

# A Stunning Conversion

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Excerpted from Los MILAGROS o FAVORES DE NUESTRA MADRE DE GARABANDAL, by Maria Josefa Villa de Gallego.

Translated from Spanish by Dr. Edward Serrano.

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***The following account of the conversion of a British subject, was told to me [Josefa Gallego] by Father Miguel Fernandez, a priest from Barcelona, now deceased, who had given me authorization to publish it. Father Fernandez talked about this conversion, which he witnessed and was a part of, in a conference at a convent of religious Sisters in Barcelona in April 1982.***

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A friend of mine from Santander told me about the ecstasies of the four girls of Garabandal, and even gave me a photograph which I still have. He suggested I go there, but I wasn't the least bit interested. Granted, the Virgin Mary can appear any place she likes, but I was perfectly satisfied working in my parish and had no desire to go.

Later on, two priests from Madrid came to Barcelona during the summer and spoke to me about Garabandal in a rather contemptuous way. This sparked my interest to visit the place.

Then a book on Garabandal fell into my hands that turned me off completely. In spite of this, I still felt the need to visit. Then I read a book by Father [Eusebio Garcia de] Pesquera, which left me wondering. He mentioned priests who went to investigate the events, and even if they weren't outright believers, they at least were submitting the happenings to scientific methods. Among them were the Jesuit brothers, Fathers Luis Maria Andreu (now deceased) and Ramon Maria Andreu.

Surely it was clear to me, that when confronted with the events surrounding Father Luis Maria, this wasn't something to fool around with, and I thought to myself: "Why can't God do that?"

After reading more books on the subject, I decided to make the trip and went with four boys from my parish during summer vacation. They had marvelous experiences there.

The next summer, I felt compelled to go again, so I asked the youngsters if they wanted to join me. This time instead of four there were eight. Half of them, and a 43-year-old woman, went with me in my car while the rest took the train.





We arrived in the village around 10:00 P.M.; it was dark and chilly. A light drizzle, made everything damp and the rocks underfoot were slippery. A man hurrying up the hill appeared next to us and since he looked as though he was about to slip and fall, I told the oldest boy to give him a hand. Instead of accepting the boy's help, the man shunned him. We didn't know what he said, as he spoke in English, but he made a sufficiently unedifying gesture. The boy's first reaction was \_\_\_\_\_. But I said to the youngster, "Hey! no murmuring! We came here to pray and we're going to pray for him, for the rebuff he gave us for our act of charity and kindness." So we recommended him to the Virgin.

What do you think happened next? That man, who acted as if he'd been stung by a dozen wasps, came back down and joined us staying the rest of the evening.

We remained there praying for about two hours with this man next to us. At the halfway point, we noticed him fall to his knees grimacing with pain. From time to time he seemed to be speaking to someone; we had no idea what it was all about.

The next morning we arose and prepared to celebrate holy Mass at the Pines because I didn't want to miss Communion. (We had planned to stay a week.)

Now, what I'm about to say is not my opinion but what actually happened.

A lady came up to me and said in English, "Miracle, Father!" I didn't understand what she meant, but people were pointing at me and saying, "He's the one! He's the one!" Then they brought me a boy and said, "Bless him! Bless him!" Another boy came up, and they said, "He wants to be a priest! Bless him!"

When I saw all these people coming toward me saying, "Touch the medals! Touch the medals!" I didn't know what to think."

As all this was happening, a Passionist Priest arrived wearing his cassock. I was not dressed as a priest; we'd been camping out and sleeping on the ground in a tent, and I wore very ordinary clothes.

Seeing that things were getting out of hand, I told everyone to go to that priest for the blessing, but what was my surprise when he himself came over and knelt in front of me for my blessing. I was dumfounded, and also afraid. I didn't know what was going on and thought everyone had gone mad.

They took up a collection of about 6,000 or 7,000 pesetas and gave it to us. Once things settled down, I began the Mass. When it came time for Communion, people began to weep, give thanks, and praise Mary out loud. We still didn't know what was happening as people continued to shout. "Miracle! Miracle!"

Finally, an Indian girl who spoke a little Spanish said to me, "Father, last night a great miracle happened here, and the Virgin chose you to be part of it."

"What happened?"

"I don't know; I just found out about it."

"Well, then, let's just let it go."

Besides all this, a sad event occurred that morning. A woman I knew had died of cancer and left three

young daughters. I felt that if I had had something kissed by the Virgin of Garabandal she wouldn't have died, so I went around the village asking everyone for some object kissed by Our Lady.

Finally, I went to the Pines, and said in front of the image of the Virgin: "Mother! I want this, not for me — I'm content with your motherly love — but for those who are gravely ill. I'm very upset about the pitiful death of this woman who was in the prime of her life."

I had no more than made this plea, when I opened my eyes (I always pray with my eyes closed) and there on the ground beside me was a rosary with a tag on it saying, "Kissed by the Virgin at Garabandal." This was another emotional moment. I went around trying to find out who had lost it, but it wasn't until some time later that a man came up to me lamenting and said in English, "You have my rosary." I gave it to him, saying mentally to the Virgin, "Well, you gave and you took away; your will be done."

Not a moment after the man left, the woman who accompanied us to Garabandal and was staying in the village, came up to me and said, "Here, take this rosary that you were asking the Virgin for." They divided the rosary keeping one part and giving me the rest.

Well, the morning after the rosary incident, the man [who we encountered going up to the Pines and who stayed with us for two hours] asked me after Mass if I planned to go to the church and pray the rosary before the Blessed Sacrament; I said yes, and would see him afterwards. He told me, "Here, Father, take this letter and God bless you." I opened the letter and found the story of his conversion.

What happened was this: this Englishman had been tricked by fellow English Catholics to join them on a pilgrimage. They visited the tomb of St. Peter in Rome, and he made fun of it. They went to Lourdes and he made fun of the Virgin. They went to Fatima and Santiago de Compostela and he made fun of and blasphemed the Virgin. He was angry with everything and everyone who had deceived him into taking the pilgrimage. This explains why he indignantly refused our help when climbing the slippery path. Here is what happened according to his own testimony.

As soon as we started praying to the Virgin for him, she took hold of him, lifted him up from the ground, and told him, "Don't go to the Pines. Join up with that priest. He is a minister of God." That is why he came to us.



I've already said that I wasn't wearing my cassock, not even a cross, and even so, it was so dark he wouldn't have been able to tell anyway. Then in his letter he says:

Father, in that moment I felt raised from the ground by a mysterious hand and it forced me go back to where you were. I understood the prayers that you and your companions were saying for me, even though I don't know a word of Spanish. I was there for two hours while you prayed, understanding everything you said to Mary, but at a certain moment the Mother made me fall to the ground.

Later he wrote me a letter of explanation. He had been away from the Church for twenty years fighting against it, ridiculing all its beliefs especially the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary. He couldn't stand priests, but that day he fell on his knees, thanks to the power of Mary, crying and begging God for forgiveness. He felt the need to confess his sins. By Divine Providence, that English Passionist priest climbed up to the Pines and the man was able to make his confession amidst a sea of tears. That was the cause of all the buzz. Next morning when I was getting ready to celebrate Mass, I heard the Englishman telling the priest, "He's the one. That's him," while pointing at me.

Signed: Father Miguel Fernandez

### Letter from the Man

Dear Reverend Father,

I'm writing this letter to thank you for guiding me to receive Christ at the Pines in Garabandal. I had not received the sacrament for many years, but thanks to the wonderful work of the Mother of God, I found you that night with your youth group. I was planning to go up to the Pines, but was literally transported and followed you. I don't speak Spanish, but thanks to the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Garabandal, the Mother of God, I was able to understand the conversation amongst yourselves, and your prayers. I thank you and Father Donovan who was with my group.

I understood you were going to say Mass next morning at the Pines. I felt a great need to go to confession and receive the Body of Christ from you. I confessed my sins to my priest at the Pines and I went to Communion. It was the happiest day of my life. I truly felt Christ within me.

I thank you, Father, for the greatest day of my life. May Our Lord and His most Holy Mother help you and your youngsters. Remember me in your prayers. I have prayed for you and continue doing so.

Signed: Christopher Walsh

England.

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