

Joseph Lomangino: 1930-2014

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On June 18, 2014, the fifty-third anniversary of St. Michael's first appearance at Garabandal and the forty-ninth of the second Message, Joey Lomangino, the blind man who for many years was the leading figure in the worldwide Garabandal apostolate, died from a heart attack at the age of 83. He is survived by his wife, Marilynn, sons Joseph and John, two granddaughters, brothers Frank, Leo, Anthony, and sister Frances. The Requiem Mass was celebrated on June 21 at St. Patrick's Church in Huntington, New York.

Because of a prophecy that Joey would regain his eyesight on the day of the great Miracle, his death caused quite a stir among believers in the apparitions although we are not aware of any fallout as a result. But is this a failed prophecy and therefore detrimental to Garabandal? I do not believe it is nor do I see it as detrimental to the Garabandal cause.

The prophecy from the events concerning Joey was preceded by an experience he had several years before the apparitions, and this excerpt is taken from the book *OUR LADY COMES TO GARABANDAL* by Fr. Joseph Pelletier, A.A.: "On June 27, 1947, when [Joey] was sixteen years old, a truck tire which he was changing [putting air in] exploded. The rim hit him squarely across the lower forehead and eyes, crushing the bones of that area, damaging his eyes beyond repair and severing the olfactory nerve. In a coma almost constantly for three weeks, he regained consciousness quite significantly on July 16, feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Adapting to complete blindness was not easy. Helped by the prayers of his friends, Joey finally turned to God in prayer himself. His first answer came in the form of a voice that awakened him while he was sleeping at home some months after his accident. The voice told him that he would recover his eyesight if he said 17 Hail Marys, 7 Acts of Contrition and 5 Our Fathers three times each day. Joey had never heard the voice before. He thought it might have been the voice of an angel."

In 1961, he went to San Giovanni Rotondo with an uncle and met Padre Pio who called him by his name without any introduction. Joey couldn't get the famed stigmatist out of his mind and two years later he returned to San Giovanni and went to confession to the future saint. It was a life-changing event as he experienced a spiritual conversion. Through St. Pio he also gained his sense of smell even though his olfactory nerve remained severed. Regarding his eyes, Pio said, "I cannot give you sight for your eyes but spiritual sight for your soul."

On the trip, Joey had been accompanied by his friend, Mario Corvais, who had heard about the events taking place in Garabandal and wanted to go there, but Joey, who at the time did not know anything about Garabandal, wanted to stay in San Giovanni where he had found happiness and peace. They decided to ask Padre Pio if the Blessed Virgin was appearing in Garabandal. Pio responded, "Yes." They asked him if they should go there and he said, "Why not?"

So in February of 1963, Joey made his first visit to Garabandal and after meeting Conchita they became lifelong friends. He must have mentioned to her the voice he had heard that told him to say specific prayers three times a day because in a letter to him dated the feast of St. Joseph in 1964, Conchita wrote: "Well today, feast of Saint Joseph, while at the pines, I had a locution with the Blessed Virgin during which she told me that the voice you heard was hers and that you shall

receive new eyes on the very day of the miracle [that will take place in Garabandal]. She also told me that the house of charity you will establish in New York will bring great glory to God.”

In a follow-up message on a holy card, Conchita wrote: “For Joseph Lomangino: The Blessed Virgin told me to tell Joseph that, on the day on which the miracle is performed for the world, he will see. The first thing he shall see will be the miracle which my Son will perform through my intercession, and from that time on he will see permanently.”

TWO PARTS

As one can see, there are two parts of the prophecy concerning Joey. The first that he will regain his eyesight and the second that he will establish a “house of charity” in New York. Since these two prophecies come from the same source, they must both be either true or false. With regard to the establishment of a “house of charity” no one has ever questioned the fulfillment of this prophecy. At the time in 1964, when Joey learned of it, he was contemplating founding a home for the abandoned-afflicted and thought that was what the prophecy referred to. The project, however, never got off the ground. But what Joey did start doing was to go with Mario to the homes of relatives and friends with an album of pictures of Padre Pio and Garabandal with captions in brail and give presentations which later would include a slide show of the Garabandal events (and still later in 1971 Dick Eversons documentary film). These “conferences” were popular and bearing fruit because of the subject matter augmented by Joey’s own communication skills in conveying the importance of the events and messages.

On June 18, 1965, he was present in Garabandal for Conchitas ecstasy in which she would receive Our Lady’s second and final message from St. Michael, and on the following morning he heard Fr. Marcelino Andreu read the Message in English from the door of Conchitas house. This was a clarion call for Joey to redouble his efforts, since Our Lady in this Final Message complained that her first Message had not been complied with and not been made known.

The conferences, first local and then national, increased with new centers sprouting up—some 400 at the peak To satisfy the demand for materials such as leaflets, rosaries, scapulars etc., the New York Center of volunteer workers came into being. When Joeys conferences went international to some thirteen countries, the demand increased all the more.

Over the course of twenty-five to thirty years, millions of scapulars, cord rosaries, leaflets; books and video cassettes by the hundreds if not thousands, were sent out gratis by the New York Center to north, central and south America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Claim can then justifiably be made that the second part of the prophecy has been fulfilled by the coming into existence of the “house of charity” which Joey had never envisioned.

But what about the first part of the prophecy? If it is a true prophecy, which seemingly cannot be fulfilled now with Joeys death, what explanation can be given? Here are two possibilities. If the restoration of Joey’s eyes was conditioned on his saying certain prayers three times a day and if for one reason or another he stopped saying those prayers, the prophecy could not be fulfilled. Another possibility is that Joey in his later years, although well taken care of by his wife, Marilyn,

felt more and more isolated by hearing loss and

Joey with Conchita in 1965 and eight years later as best man for her marriage to Patrick Keena



memory loss being added to his blindness, asked God to take him ahead of time and his request was granted. Conchita was not at all distressed by the news of Joey's death but on the contrary was happy for him that he was released from the bondage of his suffering.

She did not think that Our Lady meant any symbolic understanding of the words of the prophecy.

So, I do believe that the two-fold prophecy concerning Joey was a true prophecy coming from the Blessed Virgin and was only not completely fulfilled because of an action by the subject himself namely Joey. (Some prophecies are conditional such as the Chastisement while others --- the Warning and Miracle --- are not.)

The death of Joey on June 18 is of particular significance. Anyone who tries to use this "unfilled" prophecy as proof that the Garabandal apparitions are not from God, has to content with the fact that the leader of the worldwide Garabandal movement for many years, a role that no one else has ever filled, died on the very day (June 18) that the apparitions began in 1961 and the same day four years later when Our Lady gave Her final message. To attribute this to mere coincidence is not at all convincing especially since St. Pio once said there was no such thing as coincidence.

Joey's death on June 18 also insures his place in the Garabandal story as "the Apostle of Garabandal" for the many years of devoted service, despite his serious handicap, in making Our Lady's message known far and wide. May he rest in peace.

--- Barry Hanratty

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