

“There Is Your Mother”

Spiritual Poison and a Heavenly Antidote

Marion devotion in the Church was greatly shaken and was even uprooted from many hearts as an unforeseen and unwanted by-product of Vatican Council II. This was certainly not the desire or intention of the great Marian Pope, John XXIII. When he called the Council, he made a pilgrimage to Loretto to place it under Our Lady's special protection. Every page of his spiritual diary, *Journal of a Soul*, breathes Mary. No book of our time bears greater personal witness to devotion to the rosary than this one.

As a result of this rejection of Mary, for which there is no rational human explanation, many of us have to discover her again. Indeed, it is imperative that we rediscover her. Her role in the Church, in the mystical body of her divine Son, is so vital that it cannot be ignored or disregarded without us all suffering great loss.

That, in great part, is what Garabandal is about: finding Mary again, restoring her to her God given place in our lives and in the Church. God foresaw all that would happen after Vatican II concerning Mary. He knew the poison this would be for us. So he gave us an antidote before the poisoning of minds and hearts took place. The antidote was Garabandal. It was there, standing ready for use, when the poison was poured out in so many insidious ways.

A Witness to God's Love and Mary's Motherly Concern

People say, “We don't need Garabandal, we have Lourdes and Fátima.” By saying this, they show they do not understand the fundamental reality behind these events. Such events are a witness, a witness to God's love for his People and to Mary's motherly concern for her children. We need a manifestation of heaven's lively interest in us in times of crisis, and who could

deny that we are in a crisis. Fátima came at a time of crisis, in 1917, during World War I and at the very moment when Communism was making its first solid foothold in a country.

The testimony of the event itself, of the happening represented by the apparitions, the evidence of the divine intervention, is every bit as important a message as the verbal message given at a place like Lourdes, Fátima and Garabandal. Indeed, the spoken message in its essential parts is never more than a reminder of the gospel, of things that we already know or should know. The predictions sometimes contained in such heavenly messages are always very secondary.

So, although it may seem to some that the Church is falling apart, it is not; and that God is dead, he is not. He is very much alive and concerned about his Church. He came to Garabandal to speak to us about it. One thing that he wants us to know is that Mary has not suddenly been eliminated from his plan for us. He knows how stiff-necked we are and how slow to understand. He sent Mary two thousand times to speak to us in his name at Garabandal. He loves us. He wanted to be sure we would get this message about his love for us and that Mary is our mother.

The Marian Message of Garabandal

The Garabandal message is mainly a Marian message. Yet mention of Mary was not included explicitly in what Our Lady herself called the "messages," in 1961 and 1965. The Marian part of the message emphasizes several things: devotion to Mary based on her spiritual motherhood, and then the two major traditional forms of devotion to her, the brown scapular and the rosary. Mary's motherhood was taught in words, events and things. The choice of the feast of the Visitation for her first apparition, and the kissing of objects during her final apparition were instances of this teaching through events and things.

God Speaks through the Choice of His Messenger

Mary is our Mother. This is the first message of Garabandal, expressed subtly through God's choice of Mary as his principal messenger. God speaks powerfully to his People through his actions. So it was in Old Testament times. God spoke to his People then of his love and protection through his mighty

works: the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the column of fire, the manna, and the water flowing from the rock in the desert, etc. So, too, it was during Christ's lifetime. Jesus' actions and miracles had a symbolic meaning, a lesson to impart to us, from his virginal conception and birth in a manger through the changing of water into wine at Cana to the flowing of water and blood from his side on the cross. And, so also it happens in the Church. God speaks to his People through his works, particularly through special interventions in history. In recent times, he spoke to us at Lourdes and at Fátima. And now in our own day, he speaks to us at Garabandal. The primary message at all three places was that of Mary's continuing role as mother of his People, of the Church. He sent her to remind us of her special role under his Son, in the redemption of mankind.

He knew men would quickly forget Pope John who had such outstanding love for her and who prayed the rosary every day with great confidence. He knew that the discussion about Mary at Vatican II would be exploited by the evil one, the father of lies, the great deceiver and that he would work great harm. He knew that the outstanding chapter on Mary in *The Constitution on the Church*, with its admirable summary of the traditional Marian doctrine, would be read and preached by few. So God took steps, using his own powerful methods to assure us that she is no less our mother today than at the Annunciation when she freely and gladly gave the consent which began our salvation, or when Christ proclaimed her our mother from the cross. He sent her to Garabandal in 1961, a year before the Council. He sent her a surprising number of times. He surrounded her visits with an almost unbelievable abundance of extraordinary phenomena, to attract our attention and to prove that his hand was working there.

Mary is a Stumbling Block for the Proud

He was telling us the same simple message as before: Mary is your mother, as my Son told you on Calvary. You need her help. I have given her a special role, fully dependent upon my Son, in the working out of my redemptive plan. I want you to recognize my will in her regard and to acknowledge the exceptional role I have freely chosen to confide to her, for your sake.

I am not pleased when men, in the pride of the hearts, refuse to accept my plan; when they reject my designs simply because these do not suit their thinking. When will they learn and humbly acknowledge that my ways are not theirs? "The Lord knows how empty are the thoughts of the wise" (I Cor 3:20).

The wise men of this world will never understand Mary. She will always be a stumbling block to their pride, a folly to them in their self-complacent wisdom. Only the meek and humble of heart will believe and accept the amazing and exalted position God wants Mary to have.

The Girls Have Given Us an Example

"The girls have given us an example of how we must act with the Blessed Virgin." This statement made by Father Luis Mariá Andréu shortly after he had been privileged to share in one of the Garabandal apparitions merits our attention. The attitude and conduct of the four girls of Garabandal toward Our Lady during their numerous ecstasies offer a splendid model for us to follow in our relationship with Mary, Our Mother. We have much to learn from them in this matter.

Catholic devotion to Mary has always been characterized by much warmth and simplicity. Like so many things, this has been under attack in our day. Those who look at man and God in an abstract way with the cold light of reason will always have trouble in understanding the role of tender love and childlike simplicity in devotional life. Yet these attitudes are clearly in keeping with the divine dispensation of salvation which utilizes all the resources of man, his heart and his emotions as well as his mind and his will. Scripture itself bears witness to their legitimacy.

Even in the Old Testament, God's love for us is described in terms of the tenderness of a mother's love for her young.

As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms,
and fondled on her lap;
As a mother comforts her son,
so will I comfort you. (Is 66:12-13.)

The gospel portrays a Christ whose heart is fully human and

filled with the most tender human emotions, a Christ who weeps and sobs at the death of his beloved friend Lazarus, a Christ who fondles children and tells us that we must be like them.

At Garabandal, Mary reveals herself as a tenderly loving mother in her dealings with the four girls. She visits them frequently, some two thousand times, during a period of a year and a half, July 2, 1961, to January 20, 1963. (Our Lady appeared only four times during the second phase of the Garabandal event which went from April 1963 to November 13, 1965.) She even sends them advance notices of her coming, through three *llamadas* or calls.

Our Lady delights in listening to their chatter "about their work in the fields, their putting hay in stacks and getting bronzed by the sun." She encourages them in this and shows her pleasure by "laughing as they tell her all these things." She is very patient with them as they ask naive questions, for example, about heaven and the life that goes on there.

She allows them to take and hold the Infant Jesus in their arms and to play with him, to take in their hands the crown of small gold stars that she wears.

In a gentle way she prods them to comply with the requests she has made in her message: "Why do you not go more often to visit my Son in the tabernacle? He waits for you there day and night." Occasionally, she takes sterner measures as when she shows her displeasure with their failure to comply with her frequent requests for modesty in dress by taking them in ecstasy to their homes and making them change their clothes as she looks on.

The tenderness of her motherly love reaches its peak at the conclusion of the apparitions when she often kisses them good-bye.

In all this she was trying to tell each and every one of us: I am your mother. There are no barriers between you and me. As your mother, I am inviting you to come to me with great simplicity. I want to hear about your needs, about those you love. I want to be a mother to you in the fullest sense of the word. But you must come to me first before I can truly act as a mother toward you.

"The girls have given us an example of how we must act with the Blessed Virgin." How true these words of Father Luis are.

How important it is that we ponder them in our heart, asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten us and to help us act in faith on the understanding he will gladly provide.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel—The Scapular

At Lourdes, Our Lady appeared eighteen times to little Bernadette in 1858. Her first apparition was on February 11 and the last one was on July 16, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. That Our Lady chose to end her visits at Lourdes on that day is not without significance. It was a silent but obvious preaching of the scapular, just as her preaching of the rosary had been silent but eloquent. Our Lady did not say a word to Bernadette during this final appearance. But she did give a message to her and to us by choosing the feast of the scapular for her last visit. This silent message was like a last testament, something that she kept until the very end because she wanted to impress us with its importance. The scapular is the symbol of Mary's love and protection and it summarized the whole purpose of her many appearances at Lourdes. Her last visit on the feast of Mount Carmel was an invitation to wear the scapular as a symbol of our placing ourselves under her protection.

At Fatima, the scapular was kept until the end also. It was the very last thing that Our Lady recommended at the conclusion of her final apparition on October 13, 1917. As the people stared in amazement at the promised miracle, the dance of the sun, Lúcia witnessed a series of tableaux close to the base of the sun. The last of these was an apparition of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Our Lady had twice promised the children that she would come as Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel

At Garabandal, even greater prominence was given to the scapular. It is the very title by which Our Lady chose to identify herself. On July 1, 1961, the archangel Michael, who until then had been the only one to appear at Garabandal, said to the four girls: “. . . Tomorrow, Sunday, the Virgin Mary will appear to you as Our Lady of Mount Carmel.” She did in fact appear on July 2, feast of the Visitation, “with the scapular on the right wrist.” It was a brown scapular and very large. In her subse-

quent apparitions the Blessed Virgin always appeared with the scapular hanging from her wrist.

Although the special grace of the brown scapular of Mount Carmel is Mary's assurance to the wearer of dying in God's friendship, innumerable cures, conversions and other graces of a spiritual nature have been obtained through this sacramental. The nineteenth century French Jesuit, Blessed Claude de la Colombière, has well summarized the long history of this particularly efficacious sacramental when he said: "No devotion has been confirmed with miracles more numerous and more authentic."

Invitation to Wear the Scapular

In assuming the title of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at Garabandal, and by holding out the scapular to us, as it were, by carrying it continually on her wrist, the Blessed Virgin was telling us that it still pleases her that we wear her mantle and that she will continue to bless and protect in a special way those who do this with faith and confidence. Our Lady even seemed to be telling us something by the very size of the scapular she carried. It was unusually large, similar in size to the maniple that the priest formerly wore at Mass over his left arm. It was as though the Blessed Virgin wanted to be sure that we would not fail to notice the scapular, as though she was trying to impress us in this concrete way with the importance she attaches to it.

The scapular is the symbol of Mary's mantle of protection, that is, her motherly love. It is with this understanding that it should be considered and worn. When we put on scapular, we deliberately and willfully accept Mary as our mother and ask her to watch over us as a mother watches over her child. Wearing it is an act of consecration to her. Those who do so should consider themselves as especially consecrated to Mary. When we wear the scapular with these sentiments, Mary takes us into her heart in a very special way and fully exercises her motherly love over us, interceding for us and watching over us with a special degree of tenderness and care.

The Visitation, Our Lady's First Apparition

The same message of motherly love and concern flows from

the selection of the day on which Our Lady first appeared at Garabandal, July 2,¹ feast of the Visitation. God who sent Mary was telling us by this that she comes to visit and help us her children in need just as she had visited and helped her cousin Elizabeth, six months with child. We need her Son Jesus Christ, and she came to lead us back to him. She once took Jesus to Elizabeth and he sanctified John in her womb. It is quite significant that Mary bore the infant Jesus in her arms when she first appeared at Garabandal.

The world has abandoned Jesus and needs to find him again. The loneliness, fear, and anxiety of men have led them to seek escape in drink, drugs and sex. This comes from losing Jesus. Mary comes to Garabandal to deliver her children from all these modern plagues. She draws them back to the one who destroyed all these ills on the cross. She brings them to Jesus who saves men from their sins and heals the wounds caused by their sins.

To find Jesus and be saved by him we must believe in him. We need faith and Mary is the model of faith. The virtue Elizabeth, "filled with the Holy Spirit," proclaimed and extolled in Our Lady was her faith. Mary believed the humanly incredible thing that she would conceive the Savior of the world without losing her virginity: "Blest is she who trusted that the Lord's words to her would be fulfilled" (Lk 1:41-45).

Mary came to us at a time when we were about to undergo a severe crisis of faith. She chose a day for her first visit when the Spirit-filled words of her cousin Elizabeth would remind us of the vital importance of that faith. Faith is our greatest heritage. We must not lose it or endanger it in any way. It is the precious pearl we must cherish and protect above all else.

The Apparition on the Annunciation, March 25, 1962

Interviewing Simón González, Jacinta's father, in August, 1970, the author learned of a fascinating apparition, unknown to him before, that took place in 1962 on the feast of the Annunciation. It is very much related to Mary's motherhood which began when Jesus was conceived in her womb. God was trying to teach us something special through this event.

¹ According to the new liturgical calendar, the feast of the Visitation is now celebrated on May 31.

The relationship between the Annunciation and Mary's spiritual motherhood, which flows from her divine motherhood, is beautifully brought out in Garabandal when the people refer to the Annunciation as "the Incarnation." Jacinta's father, describing this particular apparition, always spoke of it happening on "the day of the Incarnation."

This particular event resembled many others, in that the apparition involved several girls and started with each one separately in her home. It began when Our Lady appeared first to Jacinta around twelve o'clock on the night of March 24th. Between twelve and twelve-thirty, Jacinta still in ecstasy, left her house with her parents. They went past the church and onward to Loli's house. Loli was there with her whole family. She went into ecstasy. As frequently happened, Our Lady kissed a crucifix which Loli then presented to the people for them to kiss. At one o'clock they went out in the street where they met Conchita, then passing by in ecstasy accompanied by her mother and family. The three girls joined together, as they often did in ecstasy, and marched to the village church. There they prayed for a short while.

Still in ecstasy, they left the church and began walking through the streets reciting the rosary, a thing they did frequently. But then they began something they had never done before. They began to sing the rosary! To quote Simón: "They sang in such angelic voices. It seemed that it was not their voices. I took particular note of that."

They then transmitted to the people a reproach from Our Lady. Just what was involved is not clear from Simón's description of this particular phase of the event: "They affirmed that the Blessed Virgin said that we are all at fault." Perhaps their fault was a lack of belief in the apparitions. If this is what Our Lady had in mind, then this night of March 24-25 changed the people's attitude, because later in his description of this event Simón states that "the village believed."

Simón was deeply moved by the singing of the girls. He himself began to sing and "became very excited—*estaba loco*." The singing evidently awakened the villagers because they "started to come out and by the time the rosary was over the whole village was there."

At the conclusion of the rosary, the girls "began to sing

hymns of the Incarnation," that is, of the Annunciation. At the time, it was actually the feast of the Annunciation and "the people realized that it was the day of the Incarnation."

After the girls had concluded three hymns, they continued their ecstatic walk through the village streets. "Then," affirmed Simón, "they stopped all of a sudden with their heads still lifted back. The Vision told them to sing a certain hymn¹ [which they had forgotten]. The girls said to the vision: 'If you hadn't told us, we wouldn't have remembered it.' " Then, Simón made this observation: "They used the familiar term '*tu*' (rather than '*usted*'). How moving this was!" Spanish has a special polite or formal term for addressing a person, namely, "*usted*" which utilizes the third person singular. The "*tu*" or "you" is used with friends, close acquaintances, or with children and inferiors.

At this point in the interview, Simón's wife, who was present, made this comment about her husband: "He was very much moved. He had never sung before!"

Simón was deeply moved by recalling this event. It showed in his voice and on his face. He seemed to have been particularly impressed by all the singing, the girls', the people's and his own, and by the appearance of belief among the villagers. Indeed, he remarked: "Man! everybody was singing, and the people believed!—*Que cantaban todos, hombre! Y el pueblo creió, hombre!*" His comment on the belief of the people would seem to imply that a good number of them had been incredulous up until that night.

What an impressive sight it must have been to witness the entire village follow the girls through the streets, singing along with them.

The villagers consider Simón to be a very religious, "holy" man. He impresses me as a man of deep religious sensitivity. In fact, he affirmed that he was moved by every apparition he witnessed. And he added that speaking about the apparitions would impede him from sleeping that night.

¹ In the interview, Simón affirmed this night was the first time the girls sang the rosary. He did not say it was the first time they sang hymns. Indeed, this statement seems to refer to a hymn they had sung previously during some apparition. In her *Diary*, Conchita states that Our Lady taught them songs during the summer of 1961. (See the author's book, *Our Lady Comes to Garabandal*, p. 88).

This ecstasy, Simón told the author, impressed him more than any other of the many he was privileged to see. On the feast of the Annunciation, Our Lady gathered together all her children at Garabandal to give them a dramatic proof of her presence, concern and power.

It should be noted that Our Lady led the girls to the church. At the start, Jacinta, in ecstasy, went from her home to Loli's and passed by the church. To do this she had to take a longer route. The more direct path (from the house where she was living in 1962) to Loli's, does not go by the church. Also, when Jacinta and Loli left Loli's house at one o'clock and joined Conchita in the street, they went first to the church. There they stopped and prayed for a while.

Drawing the girls in ecstasy to the village church was a device Our Lady frequently used to focus attention on her Son in his eucharistic presence. This is one of the most important messages of Garabandal. Our Lady always leads her children to her Son, Jesus.

The Final Apparition—Kissed Objects

No other apparition reveals more clearly that it was the Mother of men who came in love at Garabandal to fulfill the motherly role entrusted to her by her Son, than the final visit of November 13, 1965.

Jesus reserved the gift of his mother to us to the important last moments of his life. So Mary kept her most tender message of motherly love until the very last apparition at Garabandal. To her tender words she joined a promise of blessings made in the name of her Son. At Cana he had honored his mother's intervention in favor of the wedding couple. Now in our own day he would honor the kiss she bestowed on objects in compassion for her children.

Our Lady told Conchita many months in advance that this apparition would take place at the pines. She said it was to be a special apparition to kiss religious articles "and that she was to distribute them because they have great importance."

Conchita came to the pines on Saturday, November 13, 1965, with numerous religious articles. As she took the articles out, Our Lady first called her by name and then appeared with the

infant Jesus in her arms. The fundamental purpose of this apparition (and indeed of all the apparitions) was soon emphasized in the conversation that went on between Our Lady and the young girl.

"Conchita," she said, "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." These words summarize the ultimate purpose of the entire Garabandal event. Mary comes for all her spiritual children, for you and me and all of us, and not just for Conchita, Loli, Jacinta and Mari Cruz. And she comes to draw us to her heart and through her heart to the heart of her divine Son.

Our Lady kissed all the objects Conchita had brought. Then she said: "Through the kiss I bestow on these objects, my Son will perform prodigies—*Mi Hijo, por medio del beso que yo he dado en ellos, hará prodigios*—Distribute them to others."

"Distribute them to others," Our Lady said. As mentioned above, she told Conchita previous to the apparition that she wanted these kissed articles distributed "because they have great importance."

Distributing kissed articles far and wide brings the Garabandal event to the attention of the world so sadly in need of a reminder that God is alive and loves his children. People are occasionally heard to say: "We need an apparition in this country." This is a way of affirming that the world needs special help in these trying times. If the past is any indication of what the present will be, we should not expect numerous major apparitions (like Lourdes, Fátima and Garabandal) all over the world at the same time. The pattern of the past is one major event which eventually gains world-wide recognition. Garabandal appears to be the great event of our day. And one of the principal means God will use to bring about its recognition is a wide distribution of kissed objects.

Prodigies involving healing of every kind, physical, psychological and spiritual, are occurring all over the world and rapidly increasing in numbers. As these prodigies multiply, faith in the kissed articles grows. This in turn increases the number and nature of the prodigies. The author, particularly because of his close relationship with Joey Lomangino and the whole network

of Garabandal centers that follow Joey's leadership, is in a good position to learn of these prodigies. He is amazed by what he hears in this regard. Joey alone could write a book about the prodigies that have occurred through his lectures and the medal that he applies to people on these occasions. The number and importance of the cures and conversions that have been obtained through the application of his medal and faith in Our Lady's promise are staggering.

Following her promise of prodigies through these kissed articles, Our Lady resumed her conversation with Conchita. The theme was again that of concern for her children of the earth. She knew that people were continually asking Conchita to present petitions to her. She asked the young girl to "tell her about these petitions." And she then summed up the entire Garabandal event in these words: "Talk to me, Conchita. Talk to me about my children. I hold them all beneath my mantle." This was a parting legacy that she left to Conchita and to all of us through her. She wants us to engrave these words on our minds and in our hearts. We are her children. She wants us to talk to her, to transmit our needs to her. She holds us all in her heart.

That Our Lady did not come for Conchita alone, nor for the four girls alone, but "for all her children," was further brought out in an interview the author had with Conchita on April 25, 1970. Conchita was asked what went on during the longer apparitions, some of which lasted one or more hours. Her answer was revealing and enheartening.

During this time, the rosary was recited and it lasted quite a while because it was said very slowly—*muy despacio*. Some times—*algunas veces*—we recited more than one rosary during the apparition.

Then, many times she remained silent; we were silent and she was silent.

During these moments, she looked at the other people but did not look at us. She said that she was looking at her children.

Other times she gave us messages for other people. She never talked to us about particular things that concerned us ourselves and she never answered questions concerning our own personal affairs.

Our Lady, then, made it a point to frequently remind Conchita and the other girls that she considers us all "her children."

She looked at the other people . . . She said she was looking at her children.

Talk to me, Conchita, talk to me about my children. I hold them all beneath my mantle.

As Always, Mary Leads Us to Jesus

It is very interesting to note how the Garabandal promise of heavenly favors is worded. It is not Our Lady who will perform prodigies, but her Son: "My Son will perform prodigies—*Mi Hijo hará prodigios*." Our Lady only presents our pleas and intercedes with Jesus. He is the one who performs the prodigies. It is the power of his Spirit which brings them about.

We should not have needed this promise to induce us to seek prodigies. God is a God of love and an all-powerful God who wants to perform prodigies for us. But we must have faith in his love and in his power. Also, we must consciously and personally call on that loving power to reach us. This is another way of saying that we must ask him to perform prodigies. God has given us a free will and he respects it. He waits for us to use it by asking and giving this personal sign that we want some particular favor.

When Our Lady appeared at the Rue du Bac, she had rings on her fingers. Rays came forth from most of the precious stones. However, some stones issued no rays. Our Lady explained to Catherine Labouré that the rays seen coming from certain stones were the graces being granted to those who asked for them. The stones that gave forth no rays represented the favors that God wanted to grant but that we neglected to ask for.

The promise of favors through kissed objects is simply a way (adapted to our human weakness which needs prodding and stimulating) that God is employing to get us to ask for the great favors—the prodigies, the miracles—that in his tremendous love he so ardently wants to bestow on us. He uses water at Lourdes and at Fátima, and elsewhere he uses medals and scapulars of various kinds. These are sacramentals, concrete means which somehow speak to us and stimulate our faith and prompt us to ask for the favors that in his love he wants so much to give us.

The promise of prodigies through kissed objects at the final apparition brought the entire Garabandal event back into its proper focus by centering our attention on Jesus, the Jesus Mary carried in her arms. So too, did the reproach and invitation Our Lady made during this same last vision. Here are the words she directed to us through Conchita.

Conchita, why do you not go more often to visit my Son in the tabernacle? He waits for you there day and night.

It is important that we view our devotion to Mary in the light of her providential role which is to draw us to her Son. In the past, much stress was placed on paying homage to Mary, on honoring her, singing her glories, bestowing new titles on her. This presents a real danger which must be recognized. It tends to make Mary an end in herself. It can easily obscure her essential relationship to Jesus. Mary is totally related to Jesus. She is entirely bound up with him. She has no meaning without him. Her mission, her role in God's plan is to draw us to Jesus so that we may give ourselves more completely to him in love and service.

We must go to Mary in order to be led more effectively to Jesus. The Madonna, the mother with the Child in her arms, represents the true Mary, the Mary we should honor and pray.



The girls at beginning of apparitions. L. to r. Loli, Jacinta, Mari Cruz and Conchita. Conchita's pigtails were cut at end of July, 1961, at Santander where she was called for questioning by diocesan authorities. House at upper left was Loli's home at time of apparitions and scene of a number of visions. House at right her present home.



Conchita
and
Mari Cruz
in
1961.



Cross marks spot in *calleja* where all early apparitions, both of angel and of Our Lady, took place (June 18 through July, 1961). Some later ones occurred here, too. Blessed Virgin ordered girls to come here and say rosary, occasionally at 5 or 6 a.m. in winter. Penance was important part of Garabandal message.



The *cuadro* or corral erected in *calleja* at spot of early apparitions to protect the girls from spectators. Guardia Civil came from valley below. Note steep incline and loose stones. Girls in ecstasy came down here backward in dark at high speed and never slipped or fell.



Last steep slope from the end of the *calleja* to the pines, the most incredible part of the backward ecstatic marches. The girls' eyes were always raised above.

Our Lady appeared before all nine pines which were planted by Conchita's grandfather.

Fr. Luis Andréu celebrating his first Mass. He participated in vision at the pines on August 8, 1961. He saw Our Lady with the 4 girls. He also had a preview of the great miracle that the world awaits. The girls never saw the miracle. Conchita alone knows what it is and its date.



Conchita and Joey in August, 1970. Joey has been mentioned twice by Our Lady at Garabandal. On March 19, 1964, in a locution at the pines, Our Lady told Conchita that Joey would recover his sight on the day of the miracle and that the first thing he would see would be the miracle. Also the restoration of his sight will be permanent.



Loli, Conchita, Jacinta and Mari Cruz in ecstasy, holding rosaries and medals given to them by the people for kissing by Our Lady. She said her Son would perform "prodigies" through these objects she had kissed. Great bodily and spiritual graces have been received through them all over the world.

Reaching for Our Lady's
kiss (same vision). A
priest looks on. Some one
thousand priests saw the
girls in ecstasy. Many
believed. Conchita's
mother is at lower left.
She attended most
ecstasies





Successive phases of ecstatic march, Sept. 11, 1961, at 5 p.m. Loli, looking at vision, leaves Conchita's house followed by her father Ceferino. He accompanied her often. Seconds later, tempo of march increases.



Loli, only one in ecstasy, holds Conchita's left hand, Mari Cruz's right hand. Jacinta holds Mari Cruz's hand. Loli is in full ecstatic flight around corner of Conchita's house. Extended arms, inclined torso and sharply raised left leg indicate acceleration of her pace. Some marches were so fast spectators could hardly keep up with girls.



Forward ecstatic march. Loli (followed by her father, Ceferino) and Jacinta gaze at the vision while walking. Note the rosaries around their necks belonging to pilgrims who want them kissed by Our Lady.



Backward ecstatic march at night. Jacinta and Loli are unconcerned with the uneven path. Note Loli's right leg avoiding protruding stone.



Church of San Sebastian, focal point of apparitions. The visions sometimes began in church or under porch. Girls in ecstasy often entered church and prayed before Blessed Sacrament until this was banned by diocesan authorities. After ban, they walked in ecstasy around church, saying rosary and singing Hail Holy Queen, and they prayed at door. After each vision, girls generally went to church for "station" to Blessed Sacrament. Locutions (began, spring of 1963) often occurred in church. St. Michael brought girls Communion occasionally under church porch when it was not available otherwise. Four girls, arm-in-arm in ecstasy, crossed narrow bridge in foreground: one girl walked "on air."



At the door of the church, Conchita easily lifts Loli, who weighs about 85 pounds, so that she may reach Our Lady and kiss her at the end of the apparition. The girls in ecstasy seemed practically weightless to each other, but often two or three men had trouble raising them off of the ground.

Prayer and the Rosary

Prayer is in a true sense the beginning and the source of all spiritual good. Saint Thomas Aquinas said this in another way when he declared that it is God's will to give us through prayer everything that he wants to give us. It is God's will that we ask and get through prayer all the graces that he has in store for us. This, of course, is nothing but the message of the Gospel and the Epistles.

That is why prayer is always the center of heavenly messages received through apparitions like Lourdes, Fátima and Garabandal. This is so true that if the message of a reported apparition does not focus strongly on prayer, it has to be suspect. The principal part of the messages of Lourdes, Fátima and Garabandal was prayer in one form or another. Predictions and warnings were contained in the messages of Fátima and Garabandal, but they were only a small fraction of the total message. The heart and soul of these messages was prayer. Even the penance element of these messages is closely related to prayer. It is a matter of experience that penance and sacrifice support and strengthen our prayer and make it more pleasing to God. The saints were all men and women of prayer and penance who never separated these two things.

We Do not Know how to Pray

Heavenly messages tell us to turn to prayer. But we do not seem to know "how" to pray. We want to heed these heavenly messages and try to pray. But we do not know how to pray and this brings discouragement and the abandonment of our good resolutions. We revert to prayerless lives. This means we live empty and fruitless lives. For without prayer, every life is frustrated and unrewarding. Without prayer, man walks alone in spiritual darkness and in cold. Prayer is the sun that sheds light and warmth over all our life.

And so it is that in an age that has discovered how to land men on the moon, we also see millions and millions of people become muddled and confused spiritually and abandon private prayer because they do not know "how" to pray. They do not even know how to use the simplest forms of vocal prayer. Their total helplessness leads them to abandon even this.

But our heavenly Father is merciful. He is aware of our weaknesses and our shortcomings. He bends over us to lift us up and pour soothing oil over our wounds. In our day, he has been moved with compassion at the sight of his aimlessly wandering children. He sent Mary to Garabandal to teach us how to pray so that we might find him once again and walk in the light of his face.

Thinking About What We Are Saying in Our Vocal Prayers

Mary taught the girls of Garabandal a definite procedure or method to follow when reciting private or vocal prayers. This manner of praying that Our Lady taught the girls was a very simple one. It applies to whatever formula or particular prayer is used, whether it be the Act of Contrition, the Hail Holy Queen or the various prayers that comprise the rosary.

In her *Diary*, Conchita briefly describes two different lessons during which Our Lady taught the girls how to pray. The first instruction was given to Mari Cruz on August 8, 1961, in the very early days of the apparitions. Our Lady seemed eager, almost in a hurry, to get this teaching to the girls, and through them to us. Her first apparition had taken place just a month previous on July 2 and her last was to occur more than four years later on November 13, 1965. The instruction to Mari Cruz on August 8 came at the conclusion of a long and very important apparition, the second of that day.

All four girls had come from the pines down to the village church in one of their sensationally rapid ecstatic flights. Three of the girls eventually came out of ecstasy at the church. The apparition continued for Mari Cruz alone, who, still looking up at the vision, entered the church. Conchita, in her *Diary*, describes what happened there.

When she arrived at the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary and of the archangel Saint Michael, she started to say the Creed *very*

slowly with the Blessed Virgin. Mari Cruz said that the Blessed Virgin took the lead and recited the prayer first, in order *to teach her how to pray slowly*. After the Creed, she said the Hail Holy Queen and then she made the Sign of the Cross *very slowly* and *very properly*—*muy despacio, muy bien*. (All emphasis added.)

In the same *Diary*, Conchita tells us that ten days later, on August 18, Our Lady gave the same kind of practical lesson to the four girls together. This time her simple motherly instruction centered on the rosary.

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

"I am going to pray first and you will follow me." And she recited the prayers *very slowly*—*muy lento*. She said "Holy Mary" and we repeated "Holy Mary."

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

So Our Lady taught the girls in a very simple, homey way. She took no chances of being misunderstood. She got down to specifics. As a mother or school teacher would do with youngsters, she said the words first, then had the children repeat them after her. She pronounced two or three words slowly and clearly, and made the girls repeat these in the exact same manner. Then she went on to the next few words—I believe . . . in God . . . the Father, the Almighty . . . Hail holy queen . . . Mother of mercy. . . . Hail Mary . . . full of grace . . .

Not only do we know the precise pedagogical procedure used by Our Lady in teaching the children how to say the rosary and other vocal prayers—leading them herself, pronouncing a few words at a time, then having the children repeat these after her—but we know the end product. Tape recordings were made of these prayers at Garabandal during the apparitions. There is one recording of Jacinta reciting the rosary and the act of contrition in ecstasy and of Conchita saying the rosary in ecstasy. These are samples of the finished product, so to speak, of Our Lady's instructions to the children regarding the recitation of vocal prayers.

It is very apparent from this tape that the Blessed Virgin taught the girls two things: pronounce each word of the vocal prayers very slowly and distinctly, and make a perceptible pause or stop after each meaningful group of words.

Here is a detailed description of the first part of the Hail Mary as recited by Jacinta and Conchita in ecstasy according to the tape mentioned above. The second part of the prayer is answered by the spectators present at the apparition. It takes the girls from 20 to 24 seconds to say from the first words "Hail Mary" to the last ones "womb, Jesus," and there are six clearly marked pauses between various short groupings of words. Translated into English, the Spanish tape comes through approximately as follows: "H-a-i-l M-a-r-y . . . f-u-l-l o-f g-r-a-c-e . . . t-h-e L-o-r-d i-s w-i-t-h t-h-e-e . . . b-l-e-s-s-e-d a-r-t t-h-o-u . . . a-m-o-n-g w-o-m-e-n . . . a-n-d b-l-e-s-s-e-d i-s t-h-e f-r-u-i-t . . . o-f t-h-y w-o-m-b J-e-s-u-s.

The purpose of this detailed description of the tape recording is not to give an example for slavish imitation. Our Lady is not concerned with any definite amount of time, any counting of seconds. She was not trying to set down an absolute and unchangeable time pattern that everyone should necessarily follow. She was simply trying to tell us that we have to slow down the recitation of our vocal prayers, slow it down enough so that we can make it really meaningful. That is the whole reason behind the deliberateness.

For prayer to be meaningful, our minds and our hearts must have a part in it. To put it in another way, our prayer should involve some kind of thinking and some measure of love.

Thinking—Role of the Mind

Our vocal prayers should normally involve thinking. The thinking can be about God, Jesus, Mary, or the words of the prayers we are saying, or the mysteries of the rosary, if we are reciting that prayer. But there must be some thinking, some working of our mind as we pray, not just an empty motion of our lips. A considerable degree of slowness is required in saying the words if the mind is to have time to function, even in a simple way.

To get us to put our minds to work or to "think" as we recite the rosary was definitely one of Our Lady's concerns at Gara-

bandal. This is clearly stated by Conchita in answers she gave during October, 1969, to questions sent to her concerning the rosary. The first question was: "Did The Blessed Virgin speak of the meditation of the mysteries of the rosary? Her answer: "The Blessed Virgin spoke of meditating on the rosary, that is, of thinking about what we were saying—*pensar en lo que rezabamos*. However, she did not say anything in particular about the mysteries." The other follow-up question was: "What did she say of the mysteries of the rosary?" Her reply: "Nothing."

What Our Lady sought specifically then was what we think about the prayers we are reciting, that we reflect upon the words we are pronouncing. This is an informal sort of meditation. It is not what is usually referred to as meditation on the mysteries. Conchita is quite clear on that point. The Blessed Virgin just did not bring up the matter of meditation on the mysteries. This, of course, does not mean that she does not favor it. Meditation on the mysteries is, indeed, a part of the Fatima First Saturday Devotions. At Garabandal, she was attempting to reach the broadest possible number of souls and did not want to propose a form of prayer that would be beyond the reach of some and that could easily discourage many others.

We have the striking example of the visionary of Lourdes. Bernadette experienced difficulty in her prayer life in the convent. She was never able to become proficient in meditating. The prayer by which she sanctified herself as a nun was the simple rosary recited with recollection and love.

Acts of Love—Role of the Heart

What is said of the use of the mind applies to the heart. Our hearts, sentiments of love, must enter into our prayers. These normally flow from our thoughts. Thinking about God, Jesus, or Mary provokes sentiments of love for them. But the love will not come into speedily recited prayers, prayers that are only a rapid-fire rattling off of words.

Loving God is more important than thinking about God. So, too, in prayer, the part of the heart and of love is more important than that of the mind and of thinking. This is consoling and encouraging. There are many times, days of great fatigue, of illness, of emotional stress of all kinds, when it is impossible to think or even to keep one's mind for any time on a given

topic. On these occasions, the heart can take over and fill the gap created by the practical temporary incapability or sluggishness of the mind. It will suffice to vaguely unite one's heart, to simply direct one's affections to Jesus or Mary. Here again, the slow, deliberate recitation of the vocal prayers will soothe the soul and dispose it to this fruitful prayer of affective union with Christ and his Blessed Mother.

Our frustrations in prayer, which lead to its partial or total abandonment, come in great part from the fact that we do not put our mind and heart in it. Prayer in which the mind and heart do not participate is a dehumanized prayer which cannot possibly satisfy us. Because of the struggle between the spirit and the flesh, prayer will never be very easy. But it should be a meaningful and rewarding experience. And it will be if we put our mind and our heart in it.

Vital Importance of the Pause

Let us take a closer look at the precise form of deliberate prayer revealed in the tapes mentioned above. Two things were noted: a very slow pronunciation of the words and a considerable pause between groups of words. Both factors are important and contribute together toward a total tempo of prayer that is conducive to thinking and to loving God.

The pause, the complete stop between the various short groups of words, is a key factor. It sets the rhythm and helps to maintain a steady slow pace. It works as a check or brake on the natural tendency that we have to speed up prayers that are repeated continually, day after day, even when they are properly pronounced.

It is especially the pause that fosters thinking and acts of love. It can be lengthened at will, as the Holy Spirit illumines our minds and invites us to dwell lovingly on certain words or thoughts. Following the impulse of his grace in our purely private recitation of the rosary is important. In group prayer, of course, a steady pace must be maintained and this cannot be too slow. But when we are alone, we shall never pray too slowly. It is much better to say one decade in a truly leisurely way, with our mind and heart really in it, than to say the full five decades at a rate of speed that allows no time for their participation.

The importance of a distinct pause or clear break in the

recitation of vocal prayers cannot be stressed too much. Much of the success of Our Lady's formula for private prayer and the rosary depends upon it. A deliberate pronunciation of each word does not suffice, nor does a simple slowing down between groups of words. There must be an appreciable pause, a noticeable break after every few words, the exact grouping of these words not mattering that much and depending on personal preference.

Thanks to the Holy Spirit, a continual newness and freshness will be discovered in the rosary's rich, meaningful words which tired us so when we ran through them in the past. Thanks also to the promptings of the same Spirit, sentiments of love will easily well up in our hearts. Holy resolves will follow. At this point, the rosary has become a true prayer because it has led to meaningful communication with God.

Saint Theresa Used This Method

The saints have always sensed the need for meaningful prayer. Saint Theresa of Lisieux, the Little Flower, has a most interesting section in her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, that illustrates the principle that Our Lady was attempting to teach us at Garabandal.

I find the recitation of the rosary harder than putting on a hair shirt. I feel that I say it so badly! Try as I will to meditate on the mysteries of the rosary, I just can't keep my mind on them. . . . Sometimes, when I am in such a state of spiritual dryness that I can't draw a thought from my mind which will unite me with God, I recite an Our Father and a Hail Mary *very slowly*. Then these prayers enchant me and nourish my soul much more than If I had recited them hurriedly a hundred times. (The emphasis is Saint Theresa's.)

We, too, would do better to say one or two decades of the rosary very slowly, "à la Garabandal," rather than race through the whole rosary!

The Need of Private Prayer in Our Daily Lives

Somehow we continually need to be reminded—and occasionally in a dramatic way through apparitions—that we must "pray always."

The girls recited the rosary as they walked in ecstasy to the pines, to the cemetery, around the church, through the village streets, and when visiting the sick in their homes. This can be seen as an invitation to us to say the rosary as we walk about, wait for a bus, drive our car, etc. As so often happened at Garabandal, Our Lady taught us through the actions of the girls in ecstasy as much as through her verbal exhortations.

When we do not have time to say the rosary, or even a decade, we can still discover many moments each day when it is easy to recite one or more deliberate Our Fathers or Hail Marys, for example, while shaving or putting on makeup, while walking from one room or office to another, while doing any number of simple actions that do not absorb our mind and that leave it free to "think about what we are saying." By spacing prayer in this way throughout our day, we will create a mentality or habit of prayer and recollection that will be most helpful and rewarding.

Mary's Intercession and Her Spiritual Motherhood

Mary's concern for the prayer life of her children and the very practical instruction she gave us through the girls of Garabandal were among the most important of her motherly ministrations. She was dealing with the very lifeblood of our spiritual growth.

She insists on the rosary to remind us of the power of her intercession in heaven. It is especially through this intercession that she now fulfills her spiritual maternity. Thanks to her glorious Assumption, Mary is in heaven body and soul. She stands beside her divine Son to intercede for us.

The marriage feast at Cana repeats itself constantly in heaven. Mary has only to suggest to Jesus that he intervene to be lavishly answered. When we turn to her in prayer, she turns to her Son and says: "My child has need of you." She does not have to tell him what we need. She simply turns us over to Jesus, as she turned the problem of the dwindling wine over to him at the wedding feast. She knows he will give her children the wine they need, choice wine in superabundance.

Cana repeats itself in heaven to the fullest degree. Mary's ever vigilant love anticipates our pleas. She turns to Jesus for us even before we think of turning to her.

That Mary is our spiritual mother has been the constant teaching of the Church. Vatican II explicitly reaffirmed it. Here is how the traditional doctrine was expressed in The Constitution on the Church.

This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross. This maternity will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. For, taken up to heaven, she did not lay aside this saving role, but by her manifold acts of intercession continues to win for us gifts of eternal salvation.

By her maternal charity, Mary cares for the brethren of her Son who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led to their happy fatherland. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix. These, however, are to be so understood that they neither take away from nor add anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator (Chapter 8—The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church, pp. 91-92).

3

Mary and the Holy Spirit

No other human creature has been as Spirit-filled as Mary. She was filled with the Holy Spirit from the first moment of her Immaculate Conception within the womb of her mother. A new and unfathomable fullness occurred at the Annunciation when the Holy Spirit came upon her and the power of the Most High overshadowed her and she conceived a holy offspring who was to be called Son of God (Lk. 1:35). She was fully open to this special coming of the Holy Spirit: "Let it be done to me as you say" (Lk. 1:38).

Ever faithful Spouse of the Holy Spirit, Mary draws her true children to him. We, in turn, if we wish to be her true children, must constantly turn to the Holy Spirit. Nothing delights our heavenly mother more than to see us acknowledge our need of the Holy Spirit and seek his aid.

We need the Holy Spirit in regard to our knowledge of and attitude toward Mary and also in regard to our prayer life.

The Holy Spirit and Our Devotion to Mary

Our knowledge of Mary too frequently remains theoretical and ineffective. It does not penetrate our minds and our hearts to the point where it takes root and produces fruit. This is because we do not turn to the Holy Spirit for help, relying completely on him. We try to find within ourselves the means of truly understanding and implementing this knowledge. As a result we fumble and flounder and usually end by giving up completely.

Jesus told us quite clearly that we could not comprehend nor live any part of his message without the help of the Holy Spirit. He said that once he had returned to heaven he would send that Spirit to us and that the Spirit would empower us to both understand and live his message. We do not seem to have realized how much we need the assistance of the Holy Spirit and how

important it is that we continually seek his aid. "Ask and you shall receive," Jesus said. But we must ask, if we expect to receive. It is most important that we understand this. Nothing is automatic in regard to our salvation. We must cooperate with God at every single step along the path to heaven. Our cooperation consists chiefly in continually asking the Holy Spirit to help us do everything that God expects us to do.

This applies to our attitude or devotion toward Mary, as it does to the other parts of Jesus' message. God has given Mary a special place, under Christ, in the working out of the salvation of mankind. In the mystical body of her Son, she fulfills the role of a mother. It is important that we understand what this means for the whole body of Christ, the Church, and for each and every one of us, the members of that body. Only the Holy Spirit can give us a full and true understanding of this. This is his role, "to teach and instruct" us, as clearly stated by Christ himself (Jn 14:26 and 16:13-15). But the kind of understanding we need is that which reaches down into our hearts and produces a conviction leading to action. This is precisely the kind of understanding the Holy Spirit alone can produce, an understanding that generates a stirring conviction prompting us to act on our knowledge.

How Much De We Need Mary?

It has been the long-standing teaching of the Church that God wants all men to have devotion to Mary. There is some minimum degree of devotion to Mary that God desires us all to have. In practice, the degree of our devotion to Mary will be a matter of discerning the authentic promptings of the Holy Spirit. He will work differently in each and every soul. There is no mass production where he is concerned. He draws and shapes each soul in a very personal and individual manner. This is true of all aspects of our Christian or spiritual life. The Spirit will draw us all powerfully to Christ. But he will draw some more especially to his Childhood, others to his Passion, his Eucharist, his Sacred Heart, etc. The same Spirit will attract some people to honor and pray to the angels, others this or that saint.

And so, too, it is in regard to Mary. God's plan is not the same for each and every one of us. The Spirit will invite us all to honor and pray to her, but some more and others less, some

this way and others that. The Holy Spirit is the great artist who never paints the same picture twice. His inventiveness and creativity are infinite and he delights in making each of us different from the other even in regard to our devotion to Mary. The important thing is to be truly open to the Spirit and let him lead us as he wills.

We must not be afraid of loving Mary too much. As some saint has said: "*De Maria nunquam satis*. We never have enough of Mary." But we must ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten and lead us in our devotion to her. We should ask the Holy Spirit to remove the scales from our eyes and the shackles from our hearts so that we may clearly see and fully accept God's plan for her. It is important that we effectively acknowledge in our lives the very special position and function that have been allotted to her in the body of Christ, position and function that are always completely subordinate to Christ and entirely dependent on him for their power and efficacy.

Each day we should ardently implore the Holy Spirit to teach us to know and love and pray to Mary as the Father and Jesus would have us know, love and pray to her.

Our one and only purpose in all this should be to find Jesus each day in a deeper, more meaningful and effective way. For this is Mary's true function according to God's plan; to lead to Jesus, to lead us ever closer to him. If this be the principal purpose we have in mind in our attitude and devotion to Mary, we will never have to worry about being misled in it, about having too much of it. Honoring Mary should always be secondary and subordinate to our seeking Jesus through her.

The devil has lost nothing of his great intellectual capacity because of his fall. He knows how important Mary is for each and every one of us and for the Church. That is why he has worked so assiduously to deceive and mislead people in her regard. But he is no match for the Holy Spirit and his powerful light and aid. This light and assistance are ours for the asking. We should ask for them each day.

The person of St. John, the disciple Jesus loved, raises some fascinating questions. Why did Jesus confide his mother to him and not to some other? Was it not because Jesus knew that he already had a special love for her that the others did not have, that his virginity had given him some insights into her virginal

heart that the others did not have? Was this not why Jesus had a very special love for him that he manifested at the last supper? Since Jesus speaks to us not only through his words but through all the events and people concerned with his life, we have to ask ourselves what the person of Saint John teaches us in regard to Jesus and Mary. Does Jesus reserve the fullness of his love, the tenderness of his love for those who recognize and love his mother in a special way?

Do not the lives of the saints raise the very same important question? Their love for Mary was exceptional, both tender and strong. It was especially confident and expectant. Did this not have much to do with their exceptional love for Jesus? Again, we must ask, does Jesus give himself fully only to those who follow his bidding and accept Mary as their mother and take her into their hearts?

The Holy Spirit and Our Prayer Life

Everything said above about prayer is important. But all the factors mentioned are basically only external factors, the framework or skeleton of vocal or private prayer. They are but bones, and, in all truth, dry bones. To all of this must be added the essential interior, life-giving principle, the Holy Spirit. He is the soul of our prayer. The dry bones of prayer will never come to life by themselves, no matter how we arrange and rearrange them. It is only when the Holy Spirit is breathed into them that these bones come to life and produce fruitful results.

Even the recommendation made by Our Lady concerning slow, pause-filled prayer is only a matter of the external form of prayer. It is but a method, a technique which possesses no magic in itself. To be sure, it is a good method and a truly helpful technique that must not be ignored. It is a powerful, positive aid that will naturally lead and dispose a person to the heart of prayer, which is union of the mind and heart with God, a loving communication with him. It is a psychologically sound formula which creates an atmosphere of peace that rests our soul and disposes us to think and reflect.

We are body and soul and not just soul. We need to be concerned with the externals of prayer, with a quiet place, a relaxed moment of the day, a slow and deliberate pace of prayer. None of these things must be neglected, and it is very important to

emphasize their real value. But, by themselves they do not suffice. They are the only preliminary steps that lead us to the threshold of prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who lifts us over the threshold, brings us into the presence of God and helps us establish effective contact with him. It is only by repeatedly calling on his life-giving assistance that the helpful formula for meaningful prayer given by Our Lady at Garabandal will bear the full fruit that she intended it should.

Slow To Respond To Our Lady's Plea

There is a need to dwell on this particular point. People do not seem to be responding to Our Lady's plea for slow, thoughtful praying of the rosary. It is difficult to achieve a breakthrough in this regard. Possibly it is because of the great power of the force of habit. People are in a deep rut of poor praying habits. They have prayed for so long in a hasty, thoughtless manner that it is extremely difficult to get them to change.

The first work of the Holy Spirit is to produce in people the inner conviction that Our Lady's message was meant for them. Our Lord warned us of the danger of hearing without really hearing. It is so easy to be blind to one's faults and deficiencies, to see the speck in another's eye and not see the plank that is in our own. Or maybe it is spiritual sloth and laziness. One is comfortable in his faulty prayer habit and does not have the moral stamina to institute a change. Or it may also be true spiritual blindness. One may not realize how truly ineffective rapid, soul-less prayer is and what a difference it would make to pray in the manner that Our Lady asked us to.

The evil one, the father of lies always tries to weaken or remove prayer from people's lives. It would be quite surprising if he were not telling people that what Our Lady said about prayer is really not important and that as long as they pray, it does not really matter how they pray. Nothing would suit him better than to have us believe this lie. He would be assured that we would remain steeped in our moral and spiritual misery, dragging our feet and living completely ineffective and unrewarding Christian lives.

We should frequently ask the Holy Spirit to aid us to listen with the proper dispositions of mind and heart. Specifically we should ask him to help us be truly open and willing in regard

to Our Lady's plea for quality prayer, prayer that is slow and meaningful. Indeed, each and every time we pray, whether it be the rosary or other prayers, we should start by asking his assistance. It is so easy to forget and to slip back into bad habits. The Holy Spirit is our only real safeguard against this ingrained tendency we have in our prayer life to become the victims of routine and to fall into empty formalism: "In your prayer do not rattle on like the pagans. They think they will win a hearing by the sheer multiplication of words" (Mt. 6:7).

Dry Bones That Come To Life

There is a passage in the Old Testament which is most instructive in regard to the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. This is the famous "Vision of the Dry Bones" at the beginning of Chapter 37 in the Book of Ezekiel. In this passage, the prophet Ezekiel relates a symbolic vision he received from the Lord. He sees himself placed in the center of a valley filled with great quantities of bones that are completely dried up. The Lord tells Ezekiel he wants to bring these bones to life and for that purpose he commands the prophet to speak to the dry bones: "Thus says the Lord God to these bones: 'See! I will bring spirit into you, that you may come to life. I will put sinews upon you, make flesh grow over you, cover you with skin, and put spirit in you so that you may come to life and know that I am the Lord!' "

Ezekiel does what the Lord said and speaks the above words to the bones. Then he sees the Lord's prediction come about: "I heard a noise; it was a rattling as the bones came together, bone joining bone. I saw the sinews and the flesh come upon them, and the skin cover them, but there was no spirit in them." Although the bones came together to form human skeletons and were covered with sinews, flesh and skin, they were still lifeless and without movement, because there was no spirit in them. And so God orders Ezekiel to speak again in his name and tell the spirit to come and breathe into these assembled but lifeless bodies. The prophet speaks as the Lord ordered him and again God's prediction is fulfilled: ". . . The Spirit came into them; they came alive and stood upright, a vast army."

Then the Lord explains the vision to Ezekiel. He tells him that the dry bones represent his chosen people, Israel, who have

been complaining that they felt discouraged and frustrated: "These bones are the whole house of Israel: They have been saying: 'Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are cut off.' "

The Lord was telling Ezekiel he would send his help to his People through his Spirit and that they would be able to do with the help of the Spirit the things they had not been able to do by themselves. Indeed, he tells the prophet to say to the Israelites: "O my People! I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you upon your land! thus you shall know that I am the Lord. I have promised, and I will do it . . ."

God wants to show his People how helpless they are by themselves, when they count on their own strength. It will only be with the assistance of his Spirit that they shall achieve anything: "Thus you shall know that I am the Lord."

In terms of God's works and spiritual matters, we are, by ourselves, nothing but dry bones, lifeless and incapable of doing anything. It is only when God's Spirit is breathed into us that our efforts, our formulas, our most carefully thought-out plans and enterprises are spiritually productive and fruitful. This applies to prayer as it does to every other area of our spiritual life.

We can exclaim as the Israelites did: "Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are cut off." But we should realize that the Lord loves us as he did his People of old for whom the consoling vision of Ezekiel was intended (as it was also intended for us), and that he is just waiting for us to ask for the help of his Spirit in order to tell us as he did them: "O my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may live."

The Lord is so eager to give, if only we will ask with confident and expectant faith.

All you who are thirsty,
come to the water!
You who have no money,
come, receive grain and eat;
Come, without paying and without cost,
drink wine and milk! (Is 55:1.)

Jesus himself, shouted this same invitation from the steps of the Temple in Jerusalem:

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me;
let him drink who believes in me.

Scripture has it: "From within him rivers of living water shall flow" (Jn 7:37-38).

As we pray the rosary faithfully each day and call on Mary's all powerful intercession, let us confidently and expectantly ask her to obtain what she so ardently desires for us. This is a true openness of mind and of heart that will help us understand how much we need the Holy Spirit in everything, including prayer, and how accessible his aid is to those who ask with faith and complete trust, never doubting that they will receive it (Jas 1:6).

Mary Our Mother and Prayer

Our Lady's plea for prayer is the most important part of her entire Garabandal message. Prayer is indeed the great vitalizing factor of our spiritual life. If it is poor and inadequate, everything will be affected; the Sacraments, Penance and the Eucharist, simply will not produce in us the rich fruit Christ intended they should and every area of our Christian life will be weak and anemic.

The spiritually wise Christian constantly avails himself of Mary's powerful intercession. He frequently presents his prayer to Jesus through Mary, knowing how pleasing this is to Jesus. He also addresses himself directly to Mary, asking her to speak in his behalf.

He is happy—and not at all afraid—to acknowledge his need for Mary's motherly protection, and his filial love for her, by wearing the scapular. If the Spirit so draws him, he does not hesitate to use the scapular as a symbol of total consecration to her, confidently placing everything he has in her motherly hands, sure that it could never be more safe and secure, nor bear more fruit than when confided completely to her care.

To stimulate his faith in Mary's providential role and to nurture his love for her, he says the rosary each day, making sure to recite it in a truly prayerful way.

Pray the rosary, Our Lady said. Pray it well. Pray it slowly, think about what you are saying.

Appendix 1

The Messages of Garabandal

It is very deceptive to speak of the message of Garabandal in the singular. There were two formal messages. The first was given by Our Lady on July 4, 1961, and announced publicly on October 18 of that year. The second was delivered in Our Lady's name by Saint Michael on June 18, 1965.

Also, the entire Garabandal event comprised some two thousand apparitions and some forty locutions. Messages of varying kinds were imparted on all these occasions. These might be called informal messages, but they were often important and definitely form part of the total Garabandal message.

In addition to these spoken messages, formal and informal, there were the messages which were conveyed through the persons, places and events involved in the various happenings that form part of the entire Garabandal story. The presence of an angel, the prominent place given to Holy Communion, these and other facts have a meaning and a message for us.

The Message of October 18, 1961

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

But first, we must lead good lives.

If we do not, a chastisement will befall us.

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

The Message of June 18, 1965

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.

Before, the cup was filling up. Now it is flowing over.

Many cardinals, many bishops and many priests¹ are on the road to perdition and are taking many souls with them.

¹ Many books carry a different and shorter text: "Many priests are on the road . . ." These are not the exact words transmitted to Conchita

Less and less importance is being given to the Eucharist.

You should turn the wrath of God away from yourselves by your efforts.

If you ask him forgiveness with sincere hearts, he will pardon you.

I, your Mother, through the intercession of Saint Michael the archangel, ask you to amend your lives.

You are now receiving the last warnings.

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

Pray to us with sincerity and we will grant your requests.

You should make more sacrifices. Think about the passion of Jesus.

Appendix 2

The Church's Position on Garabandal

It can be said that there are three different sources or agencies of legitimate authority who can speak for the Church in the matter of apparitions like those of Lourdes, Fátima and Garabandal. These are the local bishop or Ordinary, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pope himself. It is important to understand the role and degree of authority, particularly the degree of finality, with which each speaks. In regard to the apparitions of Garabandal, all the local bishops of Santander have spoken out against the supernatural character of the apparitions. They have refused to admit that these events are from God. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which could take the matter out of the hands of the local bishop and into its own hands has refused to do this. It has praised the local bishops for the pastoral solicitude and prudence

during the apparition. Father Marcelino Andréu, in his Taiwan Mission Letter #3 for his friends in the United States and Canada dated October 18, 1969, states: "The message that was released to the public by Conchita was the third copy she wrote, which differs a little from the first two copies of the original message she wrote, which, given by Saint Michael, read as follows: 'Many cardinals, many bishops and many priests are . . .' When Conchita was asked why she dropped 'cardinals and bishops,' her explanation was that cardinals and bishops are priests."

they have shown and has left the responsibility of the affair, including the issuing of directives, in the hands of the present bishop of Santander. But it has left the door open to possible intervention on its part by having always refused so far to pass judgment itself concerning the supernatural character of the events of Garabandal.

The Pope, who can overrule both the local bishop and the Congregation, has never spoken out officially, either for or against the apparitions of Garabandal. But, by a number of events, including the personal and explicit blessing of Conchita, the principal visionary of Garabandal, he has indicated that, like the Congregation, he, too, is not ready at the present time to fully accept the negative position of the bishops of Santander. His mind, from all appearances (and there is other evidence), is still quite open on the matter.

There has been some very recent evidence to substantiate the position that Rome does not consider the apparitions of Garabandal a closed matter. Father José Ramón García de la Riva, pastor of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, Barro (Llanes), Asturias, Spain, has stated that on May 21, 1971, he spoke with the Archbishop of Oviedo, who is his Ordinary, concerning the events of Garabandal. The reason for this interview was that the Holy See had asked the Archbishop for documents concerning Garabandal. Father de la Riva noted that "this was the first time he was ever officially called as a direct witness."

Father de la Riva offered his recent witnessing as proof of what he considered "false rumors to the effect that the Holy See had pronounced itself against Garabandal." He said that if the date of his May, 1971 interview were compared with other dates, "one would readily see that the Holy See has not yet closed the file on the Garabandal events."

In 1971, the Most Rev. José María Cirada (Lachiondo), who had been the most outspoken against Garabandal of all the bishops of Santander, was transferred to Cordoba. He was succeeded by the Most Rev. Juan Antonio del Val (Gallo).

Don Juan Antonio del Val comes from the area of Santander. As a priest of that diocese, he served on the Commission of investigation of the apparitions of Garabandal from its earliest days. He was personally present at one apparition at least when he saw Mari Cruz, Loli and Jacinta in ecstasy.

Don Juan Antonio del Val rose to the position of Vicar General of Santander. He then went to Sevilla as auxiliary bishop. He was serving there in that capacity when he was named Ordinary of Santander in 1971.

As of June, 1972, Bishop del Val had not issued any official statement concerning the apparitions of Garabandal.

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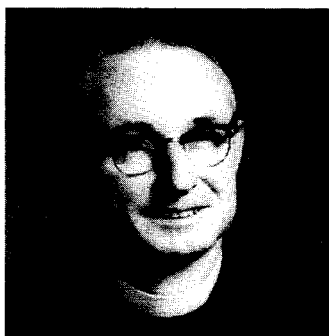
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Father Joseph A. Pelletier studied theology in Rome where he received a Baccalaureate and Licentiate in Sacred Theology. Later he obtained a Master's degree in Sociology from Boston College. He has been associated with Assumption College, Worcester, Massachusetts, for most of his priestly life since his ordination in 1937. Originally on the College's teaching staff, he is presently engaged in administration.

His first book in the field of religious history, *The Sun Danced at Fátima*, published in 1951, was widely acclaimed and became a best seller. It was followed in 1954 by *Fátima Hope of the World*.

The apparitions of Our Lady in the secluded mountain pueblo of San Sebastián de Garabandal, Spain, an event that began on June 18, 1961, and came to a temporary halt in February, 1966, has now become the focal point of his writings. A first book on this topic, *God Speaks at Garabandal*, stressing the message imparted during the appearances, was published in May, 1970. The initial printing of 20,000 copies was followed by another of 11,000 in May, 1971. Published slightly in advance of the book was an illustrated flyer, *The Apparitions of Our Lady at Garabandal*, and a pamphlet, *Garabandal Prayer and the Rosary*.

A second book, *Our Lady Comes to Garabandal*, published in 1971, tells the story of the events that accompanied the imparting of the message. Based principally on *Conchita's Diary*, which is included in its entirety, and other subsequent documents that are like a continuation of the *Diary*, it attempts to answer the need for an authentic account of the Garabandal happenings. Complete accuracy derived from first-hand sources has been the author's main concern throughout the book. The first printing of 16,000 copies was followed by another of 10,000 in 1972.

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