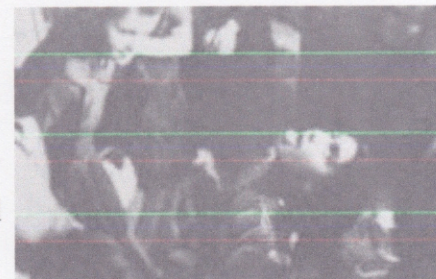


The "Little" Miracle

From *The Apparitions of Garabandal*, reprinted with kind permission of St. Michael's Garabandal Center, Maria Saraco

"The Sacred Host appeared on her tongue. It was totally unexpected . . . (She) held the Sacred Host motionless on her tongue for about two minutes before consuming it normally . . ."

The little girls at Garabandal were often seen to fall to their knees in ecstasy, pray, take up the customary attitude for receiving Communion, open their mouths, and swallow something. A priest once remarked to Conchita: "What you say cannot be true, because angels cannot consecrate." Conchita merely shrugged. But, a few days later, she explained: "I asked the Virgin and you're right. She told me the Angel takes the Hosts from the tabernacles on earth . . ."



Further on, Conchita's diary reads as follows: "Since we insisted so much with the Blessed Virgin and the Angel that they should work a miracle, on June 22nd, when I was about to receive Holy Communion, he said to me: "I am going to work a miracle; not me, God; but through my intercession and yours." And I asked him: "And what's it going to be?" And he said: "When I give you the Sacred Host, people will see It on your tongue." I reflected a bit. Then I said to him: "But, when you give me Holy Communion, the Host can be seen on my tongue anyway!" And he told me this was not so, that the people round about could not see It. But, the day he performed the miracle. It would, be seen. And I said to him: "**But, that is only a little miracle.**" And he laughed . . . And that day, after telling me this, he went away."

Next day, she again received Communion from the hands of the Angel, and asked him when the miracle would take place. The Angel replied that the Blessed Virgin would tell her the date. When she asked the Virgin the same question, Conchita recounts in her diary that Our Lady revealed that the following Friday she would hear a voice, and the voice would tell her the date.

Date foretold of Miracle of Visible Host

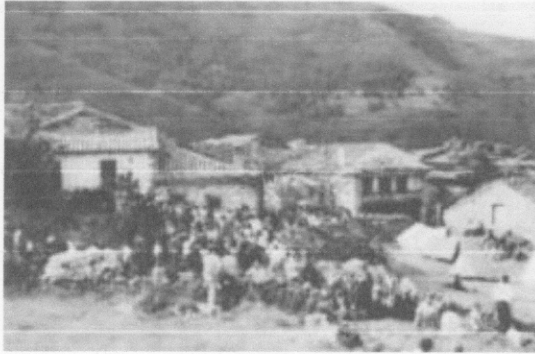
Her diary goes on: "Friday came, and as the Virgin had told me, while I was in the pines I noticed a voice telling me that July 18th was the day when the miracle would be performed. The voice I heard said to me: 'the little miracle, as you call it'."

In obedience to the instructions she had been given, from July 3rd onwards, Conchita commenced to announce the prodigy of the visible Communion with the same calm and self-assurance that she now shows in foretelling the great miracle which is to come "so everyone will believe."

She wrote the Bishop a letter which was delivered to him personally by Don Placido Ruiloba Arias of Santander, who has seen a great many of the wonders at Garabandal and has shown the utmost prudence and

insight in the close check he has kept on the events we are relating.

Hearing that the child was sending letters all over the country announcing the phenomenon, Fr. Marichalar thought it advisable to suggest that she should not write any more. Similar suggestions were put forward by other people, fearful lest the miracle might not materialize. But, Conchita assured them that she was writing on the Angel's orders.



The 18th of July (1962) came, and the streets of the hamlet were filled with a growing throng of pilgrims and sight-seers. As the day wore on, the uneasiness increased with the swelling numbers of the visitors. Near Conchita's house, a village dance was under way to the strains of bagpipes and drums. So it came about that, within a very short distance of one another, there were two groups, one dancing, the other saying the rosary. Since many were afraid that there would be no miracle at all if the dancing continued, Don Ignacio Rubio asked Conchita whether it might not be wise to ask them to stop it. To which Conchita replied that, "dancing or no dancing," the miracle would

take place, as she puts it in her diary. "And then," she adds, "they didn't bother about the dancing any longer."

"When it began to get dark," Conchita goes on, "people became uneasy because it was getting late for them, but since the Angel and the Virgin had told me that the miracle would come, I was not worried, because neither the Virgin nor the Angel has ever told me anything would happen which didn't happen."

It is truly admirable to see the faith of this girl who has never for a moment doubted the truth of anything that she has heard in her locutions or from the Vision's lips.

Let us continue to quote from her diary:

"When ten o'clock arrived, I had a summons, and another at midnight. Later, at two o'clock, the Angel appeared to me in my room. In the house were my mother Aniceta, my brother Aniceto, my uncle Elias, my cousin Lucia and Maria del Carmen Fontaneda from Aguilar del Campo. The Angel stayed with me for a while and, as on the other days, he said to me: "Say the 'I confess,' and think of Him whom you are about to receive." I did as I was told, and then he gave me Holy Communion. And after he had given me Communion, he told me to say the "Soul of Christ, sanctify me" and make my thanksgiving, and to keep my tongue out until he disappeared and the Virgin came. And that is what I did. When the Virgin came, she told me that not everybody believed yet."

Prophecy Fulfilled

This is Conchita's account. On falling into a rapture, of course, she had no longer had any notion of what she was doing. The fact is that she entered a state of ecstasy and, her head flung back, walked out of her room, down the stairs and out into the street, followed by the crowds who surrounded her and scarcely let her advance as far as a street-corner, so eager were they all to get as close as possible. There, she thudded to her knees in an impressive fall. She next stuck her tongue out, and those about her could see that it was quite bare. But, a split second later, a thickish white Host formed and she kept it there on her tongue in full view for quite some time.

Here is an account of this inexplicable episode, related by Don Alejandro Damians of Barcelona.

Providence dictated that he should find himself some eighteen inches in front of Conchita at the moment of the miracle, and he even succeeded in using his movie camera.

His story reads as follows: "At one time or another, I have been called upon to relate my impressions of the phenomenon which I was lucky enough to see in San Sebastian de Garabandal on July 18th, last year.

Depending on my audience, my frame of mind, the presence of people who had heard the story previously, and many other factors, my story was more or less long, and more or less well told.

To avoid any possible variations (rather than contradictions) that might crop up, I thought it would be a sound idea to confine my account to reading a statement that I myself would write calmly, after due close examination of each point. Some people of reliable judgment advised me to do so, and I resolved to waste no time in drawing up this document which may give you a clear idea of the part I played in events at San Sebastian de Garabandal.

My report starts on Monday, July 16, 1962.

I already knew that the first phenomenon at San Sebastian de Garabandal had been foretold for the 18th; at least, it was to be the first public prodigy of importance, because there, like everywhere else, God's wonders never cease in our day to day existence.

I have always considered myself as a man of faith. I have never needed to see miracles in order to convince myself of the truth of my religion. But, the previous March, human curiosity had already taken me on a visit to the little hamlet in the province of Santander. Without being especially impressionable, I must admit that the kindness of the village-folk, the raptures of the children, the atmosphere of the proximity of the supernatural that strikes one as soon as one sets foot in the place, and the strange inward, personal things that I had experienced there, had all made some impact on my senses. Notwithstanding, I felt that was enough experience in this line, and though I quite looked forward to returning to Garabandal, I was rather undecided about taking that particular opportunity.

I confess that I enjoy my creature comforts, and this is perhaps why I was prepared to spend four days' holiday at our house at Premia de Mar, trying my level best to ignore the fact that, on the 18th, there would take place a spectacle which I was hardly likely to have a chance of seeing again anywhere. I tried to make excuses for my indifference, arguing that, if I was fated to go to the village, then God's will would be done without any help from me.

A cousin of mine was eager to go, and I had left the decision to him. We had arranged that, before setting off, he would pass through Premia on the 16th, on his way back from a town up the coast, to confirm whether or not I should join the party. The time we had agreed on was between six and seven o'clock. I waited in vain, until I finally decided to make myself comfortable and have supper. This I did; by then, I was fully resolved not to interrupt my holiday.

Half-way through supper, my cousin turned up to say that family affairs made it impossible for him to go, but that a friend of his was willing to go if he could only find someone to keep him company on the journey.

I turned the invitation down. My excuses for not going waxed more and more plausible; the lateness of the hour; my cousin's backing out; and the idea of making this trip in the company of someone who was almost a stranger at the time. All these were fine pretexts for my remaining at home.

It was at this juncture, in the most natural way, that I became fully aware of the Divine Will, in the shape of pressure brought to bear on me, not just by my wife and cousin, of whom such a reaction was to be expected, but mainly by my son, whose extreme youth hardly seemed to warrant it. Persuasion by my wife, advice from my cousin, and supplications from my son. At last, I gave in.

There ensued a whirlwind of activity.

A telephone call from Premia to my cousin's friend; our rendezvous for 4 a.m.; the drive up to our Barcelona apartment to pack a bag with the bare essentials and leave a note at my office to say I should be away for a few days. Everything was done in a rush; it was a nightmare.

At 4 a.m. sharp, my friend, his brother, my wife and I departed in a Renault Dauphine.

And now comes a point which was perhaps destined to be the most important of all. Before we drove off, my cousin lent me a movie-camera belonging to a friend of his, giving me a few quick instructions on how to use it, since I was totally ignorant of such matters.

I need not go into any details of our journey. Suffice it to say that we did not bother to sleep on the way, and we reached San Sebastian de Garabandal at about 10 p.m. on the 17th.

The little village was packed with strangers. Without any publicity, the news of the first visible proof had spread all over Spain, and a multitude of people from all parts of the country and every walk of life had brought with them an atmosphere of expectation that could be cut with a knife. Among the visitors were several priests, who were chatting with Fr. Valentin Marichalar, parish priest of Cosio. He had come up to San Sebastian because the following day was the feast of the patron saint of the village.



We found accommodation at the home of Encarna, an aunt of one of the visionaries. There, we deposited our scant luggage and immediately went round to Conchita's, for she was the visionary who had announced the miracle.

That night, we saw some trances. They were as wonderful to behold as ever, and made an even greater impact on us since we were waiting for that visible proof of the supernatural.

It seems absurd to speak of 'the next day,' when, in my mind, the 17th and 18th were all one unbroken day; that night, which I found endless, was chased away by a dim, overcast, leaden-gray dawn that was no more than a continuation of the night hours.

Mass that morning was followed by a slight air of bustle as the village made ready for its celebrations. It was barely noticeable in the morning, but the early afternoon brought mounting expectation.

I spent almost the whole day at Conchita's, with my wife, our companion, several priests and one or two other people.

In the course of the day, I had the opportunity of having a long talk with *Fray Justo*, a Franciscan priest with whom I have since kept up correspondence. In a letter to a friend of mine, he stated how incredulous he

had become on leaving Garabandal after the prodigy. It was not to be long before he saw the light and changed his earlier attitude. But, that is another story.

Two factors were present on that occasion to cast doubts on whether or not the expected would take place. One was the festive atmosphere in the village, and the other was the presence of priests.

On certain previous occasions when the first of these circumstances had occurred, the children had not fallen into a rapture. As for the presence of priests, it had always resulted in the child receiving Holy Communion in the normal fashion, and never from the Angel.

The atmosphere certainly lent itself to doubt, because, despite these proven facts, the rumor spread among the visitors that Conchita had personally notified some of the priests to come to Garabandal on the 18th, and that, when questioned about it that very day, she had declared that neither the *fiesta* nor the presence of the priests would prevent the prodigy taking place.

At midday, Conchita announced that she was going to have lunch. This convinced us that, if what we were waiting for was the Communion, then we should have to wait at least another three hours for it.

So, amid doubts, confidence, tedium and hope, that day dragged on into night.

The 18th had passed uneventfully. People were discouraged and openly incredulous.

Finally the Event

It was almost one o'clock in the morning on the 19th, and some had already begun to make their way home, when the news spread like lightning that, as measured by the sun, the 18th did not really end until 1:25 a.m.

By that time, those of us at Conchita's house knew one thing for sure; Conchita had received her first summons.

Shortly afterwards, we were asked to go outside. I stood in the doorway with a friend of Conchita's family to prevent anyone entering.

From where I was standing, I could see the kitchen and the staircase leading to the upper floor.

Conchita was upstairs, in company with a cousin and an uncle, I think, when she was seized into an ecstasy. The first I knew was when I saw her descend the stairs very fast, wearing that classic expression which softens and embellishes their features.

As she crossed the threshold, the crowd waiting before the house opened just sufficient time to let her pass, and then the multitude was milling round her, like a river that has burst its banks and sweeps away everything in its path. I saw people falling to the ground and trampled by others. As far as I know, nobody was hurt. But the sight of that fantastic mob on the run, shoving and elbowing one another, could not be more terrifying.

I attempted to follow Conchita, but a crowd, fifteen or twenty feet deep separated us. I sometimes caught a vague glimpse of her. She turned left along the lane formed by the side of her house and a low wall. She turned left again, and there, right in the middle of the alley, which is fairly wide at that spot, she suddenly fell

to her knees.

Her fall was so unexpected that the avalanche of people were carried past on either side of her by the weight of their own numbers. I was fortunate in not being carried past with them, and before I knew it, I unexpectedly found myself to her right, with her face a mere eighteen inches from mine. I staunchly withstood the pushing of those behind me, striving with all my might not to be wrenched from my vantage point. I succeeded.

The shoves gradually ceased and relative calm ensued.

Shortly before midnight, the clouds obscuring the sky had slowly drifted away, and the blue mantle of the heavens had become studded with stars shining about the moon.

In their light, and that of an infinite number of torches in the alley, I could see quite plainly that Conchita's mouth was open and her tongue out in the position customary when going to Communion. She was prettier than ever. Far from causing laughter or looking the slightest bit ridiculous, her expression and attitude had about them an awesome, moving mysticism.

Suddenly, without my knowing quite how, without really realizing it, without Conchita changing her expression in the slightest, the Sacred Host appeared on her tongue. It was totally unexpected. It did not seem to have been deposited there, but might be described rather as having materialized there, faster than the human eye could see.

It is impossible to describe the feeling that came over me at that moment. I still relive it today when I recall it. In these or similar words, I have related the occurrence a thousand times just as it happened, and I have never been able to reach this point without experiencing again those marvelous feelings of tenderness, of love and of joy that bring irrepressible tears to my eyes.

Afterwards, I was told that Conchita had held the Sacred Host motionless on her tongue for about two minutes, before consuming it normally and finally kissing the crucifix in her hand. I was told some months later that this long wait was due to the fact that the Angel had instructed Conchita to keep it in sight until the Blessed Virgin appeared to her.

Personally, I hardly noticed the passage of time. I only remember, as in a dream, voices crying out to me to get down, and I felt a heavy blow on my head.

Hanging from my wrist was the movie-camera. Paying no attention to the protests from behind me, scarcely remembering my cousin's instructions, I pressed the button and filmed the last few moments of Conchita's Communion.

I had never filmed anything in my life before, and I only knew that I had succeeded in focusing on the subject. But, in view of my total lack of experience, I seriously doubted whether the film would come out.

Still in her rapture, Conchita rose to her feet and disappeared from my view, followed by Garabandal *en masse*.

Afterwards, I heard that the ecstasy had lasted almost an hour.

For my part, I had had enough. I stayed where I was, alone in a corner. Leaning back against the wall, I

clung to the movie-camera with my last remaining strength. I do not know how long I stood there. When a calm lassitude had replaced the nervous tension in my limbs, I rambled aimlessly through the village streets. I exchanged impressions with people as I went, and finally made my way back to Conchita's house. She was not in a trance now, and she wrote a little dedicatory note for me on a holy picture.

I said goodbye to her and to Fr. Valentin Marichalar, who had sent for me to ask my address. At about 3:15 a.m., feeling totally exhausted, I set out from San Sebastian de Garabandal bound for Barcelona.

Not for one minute did it cross my mind that the movie-camera could have recorded anything. For one thing, there was my ignorance of how to handle the camera, and, for another, the scant light, because the phenomenon took place in the dim glow cast by flashlights. Nevertheless, I took the film to be developed. And now came another "miracle." On the film there appeared seventy-nine frames showing the scene. Jogging by the people around me had resulted in many of the photographs not centering properly on the subject, and they only showed the top of Conchita's head. But, several had recorded the picture quite clearly. Of these, I have chosen one which I enclose with this report.



PICTURE: Mr. Damians photograph of the Miracle of the Host

"The Sacred Host appeared on her tongue. It was totally unexpected . . . (She) held the Sacred Host motionless on her tongue for about two minutes before consuming it normally . . ."

I do not know what you think of all this, or what decision the Church will adopt after weighing the facts. I

honestly have no idea. The only thing I can assure you without the slightest shadow of a doubt is that, on July 18th, 1962, at San Sebastian de Garabandal, two miracles were worked. The first was the Holy Communion administered to Conchita, which was a supernatural occurrence of overwhelming proportions. The second, though just a small miracle, was this sign of the infinite condescension of Our Blessed Lady; for, only her infinite condescension explains my having been there to see the phenomenon in the first place, and its having been recorded on my film."

Some Still Doubted

Conchita writes: "After the miracle which Our Lord God worked through the intercession of the angel, St. Michael, those who had seen the whole miracle, and some of those who had just seen the Host on my tongue, firmly believed; and many of those who had not seen believed it too on hearing the reports of those who had. But, as the days went by, people began to doubt, and some said that it was I who had placed the Host on my tongue. And there was nothing but talk of the Host for a long time."

"A Franciscan Father, Fr. Justo, said it was a lie, and that I was the one who had done it. But, two or three days later, I got a letter from this Father asking forgiveness for thinking so ill of me, and in his letter he said it was the devil who had tempted him. And, shortly after I got the letter, three Fathers arrived, sent by him, because he had to explain many things to them about Garabandal, about the Virgin; and those three Fathers told me that Fr. Justo has spent several very unhappy days and sleepless nights, thinking about the Sacred Host, but that he had now recovered and was very happy and believed very firmly."

Conchita wrote a letter to one of the members of the Commission. In her missive, she complained about his assertion that she herself had been the author of the miracle of the Holy Communion. Here is an extract from that letter: "What a responsibility for me before God! Don't you think I have sense enough by now to think of that . . .? And besides, I would have realized that people would notice; and anyway, I would not be clever enough to do a thing like that. It was the angel, St. Michael, who put a visible Host on my tongue for people to see."

And her letter ends with the following paragraph: "I am also certain the Miracle will come, because the Virgin told me so, and I know the date of the Miracle, too, *and* what will happen in the miracle that the Blessed Virgin is going to work for "the world. I am as certain that the miracle is coming as I am that two and two make four."

Having proved Conchita's genuine state of ecstasy on the day of the visible Communion, it is plain that the unconsciousness, rigidity and other phenomena that occur in a rapture are entirely incompatible with the artificiality of a pretense. The Host seen in the photograph could not have been placed in her mouth by Conchita herself or by any member of the family, because the state of trance makes this deceit impossible.

A Frenchman, whose name we need not mention, was also just in front of Conchita. But, he did not succeed in bringing his movie camera into action. In an interview with *Senor* Damians, both of them witnesses of the phenomenon, he attributed this fact to his not being in a state of Grace at the time. Here is his own explanation of the scene:

"I had everything prepared to film the miracle; everything was ready, but only at the very last moment, in the last fraction of a second, did I get a glimpse of the Host disappearing as the child consumed it. And at that instant, I felt a fearful, horrible pain that overwhelmed me; it was the impression that *I could have glimpsed but He had slipped away from me*; and then, I realized that I was in mortal sin. I felt the need to weep in

desperation, and I understood in one instant what Hell must be like, and what it meant to live separated from God. From that time on, I have always lived in a state of Grace, and I hope God will allow me to see the miracle, for I am certain that by doing so I shall recover the inner peace of which I am in need."

* * *

Another Witness - Benjamin Gomez

Let us round off our information on this subject with the evidence given by Benjamin Gomez, a farmer from Potes, who frequently went up to Garabandal and was lucky enough to be in front of the child at the instant she received the visible Communion.

In an interview recorded on a tape recorder, he made the following statement:

"I was little more than a hand's breadth away from Conchita at the moment when she put out her tongue; I saw it was quite bare; there was absolutely nothing on it; I could see her tongue quite plainly, and I assure you it didn't make the slightest motion. All at once I found the Host before me. It was white, shining, It reminded me of the snow when it's iced over and the sun glances off it. But, it didn't dazzle the eyes. It was the size of a *five-duro* coin, [One "*duro*" is five pesetas. A *five-duro* or twenty-five peseta coin is about the size of a quarter.] but thicker, as if there were two coins, one on top of the other. It was not quite round. Conchita's face wore that transfigured look this little girl always has in ecstasy. It was the face of an angel. Some people said she must have put the Host there with her hand, or else have had it in her mouth all the time; but I can testify that she didn't move her hands, or raise them to her face either; nor did she draw in her tongue before she stuck it out even farther ... It was without moving it that she received the Host. .. And everybody who was there must have seen this, just as I did, and there were a lot of us. We all had time to contemplate the prodigy at our leisure and without hurry. I didn't believe until that day ... I say that, because it's the truth, and for no other reason, because I'm not so Catholic as to let myself be taken in over this. I have never taken any notice of God in the past, except to curse; or else to offend Him ... I went to Confession last April, but I hadn't been for twenty-three years . . . When I began to come up to Garabandal, the whole village laughed at me. They were surprised that I should be the one to come. 'You've got more sense than to go in for all that', they said to me. And it's true. I have got sense; and that is precisely why I can't help calling a spade a spade . . ."



I have thought it appropriate to include part of his statement in order to show as exactly as possible the evidence given by this tiller of the soil who was a leading witness of the miracle of the Holy Communion in the early hours of July 19th, 1962.

The mystery of Garabandal will be cleared up the day of the miracle, the one which Conchita insistently announces and of which she knows many details.