

PENANCE AND SACRIFICE

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From: [Mercedes Salisachs](#): Part 4 pp. 17, translated by Dr. Edward Serrano

As always, the recently arrived priests and the curiosity seekers that followed the children did not understand all this walking around and, between prayers, complained and wanted to know the "why" of all this action. They were unable to see the intention of the Virgin. These painful nocturnal walks and the long waits in the girls' kitchens made them uneasy. They had already forgotten the message of the Virgin, when she asked for "penance and sacrifice."



One night Padre Buedo wanted Mari Loli to ask the Virgin why she kept us waiting for her so long. Did it bother her that instead of praying we were just talking to each other? When she came out of ecstasy, she said the Virgin not only was not disturbed by our conversation, but she would be happy with a single rosary. But if she kept us up all night it was so we could do penance. Actually, the question was unnecessary. The night before I had a very clear sign from the Virgin indicating what she wanted. Seeing that there was considerable time between "calls," I decided to go to bed and have someone come to tell me when the second call came. Just as I was leaving the tavern, Mari Loli came and whispered in my ear, "I just received the second call." It was around eleven o'clock. So we waited. The ecstasy didn't come until twenty minutes to eight the following morning. Our Lady's intention couldn't have been clearer. She wanted us to keep vigil.

The people in town understood from the beginning the necessity of performing penance. I will not forget the lesson that I learned from the three women who owned the house where I was staying. One early morning, at about five o'clock, I was going to my room for something when I found them and their three daughters seated in the kitchen. I asked them why they weren't in bed, since they weren't with the seers. The answer was irrevocable. "Because it's Saturday, and we must make some kind of sacrifice. After the girls have their vision we'll sleep." Actually, they weren't staying up "to see the girls in ecstasy," but they were happy to be united with the girls in the penance of staying up with them. These subtleties were not perceived by the visitors to Garabandal even by those whose intentions were exemplary.



◁ When Conchita, after saying the rosary and having dragged the people through rocky paths, fields and mud holes returned home, I was observing the people coming into the kitchen. I saw my husband, exhausted and impressed but unable to understand what was happening. My son Javier was there (he had received his proofs and was convinced that Garabandal was true). I also saw the two nuns, and I seem to remember Father Buedo also being present.

When Conchita returned to normality, all she did was look at me and I knew she had something to tell me.

"The Virgin has given me a message for you. She told me that Miguel is very happy, because thanks to your prayers, two of his friends who were in purgatory went to Heaven today."

"What friends? The ones who were with him in the accident?"

Conchita almost didn't let me finish, saying, "Those... those... no others..." I almost couldn't breathe from the emotion. She continued, "That is why he asked you to pray for the souls in purgatory. He wanted them with him in heaven." The puzzle pieces were finally fitting together perfectly. It was a Saturday, the feast of Saint Michael... Conchita had taken her time in telling me; the Virgin hadn't answered her when she asked... The Angel had answered, as a messenger.

That night, still overwhelmed by what Conchita had told me, I asked Mari Loli to thank the Virgin for what she had done, and the answer was the most perplexing and improbable of all that I'd received: *"The Virgin says that it should not be you who gives her thanks, but she to you for how much you have prayed."*

As the days go by the memory of this episode, far from fading away, grows ever stronger in my mind. At first glance, it could seem to be my own personal incident, with no other purpose than to make me happy thinking about it. However, without a doubt, it has a more transcendental meaning for everyone. It shows the power of prayer and how effective it is in delivering souls from purgatory; the value of our penances, the continuation of friendship beyond matter, the difference between dying "prepared," as my son was or dying "by surprise," as did Miguel's friends (who were good people).

It seemed to me that my husband had difficulty in believing what Conchita was saying, even though he had witnessed prodigious events that had left him wondering (one of them being the reaction of the two nuns). He could not fathom all that happened.

Perhaps this was the reason that, the night before he was to leave for home, Conchita forced him to kiss the crucifix three times, each time leaving it longer than usual. This was her last ecstasy of the evening, and she seemingly wanted to reinforce his faith in the apparitions. Earlier, Conchita was heard asking the Virgin "Make Mercedes' husband believe like she believes."

My husband still has doubts, but cannot find any explanation for what happened there.

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