

Garabandal and Purgatory - 2

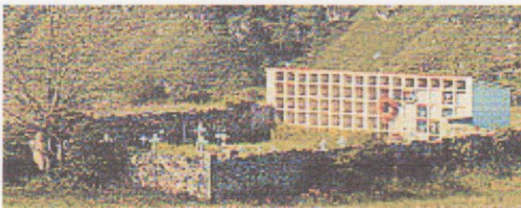
Purgatory is another subject rarely preached today even though almost everyone who is saved will have to spend at least some time there. We know from the lives of the saints and other holy persons who have received revelations about the hereafter, that very few people go straight to Heaven. Purgatory is, so to speak, the last leg of our journey to God.

The sufferings of sense and of loss in Purgatory are said to surpass all human sufferings while at the same time, as St. Catherine of Genoa tells us "there is no happiness comparable to that of the soul in Purgatory except that of the saints in Heaven." The reason for their happiness is that they are safe and cannot be lost. To illustrate the seriousness of what is at stake, Padre, now Saint Pio, after hearing a fellow friar say that according to one tradition, a certain pope would be in Purgatory until the end of the world, interrupted and said: "If only it were the will of God that we too could have such certitude of salvation, I would agree to it from this very moment." [*The Holy Souls*, Fr. Alessio Parente, O.F.M., Cap.]

Spiritual Work of Mercy

Our faith teaches us that we can and should help the souls in Purgatory with our prayers, sacrifices and Masses.

At Garabandal, Our Lady reminded us of this duty to assist the faithful departed and She could not have chosen a better place in which to do that than San Sebastian de Garabandal with its time-honored custom of remembering the dead. Each evening at dusk one of the women went through the town ringing a bell reminding the villagers to pray for the deceased. And the feasts of All Saints and All Souls at the beginning of November were always celebrated with great solemnity.



Normally, the villagers had a deathly fear of the town burial ground and never went there, that is, until the apparitions. The Blessed Virgin led the visionaries in ecstasy in the cemetery and the villagers who followed them on those occasions were not afraid being with the girls in ecstasy.

Conchita's aunt Maximina described one incident in a letter to the Pifarré family of Barcelona: "We went to the cemetery singing. There they recited a mystery of the rosary on their knees. At the gate, Conchita stretched her arm through the bars with the crucifix in her hand. And it seemed that she was holding it out to be kissed! It was a moving experience, even for the hardest hearts.

Conchita's mother, Aniceta, recalled one "horrible night" because of the weather when she accompanied her daughter in ecstasy and they *stayed for a long time* praying for the departed at the gate of the cemetery.

During the month of November, the girls' attention to the faithful departed was noted by their many visits to the cemetery in ecstasy. Conchita was especially involved in these visits. Here is an excerpt from a letter dated November 6, 1962, written by Maximina to Dr. and Mrs. Ortiz of Santander:

Conchita goes to the cemetery very often, and the other day she and Maria Dolores went. They walked singing the rosary -- now they've told us all to sing it -- and we went with them to the

cemetery. There they stopped singing the rosary and recited it with great devotion. They had never entered inside, but on that day, Conchita opened the gate and we went in. Oh! You can't imagine how much respect that inspired in us!

First they went to the grave of Conchita's father. They knelt down with tremendous devotion, placing the cross on the ground; and afterwards, they gave it to the Virgin to kiss. What the one girl did, they went to the tomb of my husband. Again they knelt ... This was very hard for me. From there they came over to me and gave me the crucifix to kiss many times. Then they went to another tomb and then to my mother's.... You know how they have their heads back in ecstasy without seeing anything -- well you should have seen how easily they found the graves!

Visits to the Houses

Prayer for the faithful departed was again noticed at Garabandal when the visionaries, led by Our Lady, visited the village homes. One night, while lodging at Maximina's house, Fr. José Ramon Garcia de la Riva received a visit from Mari Loli in ecstasy. He recounted the incident in his *Memoirs* as the girl appeared in the door of his room: "... Loli appeared in ecstasy. She fell to her knees and slowly began to make her way, on her knees, toward the wall that was facing me. This impressed me very much even though I didn't know at the time that when the girls visited the homes in ecstasy, almost the first thing they did was to pray for the deceased members of the family. On the wall in front of me was a large photograph of Maximina and her husband, who had been dead for some years. Kneeling under the photograph, Loli prayed for a short while."

One final reference to Purgatory at Garabandal has to do with the articles kissed by the Blessed Virgin during the events. Our Lady told Conchita that those who wear them with faith and confidence will do their Purgatory on earth.

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see also [Garabandal and Purgatory](#) article by Fr. Pelletier.

