

# OUR HEAVENLY MOTHER

■ BARRY HANRATTY

*"On July 2, (1961) the little mountain village of San Sebastian de Garabandal would experience a marvelous reoccurrence of Mary's Visitation. With the gesture of a mother who could not wait any longer, her children being in danger once again, she arose and went with haste to the mountain."<sup>1</sup>*

From the very beginning of the Blessed Virgin's appearances in Garabandal, she showed herself as a very approachable loving mother. In her Diary, Conchita writes, "That day [July 2, 1961] we talked a lot with the Virgin, and she with us. We told her everything.... And she laughed as we told her all these things...she was like a mother whose daughter has not seen her for a long time. The daughter quite naturally tells her everything. And this was even more so in our case since we had never seen her before and she was our heavenly Mother."

**Mother and Teacher** Our Lady as mother didn't waste any time to teach the seers. In Conchita's Diary is this excerpt: "The people said that we recited the Creed at the Pines. That day was the first time the Blessed Virgin taught us to pray. Then, still in ecstasy, we went down to the village. When we got to the church we stopped seeing the Blessed Virgin. Since Mari Cruz hadn't seen her for several days, she remained in ecstasy with the Blessed Virgin and went into the church. When she arrived at the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary and of the Archangel Saint Michael, she started to say the Creed very slowly with the Blessed Virgin. Mari Cruz said that the Blessed Virgin took the lead and recited the prayer first, in order to teach her how to pray slowly."



July 2, 1961, the first apparition of Our Lady

The Blessed Mother teaching them the Creed may not have seemed out of the ordinary for all that was happening in Garabandal during those incomparable days. But now, as we look back more than 50 years, Our Lady's teaching the Creed to Mari Cruz and the others had more significance than first realized. In the post Vatican II period, the very tenets of our faith, those professed in the Creed, came under attack. But the Blessed Virgin now glorified in Heaven, cannot utter an untruth which isn't to say that she ever did while living on earth either. Therefore if she pronounced the words of the Creed as we know it, then we can be assured beyond a shadow of a doubt that everything therein is true.

As the Blessed Virgin featured the Rosary at Lourdes and Fatima she would do the same in Garabandal. She instructed the girls to say the Rosary slowly and thinking about the words; and she taught them the mysteries. Conchita's Aunt Maximina, who led the daily Rosary in the village church, was very surprised that the girls knew them, because no one else in the village did. When they prayed the Rosary, they simply prayed one Our Father, ten Hail Marys and one Glory Be five times. The visionaries used the beads in the beginning but later they did not as Our Lady indicated

when to say the Glory Be. When they said the Glory Be, Our Lady bowed her head.

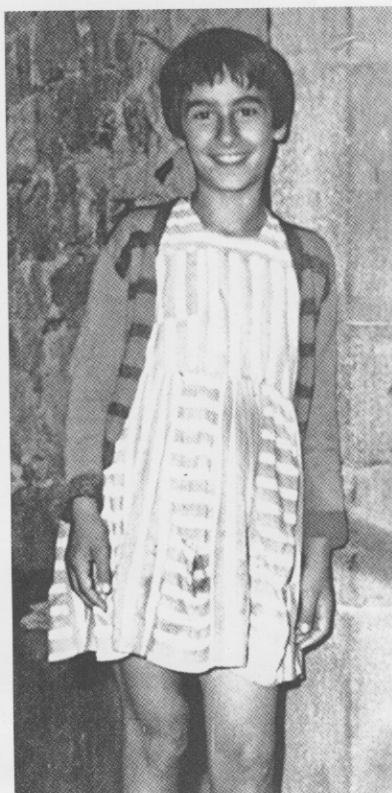
**Mother of Priests** Since we covered Garabandal and the priesthood in the July-August 2018 edition it will suffice to say here that Our Lady showed great predilection for priests mentioning them in almost every vision, and she was pleased when priests went up to Garabandal. She impressed upon the visionaries that they should pray and make sacrifices for them.

Shortly before he died, Fr. Luis Andreu said, "What a gift the Virgin has given me. How lucky we are to have a Mother like that in Heaven. This is the happiest day of my life."

The Blessed Virgin called Fr. Jose Ramon Garcia de la Riva a "holy priest." Mari Cruz in 1961 And once when Loli mentioned to Our Lady that a particular priest was fat, she responded, "Yes, but he is very good."

**Motherly Advice** As you can see in the picture above, Mari Cruz's dress is quite short. It apparently was the custom at that time and region, but the Blessed Virgin was not impressed. She told the girls that dresses should have high necklines, low hems and sleeves. She also said they should have no jewelry on when they were to see her. On one occasion Loli was wearing a wristwatch of a visitor, but when she got one of her "calls" she quickly took it off. When the visionaries got short haircuts they asked the Virgin if she liked them, but she didn't answer. From then on they let their hair grow. She also told them not to have their picture taken with women wearing low cut dresses.

**A Watchful Mother** On the night of November 4, 1962, the weather was stormy. In Loli's house there was a vigil, waiting for the time of the apparition. Toward 3:00 a.m., the wind began to blow fiercely, with the threat of a rainstorm. Then Loli's mother told her to



gather the laundry that had been left hanging outside. Loli was ready to obey, but one could see the interior struggle she was undergoing out of fear of having to leave the house at that hour. She was heading toward the door with a lit flashlight in her hand when she fell into ecstasy. She made the sign of the cross repeatedly, held out the crucifix to be kissed by those nearby, and went outside. A little later, and still in ecstasy, she returned to the house with the laundry she had gathered.

As soon as she came out of the trance, she was asked what had happened. And the girl explained that it had been very hard for her to obey her mother with regard to the laundry, since she was afraid to go out alone. The Virgin had noticed both her good will and her fear, and had come as a mother to accompany her.

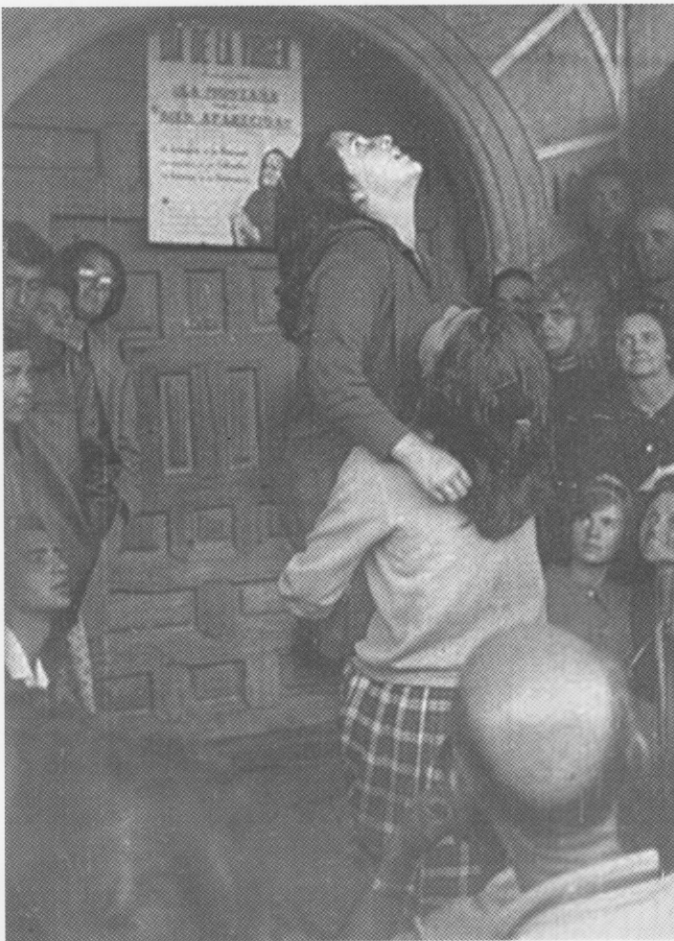
**Her First Kisses** Conchita said in her Diary, "On that day [August 16, 1961] the Virgin told us that on the following day we would hear a voice. But that we shouldn't be afraid and that we should follow the voice."

(This seems to indicate that something unusual is going to happen, something that is going to bring one more new element in this succession of singular phenomena.<sup>2)</sup>)

"The next day, the Blessed Virgin appeared to the four of us at the same hour as on the previous day. She stayed for a few minutes, smiling very much, but without saying a word. A few minutes later we found ourselves in darkness. A voice called to us and Mari Cruz said: 'Tell us who you are. If you don't we'll go home.'

"The voice lasted a moment. And during that time it was very dark and we didn't see the Blessed Virgin. After the voice stopped, the Blessed Virgin arrived and it became very light. She said to us: 'Don't be afraid.' She talked to us for a moment; then, for the first time,





In ecstasy, Conchita lifts Loli so she can kiss Our Lady

she kissed us. She kissed us one by one and departed.

**All Her Children** Once, a Protestant and a man judged to be deranged by others (Alfonso? see below) asked Conchita if they could kiss her crucifix the next time she had an ecstasy. She felt she should not give it to them and when Our Lady appeared she told her about her misgivings. The Virgin glanced at them and said, “They are all my children” and conducted Conchita to give them the cross. The seer afterwards said that the Virgin gave it to them, since she didn’t remember doing it.

Father Valentin Marichalar, the pastor, made the following entry in his journal for September 16, 1962, a Sunday: “There is a man in the village who is half crazy and does stupid things that could be very wrongly interpreted by the visitors who don’t know his mental condition. He had been in an insane asylum for a year

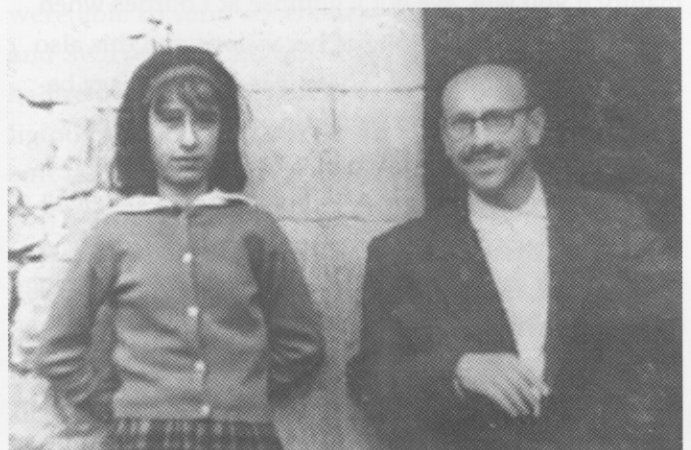
and now has decided to stay here. This is causing trouble and annoyance, and he will have to be sent away.”

During the ecstasy on this day, Loli and Conchita went to the house where this disturbed man, Alfonso, was staying and, with a crucifix, they made the sign of the cross there on the pillow of his bed. And while passing by him, they gave him the crucifix to kiss several times. The disturbed man froze on his knees. That night Father Anzizu commented: “What a lesson in charity the girls have given us.” Everyone who had been talking about the necessity of throwing the insane man out of the village was touched—above all, the Cardinal’s secretary, Father Guillermo Hausschildt, who had thought of refusing him Communion. He said: “It is clear the Virgin wanted to give us a lesson.”

Conchita was asked why she had gone to the place where the deranged man was and had repeatedly given him the crucifix to kiss. She answered, “The Virgin told us: ‘You despise him, but I love him.’” (*She Went in Haste to the Mountain*)

On November 13, 1965, Conchita saw the Blessed Mother for the last time at Garabandal. In her dialogue with the Blessed Virgin, she said, “Oh, our Mother, how unworthy I am of the many graces that you’ve given me! And still you come to me today, to lighten the little cross that I have now.” Our Lady responded, “Conchita, I have not come for you alone. I have come for all my children, with the desire of drawing them to Our Hearts.” And later she said to the seer, “Talk to me Conchita. Talk to me about my children! I hold them all beneath my mantle.” And then, “This is the last time

Mari Cruz with Alfonso





In ecstasy from left: Conchita, Jacinta, Mari Loli and Mari Cruz

you will see me here, but I will always be with you and all my children.”

In 1966, Conchita told Mother Nieves, principal of the school she was attending, “Many times the Virgin didn’t look directly at us, but farther away at the people who were behind us. Sometimes she changed her expression; but she didn’t stop smiling. I asked her, ‘Who are you looking at?’ She said to me, ‘I’m looking at my children.’”

## A PROFILE

More than any other Marian apparition, Garabandal showed the Blessed Virgin’s motherhood and her humanity if you will. We got a glimpse at Lourdes when Bernadette laughed in one of her visions and this also happened at Garabandal. There was also intimacy between a mother and her daughters as Conchita explained, “The Virgin told us one day that she put perfume on the tassels of her slippers when she lived on earth.” Another time she said to them, “Be very clean: I took care to be that way too, when I was living on earth.” She called the girls by their nicknames rather than given names: Maria Concepción was Conchita and Maria Dolores, Loli. She endeared herself to the seers in other ways. Conchita told Mother Maria Nieves, on De-

cember 3, 1966: “Sometimes she mimicked us by repeating our badly spoken expressions and she did this to make us feel at ease in her presence.” Conchita said to Mother Nieves: “I love the Virgin as if she were my mother. One can talk with her about everything.”

It did not take long for the young visionaries to be aware of Our Lady’s great goodness (Loli was once heard in ecstasy saying: “You are very kind.”), and sometimes they took advantage. When they knew she wouldn’t leave until they blessed themselves correctly, they would bless themselves backwards so she would stay a little longer until they did it right. Fr.

Ramon Andreu heard them in ecstasy call the Virgin, “Mother”.

When they prayed the Rosary in ecstasy they on occasion spontaneously added to the Hail Marys “Holy Mary Mother of God and our mother...” which Our Lady said she liked but told them not to use unless it was approved by the Church.

In the Diocese of Santander, Our Lady is invoked as Patroness under the title “Our Lady Truly Appeared, Queen and Patron of the Mountain.” However, when the seers prayed in ecstasy and added this invocation at the end of the Rosary, they said, “Our Lady Truly Appeared, Queen and Lady of all creation.” This was an inspired proclamation of her universal motherhood which implies her power to intercede for her children.

This is Mary, the queen of all creation, the woman of the apocalypse and our mother, our powerful advocate to whom we can turn to in troubled times. Let us place ourselves under her protection in anticipation of whatever befalls us. □

1. *She Went in Haste to the Mountain* by Eusebio Garcia de Pesquera, O.F.M., Cap.
2. Ibid.