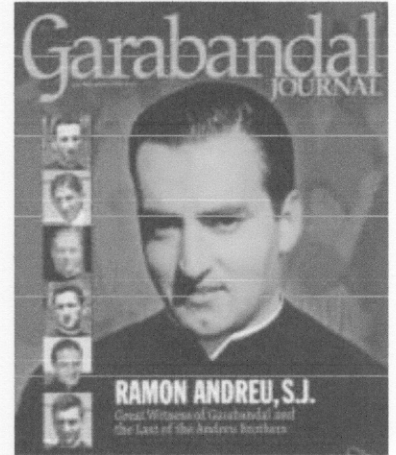


He was the last of the Andreu brothers and a significant figure in the Garabandal story

FATHER RAMON ANDREU

EXTRAORDINARY WITNESS

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By Barry Hanratty



Acknowledgments

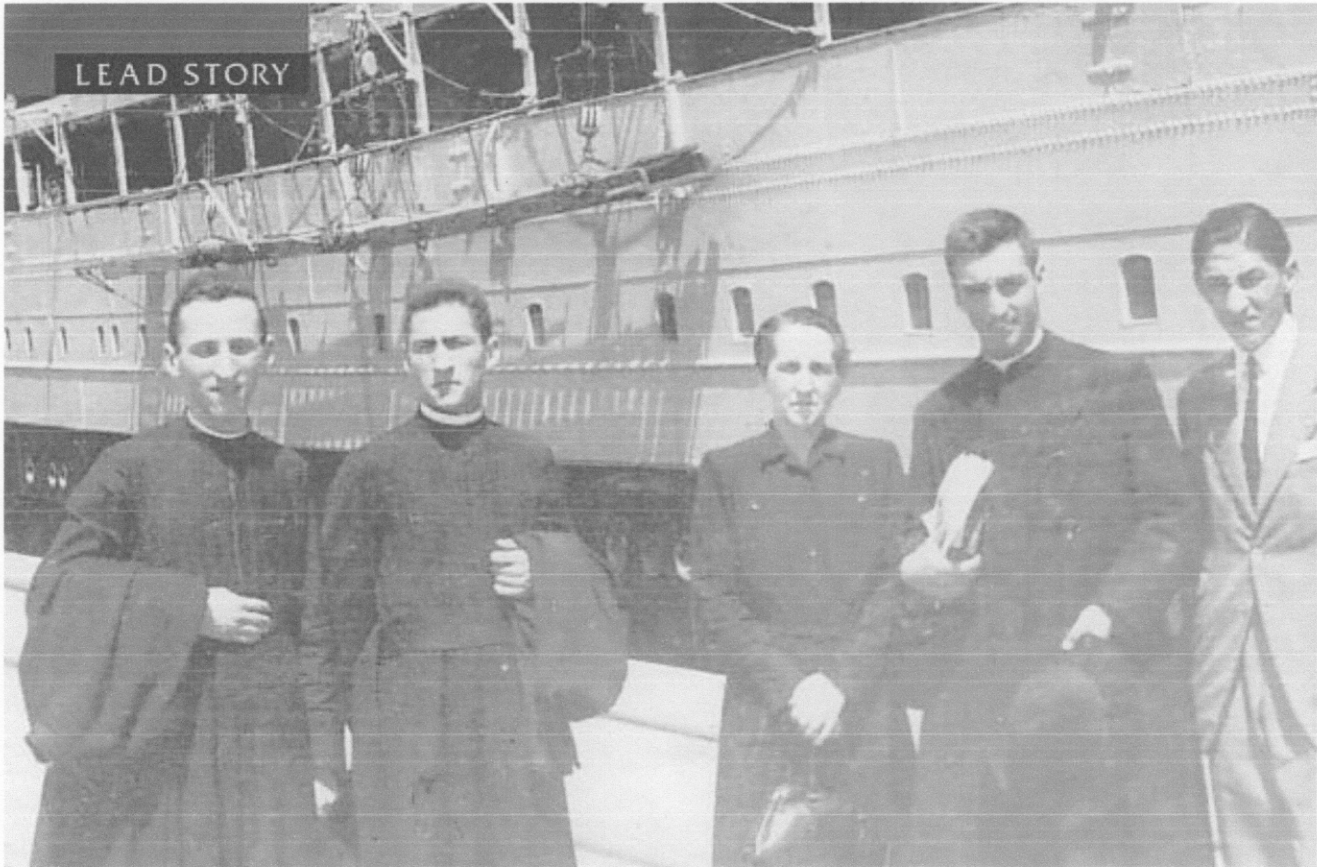
Our special thanks to Jacinta and Jeff Moynihan for providing us with information and pictures, and for making it possible for us to contact the Andreu family in Spain who were wonderfully cooperative in sending us family information and many precious pictures never published before. Many thanks to Begoña Andreu, Fr. Ramón's niece; Edurne, his sister-in-law; Luis Andreu, his nephew; and Maria del Rio, Begoña's daughter.

The Andreu best known in the Garabandal story, is Father Luis Andreu, the Jesuit priest who saw Our Lady and a preview of the great Miracle at Garabandal on August 8, 1961. His mysterious death on the drive home after the vision, his later conversations with the seers "from the other side," and the prophecy that his body will be found incorrupt on the day after the great Miracle, add to his legendary status in the events.

But there was another Andreu associated with Garabandal albeit with less celebrity: Luis's older brother Father Ramon Andreu who died of cancer on November 11, 2004, in the hospital of the University of Southern California (USC) at the age of 81.

This story is about him — the other Andreu brother who figured so prominently in the Garabandal saga.

He was born in Bilbao, Spain, on September 9, 1923, one of six brothers all of whom he survived. The first, José Mari, and a girl, were the offspring of Marcelino Andreu and his first wife who died in a flu epidemic along with their daughter. Some time later, Marcelino married his sister-in-law, Maria Luisa Rodamilans, and from this union came five more sons. Of the six brothers, José Mari, the oldest, was a medical doctor and Rafael, the youngest, a surveyor. The four between them: Alejandro, Ramón, Luis and Marcelino (listed in order of age) were Jesuit priests. Except for Luis, all became missionaries: Alejandro in Venezuela, Marcelino in Taiwan and Ramón in Central America and the U.S.



From Left in 1947: Luis, Marcelino, Maria Luisa, Ramón and Rafael.

To this already remarkable family that gave four religious to the Church, one more would be added later. After the death of her husband and Father Luis, Maria Luisa, the mother, entered the Visitation Order and spent the rest of her long life — she lived to be 94 — as a cloistered nun in the city of San Sebastian.

RAMON'S CAREER

Father Ramón entered the Jesuits on September 11, 1939, at the age of 16 and was ordained to the holy priesthood at the Jesuit seminary in Oña, Spain, on July 30, 1955. Luis was also ordained at the same time and place, and on the following day, feast of Saint Ignatius, they both said their first Mass.

Father Ramón spent the next several years in Spain where he was assigned to the retreat house connected to Christ the King Vocational School in Valladolid. He left Spain sometime in the 1960s for assignment in Nicaragua, Central America, and his obituary in the Los ANGELES TIMES stated that he spent a number of years there before being transferred to Saint Kevin's Parish in Los Angeles in 1971 where he remained for the rest of his life.

In addition to serving at Saint Kevin's, a predominately Spanish-speaking parish, he was affiliated with the Jesuit community of Loyola High School not far from Saint Kevin's. In 1981, he earned a Ph.D. in Spanish literature from USC, and then taught Spanish at Cal State Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Unified School District and at USC.

In the mid 1970s, he renewed an old friendship dating back to 1961 when Garabandal visionary Jacinta Gonzalez, after her marriage to Jeffrey Moynihan, settled just north of Los Angeles in Oxnard, California.

Jacinta and Jeff stayed in touch with Father Ramón and cherished their friendship with him. Both Father Ramón and Jacinta considered it providential that after so many years they should be reunited in a foreign land.

EXTRAORDINARY WITNESS

As a well-trained Jesuit, Father Ramón was an excellent witness of the Garabandal happenings, and his extensive notes rank among the most important documentation of the events. He personally witnessed some 200 ecstasies. In addition, he amassed a large archive of reports and letters of testimony from other witnesses, and through his collaboration with the Marquis and Marquisa de Santa Maria, and the Fontaneda family, the large FAS (Fontaneda-Andreu-Santa Maria) archive was formed.

His personal account of what he experienced in Garabandal after the announcement of the Message at the Pines in Garabandal on October 18, 1961, is one of the most compelling and important testimonies in favor of the supernatural origin of the events since it deals with the reading of hearts, something outside the capability of the devil. Here is a summation of what was recounted in detail in the November-December 2003 edition of GARABANDAL JOURNAL.

The Message was to be announced on October 18, 1961, and Father Ramón was happy and optimistic when he arrived in the village on the seventeenth. But all that changed the following day — a cold, rainy, windswept day, with hail, and rain mixed with snow, even thunder and lightning.



After such an inglorious preamble, the crowd of weather-worn travelers had to wait until late in the evening for the announcement of a message that did not meet their expectations. A shroud of disappointment settled over already dampened spirits, and no one felt it more than Father Ramón.

As he made his way down from the Pines, he suddenly found himself submerged in the blackest depression: "Never in my whole life have I known such desolation. I felt an intense desire to go away, far away — to America! And I said to myself, 'What are you doing here? These girls are nothing more than poor, sick children. And all this is a pathetic comedy of backward villagers.'... I changed locations, and again I remained stationary for a length of time that I cannot recall. I was as if unconscious... I had stayed on the side of the hill at least an hour, and seeing flashlights going up and down was like a nightmare."

When he got back down to the village and the house where he was staying, Mari Loli's younger sister Amaliuca came to say that Loli wanted to see him. He had no desire to go but thought "to visit the sick is still a work of mercy" and followed the girl with the intention of saying a final goodbye.

Loli greeted him with a smile and Father Ramón would never forget the conversation that followed. When she told him and his two companions that one of them did not believe, Father Ramón confessed that it was him. With a knowing smile, Loli said: "The Virgin told us, 'Father doubts everything, and suffers much. Call him and tell him not to doubt anymore, that it is really I, the Virgin, who is appearing here. And in order for him to believe better, tell him: When you went up, you went up happy; when you came down, you came down sad.'"

Father Ramón sat there staring at the girl in stunned silence. Then she said: "The Virgin spoke a lot about you to Conchita."

He wasted no time in grabbing his two friends and hurrying across the village to Conchita's house where he prevailed upon her mother to let him go up to see her even though she had already gone to bed. As soon as Conchita saw him she said with a smile: "Are you happy or are you still sad?"

"I hardly know. Loli told me the Virgin talked a lot to you about me."

"At least for a quarter of an hour."

"And what did she say?" "I don't know what I can say." "Then I'm no better off than before." Conchita smiled.

"Well, there is something I can say. When you went up, you were happy; when you came down, you were sad. She [the Virgin] told me everything that you were thinking and the locations where you were thinking those things. 'Now I'm going to America.' And at another location you were thinking, 'I don't want to know anymore about so-and-so or about so-and-so.' And you were suffering a great deal. She told me to tell you this and to advise you that it all has happened so that in the future when you remember it, you won't doubt again."

Father Ramón was speechless. He testified further that on "the next day, on a detailed photograph of the Pines and its surroundings, Conchita pointed out with her finger all the places where I had been and what I had been thinking there! I can assure you that she was not mistaken in anything."

Prior to this experience, he had another one after the death of Father Luis that was also quite impressive:

"It was August 14. I had come from burying my brother Luis [who had died on August 9]. On arriving at Garabandal, a boy from Burgos came up to me and said, The girls said during an ecstasy "What a pleasure! Are we going to speak with Father Luis?" I became depressed and thought that this had to be a typical case of auto-suggestion. My brother's death had made an impression on the girls and the result was obvious! I wanted to leave Garabandal, but stayed because those who had accompanied me didn't want to go.

"I went to where the girls were in ecstasy and tried to listen to the conversation with or about Father Luis. After a while I didn't know what to think; I was truly amazed. The girls were repeating the words of the Vision, and I heard them describe my brother's death and funeral rites. They were giving a number of very precise details about the special rites of a priest's burial. They even knew that with Father Luis some exceptions were made to the traditional regulations in the dress of the deceased. For example, a biretta had not been put on my brother's head, and the chalice, which should have been put in his hands, had been replaced by a crucifix. The girls also gave the reasons for these changes.

"On another occasion, I heard the girls in ecstasy say that my brother Luis had died before making his profession. They also spoke about me and my vows. They knew the precise date, the exact place where they had been pronounced and the name of a Jesuit who had made them at the same time. You can understand my amazement and my confusion in the face of this string of rigorously exact details, since I definitely knew the girls could not know these things, at least not through human intelligence."

— SHE WENT IN HASTE TO THE MOUNTAIN

HIS CURE

Another impressive proof for Father Ramón occurred in October of 1961, and we have the details from the testimony of Maximo Foerschler, a Protestant — he later converted — and longtime family friend, who had accompanied Father Ramón on a visit to Garabandal. Father Ramón was in Max-imo's car as they made their way up to the village.

"Some 20 kilometers before Cosio we had a tremendous collision with another car on a mountain pass. The accident could have had fatal consequences. Only later did I come to understand that it was without doubt the Blessed Virgin who had saved us from certain death.

"Because of what had happened we arrived at San Sebastian de Garabandal very late, after eleven at night. We had barely arrived when we had the good fortune of being able to witness two ecstasies. Following this, at twelve o'clock, Father began to feel very bad. He was nauseous and broke out into a cold sweat, with a terribly painful left ankle which appeared quite swollen.

"I notified two doctors who were in the village: one from Santander and the other a bone specialist from Burgos. After an examination they made a diagnosis: besides the obvious swelling, there was probably a fracture of the ankle, at least a hairline crack. They applied a thorough dressing and an ice pack that they were able to get from the *indiano*, who had a refrigerator, and with several others, carried him to the bed; he was in great pain. As an old friend of the Father, I stayed in a second bed they had set up in his room so I could look after him at night.

"After a long time — it had to be 3:30 in the morning — we heard noise coming from the street and people shouting that the owner of the house should open the door since Jacinta was there in ecstasy wanting to come in. Shortly afterwards she appeared in the room, went toward Father and gave him the crucifix to kiss. Following this she said something to him that I couldn't hear.... Seconds later, the girl returned to normal. It was four o'clock Sunday morning, October 15, time to get some sleep! "Light was beginning to dawn on the morning of that day when several French people, followed by one of the two doctors, stopped by to see how Father Ramón was doing. It was about eight o'clock. Father told the doctor that all the pain was gone and that he was able to move his foot without difficulty. The doctor was surprised; but as a precaution, he counseled him not to put any weight on the foot, and to wait for the coming of the ambulance that they had been able to summon from Casa Valdecilla Hospital in Santander. The injury had been serious and normally would take from fifteen to twenty days to heal."

Father Ramón added some details of his own of what happened when the doctor found him sitting on the edge of the bed:

"What are you doing, Father?"

"As you can see, I'm trying to get up."

"Don't do that! That's foolish. Let's see your ankle."

The doctor got down on one knee to examine the ankle. Then raising his head toward Father Ramón, he looked at him in a peculiar way and said: "You're quite a joker! Show me the bad ankle."

Father Ramón showed him the other ankle which was the good one. The doctor examined it very carefully.

He compared it with the other and ended up raising his head again toward Father Ramón while saying with an expression hard to describe, "What strange things happen in this village!"

Now back to Maximo Foerschler's account: "When the doctor left, Father began to put his shoes on, since he felt no pain. He went to stand on his foot and did it without difficulty. Then he decided to celebrate Mass in the village, declining to advise Father Valentin to come up [from Cosio] as we had first agreed. He ordered the bells to be rung for Mass, and we set off in search of a cane. I accompanied him myself to the church.

"As I did not understand anything about the Mass, when he was beginning the celebration I found a place near the last pew to carefully observe from there how he managed on his foot. During the entire ceremony he moved and knelt down and got up without difficulty.

"After the Mass, I gave him my observations, and he made various movements with his foot in front of me without the least trouble. Finally he confided to me what had happened. Jacinta had told him in ecstasy at 3:30 in the morning: 'Father, the Virgin told me that you were ill, but she told me to tell you that you are cured.' At the same time the pain disappeared."

— SHE WENT IN HASTE TO THE MOUNTAIN

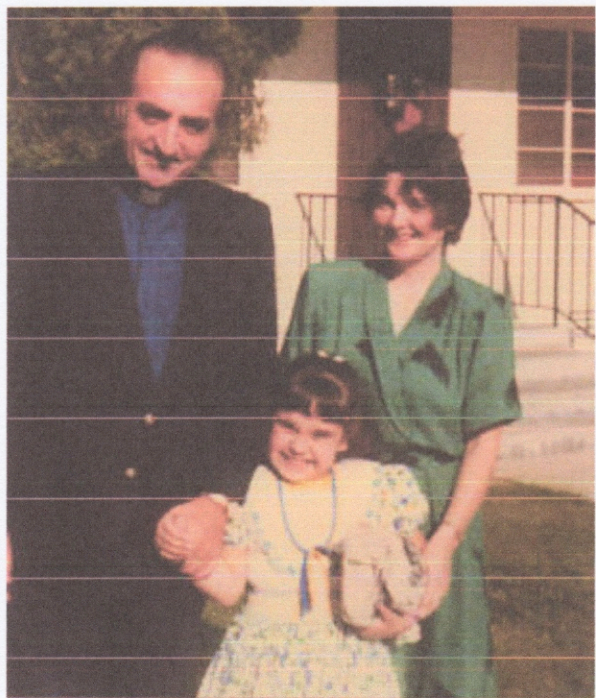


PHOTO: Jacinta and Father Ramón

"Father Ramón was my spiritual director here in California since 1977. For me, he was very special because he knew me since I was 12 years old. He always gave me excellent advice which I hope to always follow. I'm going to miss him a lot. Yet, like he said: "Trust in Divine Providence always." I feel that he will continue to guide me from Heaven." - Jacinta Gonzalez Moynihan

FAREWELL

Two days before Father Ramón died, Jacinta and Jeff went to see him in the hospital. Jacinta brought her crucifix kissed by the Virgin at Garabandal and said to him: "Father, this is the same crucifix I gave you to kiss at Garabandal when the Blessed Virgin cured you of your broken ankle. She loves you very much." He eagerly kissed the crucifix and then momentarily closed his eyes

with a tear rolling out of each one. His funeral Mass was celebrated at Saint Kevin's on November 17, and the Church which held 1,000 people, was filled to capacity. Afterwards, the body was reserved in a morgue for about two weeks before being transferred to Spain. On December 3, it was interred in the cemetery of the Jesuit shrine at Loyola where the remains of his brothers, Frs. Luis and Marcelino, are also located. Prior to interment, the casket was opened for the benefit of his kin: two sisters-in-law, one niece and two nephews and their families, and they all were edified to have had this last glimpse of their beloved relative and at peace knowing that his body has been safely returned to Spain for burial.

HIS LEGACY

Father Ramón was a dedicated priest and religious who never went up to Garabandal for the ecstasies without first getting permission from his superior and the diocesan bishop. At the end of 1961, the prohibition on priests visiting Garabandal was also applied to Father Ramón (the chancery thought he was influencing the girls). From then on, he did not return to the village until 1988 when Bishop del Val removed the ban.

He was very circumspect, and as the many proofs he received show, he was no pushover in accepting the events as coming from God. He would never speak before the Church and say that Garabandal was supernatural. What he would say was that the ecstasies were facts that really happened.

As he grew older, he reflected more and more on the events and the many graces he received. During the funeral eulogy, his good friend Father Javier Altuna, S.J., mentioned that being cured by the Blessed Virgin had made a great impression on him.

The entire Garabandal movement is indebted to Father Ramón Andreu for his great contribution to the cause. And while the Blessed Virgin may have chosen Father Luis for a unique place in the events, she also chose Father Ramón for a singularly significant role. May he rest in peace.



Jacinta and Sister Refugio Lopez, who was with Father Ramón when he died, make their final farewell.

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