

All the authors of books on Garabandal have written about this.

When describing the locutions of the Blessed Virgin, Conchita wrote that they brought and left a peace and a joy even greater than if she saw her. She explained that it is “a voice of joy, a voice of happiness, a voice of peace.”

The locution of Pamplona, through which she learned from the Lord that she was not called to live as a nun, brought her both sorrow and joy: sorrow from what the Lord told her, and joy from the Lord speaking to her.

The photographs and films of the girls in normal state show them quiet and joyous, even gay and playful.

Theologians who have been acquainted with them noticed with interest their peace and their joy. They took good note of it, especially the author of the *Memorandum* (p. 14), Fr. Julio Porro Cardenoso and Fr. Materne Laffineur.

This was also noticed by visitors who met the visionaries between 1967 and 1970 despite their going through the trial of deep doubts. Conchita was radiant with a peace and a felicity which struck all those who met her. A French Dominican who observed her attentively, trying his utmost to discern her innermost spirit, told himself that, offhand, the two poles of her personality were “felicity and communication.” Thinking it over ten minutes later, he told himself: “Well, this is just the opposite of Satan.”

The three other visionaries were also joyous and at peace, with the normal differences one would expect from the variety of their temperaments; for example, Jacinta is generally considered to be much more shy than her companions.

## Chapter 10

# The Communication of Salvation

### 49. Love of All Men

St. Matthew mentions three times that Jesus had compassion for the crowds (9:36; 14:14; 15:32). He gave His blood and His life for a multitude (Mark 10:45; 14:24). The Good Shepherd gives His life, not only for the sheep of Israel but also for other sheep of another fold (John 10:11, 16).

The walls separating men have been pulled down by Christ: we are all one in Him (Gal. 3:28).

Those who have been saved—“the servants of God”—form “a great multitude which no man can number” (Rev. 7:3, 9).

Therefore the layman will learn to love in God the world and all men (Vatican II, Ap, No. 29).

Except at the beginning, the spectators played a part in the apparitions of Garabandal. The young girls spoke to them, by name if they were known, found them out—guided by the Apparition—touched them, put chains of objects kissed by the Virgin around their necks, had them recite the Rosary (the Apparition asking them to talk louder for that purpose). They crossed the people, and people asked questions of the Apparition, sometimes mentally, and the Virgin answered through the *niñas*. The visionaries thus learned to satisfy the demands that were made of them thousands of times (DS, p. 165).

The Blessed Virgin never talked to the children of their personal matters, and never answered questions which concerned them personally. On the other hand she gave messages to other people. Conchita told Fr. Pelletier this in 1970 and, four years earlier, to Mother Maria Nieves: “When we spoke of things too

personal, she didn't answer us; she was interested in other people."

"She gave the impression of casting her eyes more upon the world at large than upon you alone," Conchita told Señora Gallardo, "and in what a way! No one could look like that."

The two formal Messages are meant for us all: "As my message of October 18 [1961] has not been complied with and has not been made known *to the world*, I am advising you that this is the last one . . . I love you very much and do not want your condemnation." In this context, the word "you" refers to all men. The Second Message was universal in its very wording. And the First? On September 8, 1961, before it was revealed, Dr. Porro had the young visionaries ask if it was for the whole world or only for Spain. The answer was "for the whole world." This answer was clearly heard by everyone present. It was given by Mari Cruz.

In their ecstatic prayers, the children recommended all sorts of people. On September 5, 1962, Mari Loli prayed for Cath-

*The day of the First Message, October 18, 1961.*



erine's parents, one a Jew, the other a Protestant, but neither practicing; for an unbeliever; for a Protestant named Barbara; and for a very sick person. On the 8th, she or Conchita prayed eagerly for a blind child. A certain Alfonso suffering from a mental imbalance happened to be at the village. Everybody knew his condition. This did not prevent the visionaries from going to his bedside, crossing his pillow, then giving him the crucifix to be kissed several times. Back to normal state, Conchita was asked why she had so often given him the crucifix to be kissed. She answered, "The Virgin told me, 'You despise him, but I love him.'" What a lesson!

In an interview in 1975, Conchita relates this story. "One day there were in the village two men, one mentally unbalanced, the other a Protestant. They asked me to allow them to kiss my crucifix when I next saw Our Lady. I was quite concerned about this as in my mind I didn't think they should kiss the crucifix. When Our Lady appeared to me, I told her about their request and how I felt about it. She looked at them and said, 'They are all my children.' After the ecstasy they came over to me and thanked me for having given them the crucifix to kiss. I did not do this on my own; it was Our Lady who gave them the crucifix. I do not remember giving it to them."

Our Lady showed Conchita that her heart was wide open to all mankind when she told her: "I love you *all—os quiero*—very much and I desire your—*vuestra*—salvation and your reunion—*reuniros*—here in heaven" (November 13, 1965; OL, p. 187). She also told Conchita that she held all her children under her mantle.

They were told to say the Rosary daily for sinners, and the Blessed Virgin specified to Mari Loli on October 24, 1965, that it was for the sinners of the whole world. On another occasion, when giving an answer to a priest, she explained that sinners are also her sons. After such words, what confidence we may now have in the universal motherhood of Jesus' mother! And in the universal fatherhood of Jesus' Father!

On the evening of September 8, 1961, Dr. Porro had one of the visionaries ask the Apparition: "What sacrifice does she ask mainly from Spain?" "That she help other nations to be good." This "being good" is brought to fruition by the enactment of just laws and treaties, so that justice reigns in society between ethnic groups, professions and corporations, the rich and the poor, and whenever there is mutual help and full solidarity within a nation and throughout the world. In 1962 Conchita asked the



Virgin whether a war was about to break out. The answer was: "God does not want war between His children." We see that no nation falls beyond the scope of her motherly love. The Blessed Virgin reminded us of a few evangelical principles which should preside over international relations: mutual service, good example and universal brotherhood in God.

In our time of glaring injustice in economic affairs and of very grave breaches of human rights, one would have much to say, but that would go beyond the scope of this book.

Faith is not in itself sufficient. Good works are also needed. On March 11, 1962, Our Lady said that she had a predilection for Spain because of her faith, but that other nations made more sacrifices.

This concern of heaven for nations was a concern also for languages, which are after all the main vehicles of our varied cultures.

The Virgin taught them sentences in French, in Latin, and in German. When Fr. Luis spoke to them after his death, he taught them to pray in Greek and sing in French, and to say some German and English words. The prayer in Greek was the first part of the Hail Mary. Conchita did not forget it and recited it to Fr. Combe on October 17, 1968.

These lessons in languages are new in the history of Marian apparitions. We can assume that they invite us to respect the various cultural worlds, as well as the various Churches. Latin is after all the language of the Latin Church, and Greek the language not only of the New Testament but of the Greek Church, still separated from Rome.

Whatever the worth of these hypotheses, Conchita was warned that the Messages, the Warning and the Miracle are meant for the good of the whole world.

This has already been said of the Messages.

The Warning is meant to provoke our amendment, the amendment of many, perhaps all, as it will be seen and perceived in the whole world.

The Miracle will be "extremely great, in keeping with the needs of the world." It will take place "to convert the whole world" as the Lord told Conchita in the locution of July 20, 1963.

In the first year of the apparitions, to be exact on December 8, 1961, Conchita was heard saying in ecstasy: "Oh! the Pope is greatly affected by the problems of the world?" Thus the Blessed

Virgin opened Conchita's heart very early to the desire for the salvation of the world. Four years later the Lord addressed Conchita on the same topic, forcefully and three times, in the locution of Pamplona already quoted in Chapter 8, No. 44:

"I chose you in the world so that you would remain in it . . . I want all of this for your sanctification and so that you may offer it for the salvation of the world. You must talk to the world about Mary . . . Consider what you have to do . . . for the world, so that people may accomplish My divine will."

Let us remember that these divine interventions in our twentieth century are inspired by God's love for all men, God wanting to save mankind from the chastisement it deserves.

How will the four girls love everybody?

Mari Cruz welcomes all visitors. Mari Loli and Jacinta pray with fervor and steadfastly for sinners.

We are better informed on the way Conchita has responded to Our Lady's and Our Lord's callings to love everybody. Here are some of the facts in chronological order.

During her locution of the Lord on July 20, 1963, she showed concern about the conversion of Russia. We know the Lord's answer was affirmative. Conchita stressed in October 1968 that it would take place as a consequence of the Miracle.

The last page of what has already been published of her *Diary* (of the latter half of 1963) shows as well her humility, her faith, and her love for mankind: "Jesus will give me the cross to purify me, and through my crosses [He] will permit me to do something for the world with the help of God, for by myself I can do nothing."

This love of Conchita for mankind reaches all—atheists and the ungrateful as well as others: "We must realize that . . . our belief [in the apparitions] is a grace that comes from Our Lord. We should pray hard for our brothers who do not know God. I believe this is Our Lady's wish. We should also pray for those who receive graces from God and the Blessed Virgin and who do not express their gratitude for them" (OL, pp. 188-189).

On November 17, 1966, at a time when it was feared that a war might break out, she told Mother Maria Nieves Garcia: "We should pray a lot [that a war doesn't break out], shouldn't we?"

On May 8, 1967, Conchita learned from Mother Nieves of the accidental death of His Excellency Vicente Puchol Montis, the Bishop who had interrogated her at Pamplona, who had explained to her in his own way her "calls" and other extraordinary spir-

itual favours, and who later published her negations. She was deeply touched and burst into tears. "What happened grieves me very much. He was very good, and young. The poor man! He did everything meaning well, didn't he?" We should note the charitable interpretation of what "he did."

## 50. The Apostolate

The twelve are not the only ones in the New Testament to be called apostles. We must of course add Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:13) but also others, in a wider sense.

A specially notable fact is that a man and a woman, probably husband and wife, by name Andronicus and Junias, were said by St. Paul to be "of note among the apostles" (Rom. 16:7). The word is used, here and elsewhere, in the wider sense just mentioned, that of a "missionary of the gospel."<sup>1</sup>

It is a charism, a spiritual gift among others, granted for the benefit of the Church (Cf Eph. 4:11).

There is an analogy between the relations of St. Paul with his collaborators and the relations of the Blessed Virgin with the visionaries. The latter were also collaborators, but often, especially at the beginning, mere instruments in her hands.

They collaborated in the Virgin's apostolate by giving the crucifix to be kissed by thousands of persons, which was the occasion of perhaps as many acts of faith, loving of Christ, repentance, and sometimes of deep conversion such as that of a person from Madrid who wrote a long letter about it to the vicar of Barro on June 2, 1962, (AGSI, p. 72). A precise example is that of Don Luis Navas who had observed the girls' ecstasies. He left Garabandal on July 23, 1962. "I felt a keen desire," he wrote, "to be really good, not just half way, and to amend my bluntness, my stubbornness, my obstinacy . . . While wanting to defend the truth, I have not always served charity."

The Blessed Virgin had the crucifix presented to Protestants to be kissed by them. This happened on September 5, 1962, when Mari Loli gave the crucifix to be kissed at great length by an Englishwoman, a Protestant, who later told Fr. Valentin, the village priest, that she was disposed to become a Catholic.

Our Lady once told one of the young visionaries, who was saying her Rosary at the church door, to recite it aloud so that the faithful might be able to answer.

1. Note of the Bible of Jerusalem on Rom. 1:1.



*Conchita being interviewed by Fr. Joseph Pelletier in March, 1978.*

The visionaries declared that the Virgin Mary said that she also wanted to see unbelievers come.

From the beginning of the apparitions the visionaries entered progressively into communion with the apostolic desires of the Virgin. Their great desire was that all should believe and be saved. If they wished people to come, such was their reason. They attributed to their visions of the Virgin their great desire to love Jesus and Mary, and to speak about them to the people. That is why they recited the Rosary outdoors and at dawn, "that everybody may believe" as Jacinta wrote.

Fr. Laffineur devoted the whole of Chapter XLI of *Star on the Mountain* to Conchita's apostolate. Some time having elapsed, and thanks to new information, the subject may now be treated at greater length.

It is very clear that Conchita has a charism for the lay apostolate. Her apostolate is manifold.

This is noticeable in her spiritual radiance, perceptible even when she keeps silent. It is difficult to be precise about this. It

is a reality which must be experienced and about which words are difficult to find. A visitor in July 1970 wrote down in his notebook: "very great welcome, very great kindness, a radiating personality."

It is noticeable in her listening, for she does not talk much. She is attentive to what she is told, and answers meekly and amiably.

It is noticeable in her sayings. On September 2, 1970, an Englishwoman was asking her how to say the Rosary. Through an interpreter she answered, quick as lightning, "with devotion and as addressed to a person."

Among the quantities of personal notes she has written, seven have been selected.

Very early on, Conchita would simply copy the First Message for those who came to the village. She wanted people to receive it in earnest. There is a photostatic copy of one of these personal messages. She added candidly, childishly 'theeing' and 'thouing': "Wilt thou do it, Sir? I do not know thy name. Do it, and get others to do it. Goodbye. Conchita."

She walked one day into the home of a woman named Romanuca and she saw her grandson reading love stories. She took one of them and wrote on its front page:

+

"Jesus has not made your eyes for reading these books because they can lead you on the way to perdition. Conchita"

She wrote other similar warnings on the front pages of two other novels of the kind.

On a 16-year-old girl's book she wrote:

"I join with affection my prayers to yours, asking God that He give you the strength to quit whatever does not lead us to Jesus and Mary. In our reading and in everything, let us look for a greater perfection of our soul, while living for God.

"Pray for me, that I be totally given to what God and the Virgin want of me. Conchita"

On the back of a holy card she wrote:

"Rather die than sin or cause my neighbour to sin. Conchita"

The translator of a book on Garabandal was presenting a copy to her on August 29, 1969. After showing her joy, she wrote down a dedication:

"May the Virgin, through these books, draw us closer and closer to herself.

"Pray for me.

Conchita"

On August 6, 1970 she wrote to an unknown woman:

"Let whoever looks at me, see you. Conchita." (That is to say, let whoever looks at me, Conchita, or the addressee, see the Virgin as by transference.)

On September 2, 1970, she wrote to a 20-year-old girl:

"Your eternal happiness consists in taking the Virgin throughout your life as a model and friend. Call often upon her. Pray for me. Conchita."

She has given messages to groups of friends of Garabandal who broadcast the Messages of the Blessed Virgin. From 1970 onwards, in spite of her doubts and the sufferings they caused her, her Marian apostolate has developed. In a letter to young Frenchmen dated August 24, 1970, and already quoted, she told them that the Virgin asked from them a great spirit of penance, sacrifice and prayer. "It is in the Blessed Sacrament that you will find enough strength to begin the life which the Blessed Virgin constantly demands of you. Visit the Blessed Sacrament frequently. Empty your heart of the worldly things that prevent you from listening to God."

On January 20, 1971, she spontaneously wrote a letter, meaning it to be revealed, and which she entrusted to Fr. Combe: "We should sacrifice ourselves, be faithful in prayer and in the recitation of the holy Rosary, and visit the Blessed Sacrament often. Each day, withdraw from yourself and the world so that you may be alone with God. He wants to speak to you and tell you the path you should follow."

These sayings have a ring of firmness and vigour and go against a prevailing trend of our time.

On August 7, 1971, she allowed a group of Americans to record on tape a message lasting several minutes, from which are extracted a few lines:

"Pray all the time. Each day and every moment. Prayer consists in praising God continually, in offering God everything that comes up at each moment, including all the disagreeable things which we should present to Him with love . . . . The easiest way by far to walk with God, to be with God, to think about God, to go to God, is to ask this of the Blessed Virgin . . . who

is our mother . . . the Blessed Virgin who asked God to come here to Garabandal."

Other parts of this long message reveal the spiritual development of this 22-year-old girl, who was improvising it.

In short, by word of mouth, through private or public letters, inscriptions in books or on pious images, and tape-recordings, Conchita has for years been practicing a varied, firm, and encouraging apostolate, while remaining humble. She adapted herself to each case, each need, each situation.

Mari Loli has followed suit, through verbal messages, for example telling a girl of her own age: "The Messages are good, we must put them into practice." Or writing to an American on March 25, 1965: "We must love each other, the white the black and the black the white, as we are all brothers." She did this also by supporting the Marian apostolate of a resident of Brockton, Massachusetts, and writing a letter "to all those who love the Blessed Virgin" in which she tells us: "In my humble prayers I will pray that [this] apostolate will reach all souls so that they will feel the desire to love the Blessed Virgin and their neighbour more" (*The Vigil*, January-February-March 1972 and *Needles*, Spring 1972, p. 21).

Both Mari Loli and Jacinta have given interesting interviews to *Needles* and they have been published in that periodical.

Returning to Conchita, we read that in 1971 she recommended to the friends of Garabandal "to rely entirely nowadays on the Holy Spirit" (AGSI, p.165). On February 7, 1974, she gave an interview which was especially interesting not only for its content but for the insight it gives on her personality, the sureness of her conscience, and her human and spiritual maturity. Although the Blessed Virgin does not seem to have told her anything about it, she recommended to "Our Lady's workers" that they read the Bible "every day" (*Needles*, Spring 1974, p. 17).

### *In Conclusion*

The message of Garabandal entrusted to four young peasant girls in an isolated mountain hamlet of northwest Spain is now reaching to all corners of the globe. In more than 50 countries on five continents people have been made aware of Our Blessed Mother's message of hope, justice and love.

### ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AGSI *Las Apariciones de Garabandal ¿Sin Interés?*, José Maria de Dios, Editorial Círculo, Zaragoza, Spain, 1972.
- AM *Apocalypse Mariale*, Guy Le Rumeur, Argenton L'Eglise, France, 1970
- AP *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree of Second Vatican Council.
- AV *L'Avertissement de Notre Dame du Carmel*, A. Combe, Jassans-Rottier, France.
- DPG *Dieu a Parlé à Garabandal*, Joseph A. Pelletier, A.A., A. Combe.
- DS *Dios en la Sombra*, José Maria de Dios, Editorial Círculo.
- EA *Estigmatizados y Apariciones*, Francisco Sanchez-Ventura y Pascual, Editorial Círculo, 1961.
- G I, G II, GIII *Se Fué con Prisas a la Montaña*, Dr. Gobelas, Books I, II, III, Editorial Círculo, 1972-1974.
- Gar 67 *Garabandal 67*, A. M. de Santiago, Editorial Círculo, 1967.
- GG *Se Fué con Prisas a la Montaña*, Eusebio Garcia de Pesquera, Pamplona, Spain, 1979.
- GP *El Gran Portento de Garabandal*, José Maria de Dios, Editorial Círculo, 1969.
- GS *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution of Second Vatican Council.
- GSG *God Speaks at Garabandal*, Joseph A. Pelletier, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1970.
- J *Journal de Conchita*, Nouvelles Editions Latines, Paris, France, 1967.
- LG *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution of Second Vatican Council.
- LVP *Garabandal, Le Village Parle*, Ramon Pérez, Editions Résiac, Montsurs, France, 1977 (manuscript pages quoted).
- Mém *Mémoires d'un Curé de Campagne Espagnol*, José Ramon Garcia de la Riva, A. Combe, 1972.
- Memor *Memorandum on the Subject of the Occurrences in the Village of Garabandal*, theologian and witness who wishes to remain anonymous, 1961.
- Needles *NEEDLES Magazine*, now titled GARABANDAL (see next page).
- Neg *Las Negaciones de Garabandal*, Francisco Sanchez-Ventura y Pascual, Editorial Círculo, 1969.
- OL *Our Lady Comes to Garabandal*, Joseph A. Pelletier, 1971.
- Por Qué *Por Qué* (a Spanish weekly), Barcelona, Spain.
- Presb *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, Decree of Second Vatican Council.
- QP *¿Qué Pasa?* (a Spanish weekly), Madrid, Spain.
- SM *Star on the Mountain*, M. Laffineur and M. Th. Le Pelletier, Newtonville, New York, 1968.
- SV *El Interrogante de Garabandal, Las Apariciones No Son un Mito*, Francisco Sanchez-Ventura y Pascual, Editorial Círculo, 1965.
- The Vigil *The Vigil*, St. Michael's Garabandal Center for Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 889 Palo Verde Avenue, Pasadena, California 91104, U.S.A.

## OTHER BOOKS ON GARABANDAL AVAILABLE FROM THE WORKERS OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL

*Garabandal—The Village Speaks* by Ramon Perez.

If you really want to know what happened at Garabandal, this book is a must. A rare look behind the scenes. Chock-full of eyewitness accounts not found in any other book. One of the real classics. 59 photographs. Also available in Spanish entitled, *Garabandal—El Pueblo Habla*.

*The Apparitions of Garabandal* by F. Sanchez Ventura y Pascual.

An excellent account of the Garabandal events by an eyewitness who was present during numerous ecstasies. The first book ever written on the subject.

*Star on the Mountain* by Father Materne Laffineur.

The author covers the period from 1961 to 1967. There is much valuable information in this personal testimony of a witness to the events.

*Our Lady Comes to Garabandal* by Father Joseph Pelletier.

Conchita's entire *Diary* and related documents with valuable commentary by Father Pelletier. The whole story up to August 1971.

*Miracle at Garabandal* by Harry Daley.

Includes detailed accounts of the apparitions by Conchita herself, prophecy of the crisis in the Church, the great prophecies, and the Padre Pio "connection" (real, not a pious fable).

*Diario de Conchita de Garabandal* (Conchita's Diary) in Spanish.

*Mi Tortent Garabandalban?* (What Happened at Garabandal?)  
in Hungarian.

*GARABANDAL Magazine*. Published quarterly by The Workers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Box 606, Lindenhurst, New York 11757-0606. The official publication of the worldwide apostolate dedicated to spreading Our Lady's Messages given at Garabandal. Covers past, present and future happenings related to the visions and dialogues at Garabandal.

For a complete listing of all available materials on Garabandal  
write to:

The Workers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel  
P. O. Box 606, Lindenhurst, New York 11757-0606  
U.S.A.

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