

Garabandal and Purgatory



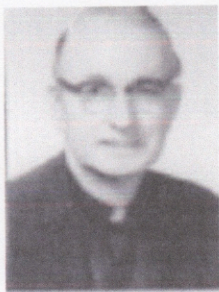
This issue of Garabandal Magazine (NEEDLES) deals with purgatory. The subject was chosen in response to Our Lady's wish at Garabandal to think often of this place of purgation and to offer prayers and sacrifices for those detained there.

Is purgatory a subject of importance? Is it really necessary to discuss this aspect of Christian life when there are so many seemingly more important issues with which to be concerned? NEEDLES must answer: Yes, it is very important. Oftentimes Our Lady dramatically called attention to purgatory by taking the seers, in ecstasy, to the village cemetery to pray for the dead. This dramatization bears much significance and

commands our attention because it was fostered by the Mother of God.

In modern times very little attention is given to purgatory. It is spoken of only rarely and in many schools the subject is no longer taught. Many of our Catholic youth know nothing of reparation - much less of purgation. Purgatory is considered a negative aspect of our faith and therefore is not expounded upon. Yet the Blessed Virgin, through Her deeds at Garabandal, teaches otherwise. IT IS IMPORTANT! Souls are suffering untold torments while waiting for the charity of their living brothers and sisters to relieve them. Our loved ones detained there, who have done much for us while living on earth, await our intercession with God for their release.

It is our sincere hope that the articles on purgatory in this issue of NEEDLES will inspire our readers to respond to Our Lady's plea with many Masses, prayers and sacrifices offered for the release of those poor souls. God love you.



By Joseph A. Pelletier, A.A.

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The messages that come to us through apparitions such as Lourdes, Fatima and Garabandal are not doctrinal revelations and they add nothing to the deposit of faith. They are commands or directives given by God to His People, indicating the things they should do, the religious or devotional practices they need to adopt or maintain at some precise historical time of spiritual need. Even the prophetic element found in such messages is directly related to action and attitudes and their immediate purpose is to inspire and direct the People of God.

Seen in the light of these considerations, the message of Garabandal is very significant. It appears as a preventive antidote prepared by an all-wise and loving God in view of a spiritual tempest about to break upon the Church. Though in preparation for some years before the opening of the Ecumenical Council, Vatican II in the fall of 1962, the storm only manifested itself in a serious way during the Council. That storm grew in

fury during the Council and in the first few years after it. God anticipated all this and gave the remedy to His Church through the apparitions of [Garabandal](#). About 2,000 of these occurred from the middle of 1961 to the end of 1965. The messages received through these apparitions gave us the answer to the problems that began to beset the Church. Mary and the rosary, the Eucharist and the priesthood, were among the major things that came under attack. Purgatory and hell also suffered from the onslaught of some of the new thinking. All these points of our Catholic doctrine were affirmed at Garabandal in one way or another. God, through Mary, His Messenger, was telling us to maintain our traditional belief and devotional practices in regard to all these things, and a number of other things also.

An Indirect Teaching

The message concerning purgatory was taught at Garabandal indirectly through the actions of the girls, as was so much of the Garabandal message. It was a lesson imparted not through words but through deeds, by being lived and practised. Our Lady led the children in ecstasy to pray for the souls in purgatory. Implicit in this prayer was the teaching that all souls who are saved do not go directly or immediately to heaven. Some of them are not yet ready to see God and must be purified by making atonement for their sins in an intermediary place that is appropriately called purgatory or place of purification.

There is much mystery in the way God works. Scripture tells us that His ways are not our ways. Yet, we can often see a certain appropriateness in what He does. This applies to apparitions as well as to other things. At Garabandal, the rosary and prayer for the souls in purgatory were important parts of the message that were frequently taught through the actions of the girls in ecstasy. And both were religious practices already very dear to the hearts of the people in the village prior to the apparitions.

Garabandal and the Poor Souls



The people of Garabandal have had a long standing tradition in regard to prayers for the souls in purgatory. The month of November, dedicated to prayer for these souls, and especially the first of November, Feast of All Saints, and the second of November, the Remembrance of all the Faithful Departed, were celebrated with great religious fervor at the liturgical functions held in the local church. What is more remarkable is the call to prayer for the souls of the departed each day of the year. This is carried out by a child who goes through the streets and lanes of the village, striking a tin can as he walks along.

Prayer for the Dead at the Cemetery

Our Lady confirmed, as it were, this custom of praying for the dead by frequently leading the girls in ecstasy to do this very thing. She led them to the village cemetery, either alone, or in various numbers. Quite significantly, this happened more often during the month of November than at other times of the year. The significance of this is heightened by the fact that the Spanish people are not really given to visiting the graves of their dead. In fact, as a general rule the girls in ecstasy did not enter the cemetery. They stayed at the wrought iron gate that gives access to the square stone walled plot of land which stands in isolation in a field a few hundred yards to the northwest of the village.

In the first volume of [Se Fue con Prisas a la Montana](#), Father Eusebio Garcia de Pesquera, O.F.M., Cap., who writes under the pen name of Dr. Gobelás, relates an incident involving Conchita, her mother, Aniceta,

and the cemetery. The event occurred on an unusually bad night. Aniceta candidly admits that she is a fearful person and very much afraid of going out alone at night. She would never venture to go alone in the dark to the remote and isolated area of the cemetery. However, she makes this very interesting observation that her fear of the darkness of night disappeared whenever she was with one of the girls in ecstasy.

On this particularly wild, stormy night, Aniceta was completely alone with her daughter in ecstasy as the two of them went to the cemetery. They stopped at the gate and prayed for A CONSIDERABLE WHILE FOR THE DEAD. Then, still alone, they returned to the village. Conchita was in ecstasy all the while. Once at the village, she began to go through the streets and lanes singing the rosary, with her mother answering as best she could. Aniceta says that her daughter normally sang very poorly, "but when she was in ecstasy she was transformed and wonderful things happened to her." The sound of the singing drew some of the people out of their homes and they joined the child and her mother. (pp. 125-126.)

June 30, 1962

Don Luis Navas Carrillo, a lawyer from Palencia, witnessed two apparitions on Saturday night, June 30, 1962. The first one involved only Conchita and included prayer for the dead.

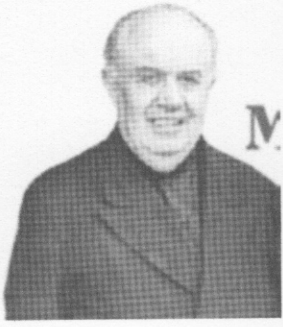
Our Lady appeared to Conchita in the kitchen of her house during the early part of the night. Shortly after going into ecstasy, the child left her house, followed by a good number of people, both from the village and from outside the village. She walked through the streets and lanes reciting some decades of the rosary and singing others. She walked backwards in her ecstasy and this made a great impression on Don Luis. Shortly after this, Conchita went to Mari Cruz' house. Finding the door locked she knocked vigorously until it was opened. Then she mounted a steep stairway leading to the second floor where Mari Cruz and her family lived. She found her friend and placed the crucifix which she carried to her lips so that she could kiss it.

Departing from Mari Cruz' house Conchita went to the cemetery, which is to the rear of the house and not too far away. She stopped for a while in front of the gate of the cemetery and then as she stood facing the tombs inside, she made a "solemn" sign of the cross.

July 21, 1962

Another apparition, in which prayer for the deceased was included, took place on July 21, 1962. We owe the information concerning this happening again to Don Luis Carrillo. It started with Loli who went into ecstasy at eleven o'clock at night followed by another involving only Conchita. It started in her house, as was so often the case during the numerous apparitions of Garabandal. Then, again following the pattern of many other apparitions, Conchita left her home in ecstasy and walked through the various streets of the village. She went to village church, made a complete turn around it and headed for the cemetery. There she went to her knees at the gate where she stayed for a while before departing for the *calleja* or sunken lane.

September 1, 1962



The pastor of Garabandal, Don Valentin Marichalar, took notes of what he observed during his many visits to the village at the time of the apparitions. He relates an event involving a visit to the cemetery by all four girls. It took place on September 1, 1962.

M. At about nine in the evening, after the public rosary in the village church, Conchita went into ecstasy at the door of the church, a place where many apparitions began. A few minutes later, Our Lady appeared also to Loli and Jacinta and then after a few more minutes to Mari Cruz. In the first days of the apparitions, Our Lady always appeared to the four girls together. This pattern changed quite quickly and the Blessed Virgin began appearing to one, two or three of the girls as well as to all four together. By September of 1962, apparitions to all four girls together were rare.

The girls then began an ecstatic march in which Loli and Jacinta went together while Conchita and Mari Cruz walked alone. The four girls went to the pines, followed by a large number of people. They recited the rosary and left the pines, walking backwards in ecstasy and still praying the rosary. On this return march, Conchita joined Loli and Jacinta, while Mari Cruz went alone. ALL FOUR WENT TO THE CEMETERY and from there to the church.

Prayer for the Dead in the Village Homes

Another way in which Our Lady taught us indirectly about purgatory through the actions of the girls was when She led them in ecstasy to pray in the homes of the villagers for the deceased (and the sick) of the families dwelling there. This happened very often, much more frequently than the visits to the cemetery. It will suffice to take one incident which is very well documented. It involves Father Jose Ramon Garcia de la Riva, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows, Barro de Llanes, Asturias, who witnessed some 200 ecstasies and has written a book about his experiences in Garabandal during the time of the apparitions. The following facts are taken from his book entitled *Memoirs of a Country Pastor at Garabandal* (2nd revised French edition, 1972, pp. 80-85.)

During the month of August 1962, Don Jose Ramon spent a few days at Garabandal. As he left the village church one evening after the recitation of the rosary, he was told that Jacinta had had an apparition and was walking through the village streets in ecstasy. Rather than seek her out and follow her he went to her house with her mother, Maria, and had supper. Then he went to Maximina's house where he was to spend the night.

Remorse overtook him, especially for not having gone to see Jacinta in ecstasy. When he learned that Loli had announced that the Blessed Virgin would appear to her the next morning at three o'clock, he decided to get up and go to this as a "sacrifice."

As he was very tired for having done much walking during the day, he slept "like a log." However, he was awakened by the sound of someone running to the house he was in. It was Loli's brother, Nandin. He banged on the door and shouted to Maximina asked her to open it quickly because Loli was coming. Then Don Jose Ramon heard someone knocking at the door of his bedroom. He barely had time to pull off the bed-covers and answer "come in" when the door was violently pushed open and Loli in ecstasy, holding a crucifix in her hand, came into the room. She went abruptly to her knees, in a crashing fall that was so characteristic of the apparitions of Garabandal and deeply impressed those who witnessed it. Then, still on her knees, the child advanced toward the wall facing the bed Father Jose Ramon was in. On that wall was a large portrait of Maximina, and her husband who had been dead for several years. Loli recollected herself and prayed for the deceased husband. Turning around, and still on her knees, she went to the bed and made a sign of the cross

over the blanket with her crucifix. Then she presented the crucifix to the priest so that he could kiss it and she smiled. Finally, she made a half-turn toward the door and advanced toward it on her knees. At the door, she rose to her feet and departed.

Don Jose Ramon concludes the story of this incident with the observation that the same thing happened to him another time; again at Maximina's house and at three-fifty in the morning.

We should be grateful to God and give Him thanks for having used the apparitions of Garabandal to reassure us concerning so many points of our Catholic doctrine, among which are our belief in the existence of Purgatory and in the help that our prayers bring the souls of the departed. May the facts related to this article stimulate us to pray more frequently and more fervently for our dear departed ones.

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