

Recollections of Benjamin Gómez

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by Rafael Jardon Mendez

Benjamin Gómez, a resident of Garabandal and later Pesués (a small town near Garabandal), gave numerous testimonies concerning the visionaries in ecstasy.

During the time of the apparitions (1961-1965) his life underwent a great change, and he returned to the Church after having lived much of his life away from its teachings. In fact, those years saw him converted anew and subsequently blessed with an abundance of peace and happiness that he continually attributed to the grace of God.

Often interviewed because of his intimate knowledge of the seers and the village at the time of the apparitions (he was its night watchman for a time), Benjamin later related to the author a few incidents — of the hundreds he had witnessed — that struck him as particularly noteworthy.



"One of my favourite recollections has been attested to by many others who met with a similar outcome. As a young man, I was considered quite strong, and easily could lift weights well in excess of what a normal man could; this was well known through the area and earned me something of a reputation as a strong man. Yet when the children were in ecstasy, it proved virtually impossible for me - or anyone — to move them at all, regardless of the force applied."

But not all phenomena were as easily proven. Some carried extremely important messages, far beyond their merely physical appearances. And what is rarely noted is that while most of the events as we know them at this point involved only the four girls (and on one occasion, Fr. Luis Andreu) as central characters, Benjamin himself was privy on at least two occasions to the presence of the Divine.

On one occasion he saw something of a clearly apparitional nature, one that vividly reminded him of the reality of Purgatory:

Benjamin Gomez taped the girls singing and praying the Rosary. On one occasion, he heard something else besides the voices of the four children: the voice of a woman -- an incomparably beautiful and sweet voice unlike anything in this world -- praying Our Father.

"Walking with my donkey in the fields above the village one day, I saw, as in a film in front of me, the

figure of a man I had known well in my youth, surrounded by a bright light that gave off an intense heat, like flames. The donkey bolted in fear while I stood rooted to the spot. It suddenly dawned upon me that I was seeing the man as he was in Purgatory, leaving me to wonder if anyone on this earth would pray for him in the afterlife.

"I remembered that this person had committed a crime in the days of the Spanish Civil War, and now must be doing penance for this and other sins. As vivid an impression as the scene made, I said nothing of it at the time, fearing others would laugh at me. But the encounter changed my life forever. Since that day, I have never forgotten to pray for him and for the conversion of his soul."

Later, he learned an amazing lesson regarding God's mercy as he lay sick and in a near coma....

"It was April 17, 1970, and I arrived in Garabandal after a long sickness, nearly dead with fatigue and thirst. I went to the fountain near Conchita's house to ask for some water. I drank a little, which was a big mistake, because there was something in it that day that made me terribly ill all over again. So sick that they had to carry me down to the next village by car. I couldn't walk.

"They called the doctor, who took my temperature and looked very worried. For the past two weeks I had eaten very little as it was, and hadn't drunk much, either. I was in really bad shape, and he saw it right away. He told me to eat something, but I couldn't hold anything down. I would rather have died than forced myself to eat at that point.

"I managed to get down a little broth, but that was it. I was sure I was going to die. I lost my senses and slipped in and out of consciousness. People were literally waiting for the bells to ring to let everyone know I had passed away. Friends of mine from Torrelavega, Santander and elsewhere were arriving expecting to find me dead. Then, all of a sudden, as many will tell you, I simply woke up - healthy and sane. Just like that!"

What Benjamin Gomez never told anyone until years later was that the Virgin herself appeared to him that night at the foot of his bed, in form exactly as the four girls had described her, and told him he would be well again immediately.

Benjamin later said: "Although it is a miracle and therefore of God Himself, I also attribute it to the intercession of the Virgin, who told me she would indeed help me if I truly wanted to do what her Son wants of me."

Thinking again of this singular vision, he added: "No one could possibly imagine, let alone explain, what I felt at that moment. The Divine reaching down to the human. Such an incredible thing! I could not possibly even begin to explain it!"

Benjamin also had several interesting experiences in the presence of the visionaries themselves. He is perhaps best remembered for being one of the privileged onlookers who saw the miracle of the visible Host on Conchita's tongue. As is attested in nearly every work on the event, Benjamin experienced a profound and permanent change from those few seconds.

He had other graces bestowed upon him as well. From his vantage point — his house was close to that of Conchita's — he had opportunity to record the children simultaneously singing and praying the Rosary in a slow and meditative voice. (Note: Several of these recordings exist today.)

Benjamin recounted another aspect of his experiences in Garabandal that also affected him deeply: hearing, albeit briefly, the voice of the Virgin on tape.

"After the miracle of the visible Host, I (and others) made a public and official declaration of what was seen and heard. For some time after doing so, I said to myself: 'Well, I guess that's all I'll say. Nothing more to add.'"

In fact, there was a great deal more to add.

"Shortly thereafter, I taped the girls singing and praying the Rosary again. I played the results for a priest and some bystanders. This time, however, I heard something else besides the voices of the four children: the voice of a woman - an incomparably beautiful and sweet voice unlike anything in this world - praying the Our Father. I was so moved I began to pray aloud as I listened to the recording.

"As I was doing so, an elderly gentleman seated nearby suddenly rose up and began saying 'My God! What is this? What is this, my God!' Well, it was the voice of the Virgin speaking! She said something about a priest, and then a few words more, but I couldn't make them out. The old man was so agitated that we couldn't hear anything the first time through. We had to calm him down. The girls, however, told us that that voice, so sweet and loving, did not belong to anyone of this world.

"And it is true, exactly as the four children told us. That voice was utterly and completely divine. It has no human comparison: the human and the Divine, they have no comparison with each other."



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Interestingly, Benjamin Gomez died on the very day that the procession of Our Lady of Fatima made its way through his town of Pesues. It is a rare occasion indeed when the procession stops in a tiny Cantabrian hamlet, but on that day it wound its way through the cobbled streets of Pesues. As it passed through, so too did Benjamin Gomez, from this life to the next.

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