



VILLAGERS TESTIMONIES: 9

## ANICETA GONZALEZ (Conchita's mother)

■ Excerpted from GARABANDAL— EL PUEBLO HABLA • Translated from Spanish by Dr. Edward Serrano  
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*Aniceta, Conchita's mother, was sixty-two years old at the time of this interview in 1971. She took care of the home and worked in the fields. She died on March 7, 1990.*

### Before the Apparitions

I cannot talk about the other girls only mine. She is a very good girl, not envious. Whenever I went to church I took her with me and after the rosary we'd pray the Way of the Cross. She was very obedient.

### First Reactions

I used to tell her to always come home during daylight, never after dark. That June evening [June 18, 1961] I had supper ready, and it was around nine o'clock or so. The sun was still up, but I was thinking that it was getting late. When Conchita came in I said, "Well, if you are a little late today, tomorrow you will come home much later; you have to be here on time." She then entered the house and leaned against the door frame there on the left side. She looked like she had been crying and said to me, "Mama, today I've seen the Angel."

"The Angel? First, you come home late, and now you talk foolishness. Don't say things like that, you hear?" I don't know why I told her not to talk to me about this, since I don't know anything about apparitions. I thought maybe she was trying to fool me so I wouldn't scold her for being late. She remained leaning against the wall and I didn't scold her. I felt a chill inside me, something strange. I asked myself, What can this be? But I didn't ask her anything.

We have the custom here that if some woman needs help, like she's sick or had a baby or something, we women group together and go help her. This was the case of a sister of Maria [Jacinta's mother] who was not feeling well, so fourteen or fifteen of us, young and old, went to help her by weeding the corn field, that one over

there. It was a Monday, the day after the apparition of the Angel, and they were saying, “Something certainly did happen there and it was pitiful to see their faces, so pale and frightened.” I was quiet because I didn’t want anyone to know I knew anything about it, but I felt very strange inside.

After the girls had seen this vision they were coming down the hill where they met their teacher. They told her what happened and then they all went into the church to pray a Station (a typical Spanish prayer said in front of the Blessed Sacrament that consists of six Our Fathers, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be followed by the Creed and sometimes by a Salve Regina). Then they went to the dance with the other children. I didn’t see any of this, but Conchita told me about it, and she came home afraid I was going to scold her.

So then I told these women, “Don’t be as childish as they are! Remember, they go around all the time seeing ghosts and all sorts of scary things. That’s all that happened and you shouldn’t believe anything else.” But as I was saying this, I kept feeling this thing inside me which I could not explain, but I didn’t tell anyone. I didn’t want anyone to know. Later on I was ashamed to be seen there when the apparitions were taking place, but I had to go feed my pig at the house where Serafin [Aniceta’s oldest son] now lives, and the apparitions were taking place near the man from Seville’s house where the apple tree was. Conchita was always with me and she said, “Mama! Look at all the people up there!” meaning the site of the apparition. I was embarrassed to be seen. There were people there from other villages besides our own. I told her, “Be quiet!” and then Conchita went there to meet the other girls. She called to me, “Come! There are lots of people here!” I went down a side street so no one would see me, but it wasn’t to be; they saw me and I hurried home. Later there were so many people and so many people had seen me that I decided to go anyway.

I saw my first ecstasy. We didn’t know what an ecstasy was or even if there was such a thing. I vaguely remembered Fatima and Lourdes and thought, well, if it happened there why couldn’t it happen here? That day the four girls were in ecstasy. I thought it would be all over then, but it continued over the next year and a half. (Author: There were more, but certainly most of them were in the first sixteen months.) I never asked Conchita anything, but sometimes she came out with interesting details.

Aniceta behind her daughter in ecstasy



Because of working in the fields, I couldn’t go to devotions in the church during the month of May so I did the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus at home with a book that found a religious card with a picture of the Child Jesus, and Conchita said, “Ay, Mama, the Child Jesus that we see looks like the one on this card!” Later on, this card was no longer in the book.

### Number of Ecstasies

I only missed two of Conchita’s ecstasies. The first time was because a lady said she felt sick and I brought her in and gave her some tea (then she felt better than I did). The other time was because a truck went over the cliff [and everyone went to see it]. I saw all the other ones. I wouldn’t miss them for anything. As I believed it was the

Virgin, I thought since she followed Jesus during the passion, so I too will follow Conchita in her ecstasies; it doesn't cost me anything.

Conchita did not always have her ecstasies in the same place. She had her calls and fell into ecstasy mostly at home and from there she went to the pine trees, to the cemetery, to the streets, through town, to the church mostly at two, three, four or five in the morning. After the message she had perhaps one to four per week.

### **Appearance of Their Faces**

Simply beautiful, peaceful faces without fatigue or weariness; the girls were left with only one thing: happiness. When they ran all over the hill, Conchita would come home fresh while the young men from the village who were running after the girls came home short of breath, soaking wet and exhausted. Conchita looked at them and laughed; her pulse was normal.

I never heard her say anything [in ecstasy] as I was always some distance behind her. In addition to Conchita, the other three girls also came to my house, mostly at the beginning, not so much later.

### **Proofs**

The four girls were in their own homes and would leave at the same moment and meet for their ecstasies in the same place. I witnessed this and when they got there Conchita told the Virgin, "My mother is very ugly and black, and her hair is turning white." Some priests present said, "Turning white, no," but I did have some white hairs.

### **Synchronization of Movements**

As the Virgin was about to leave, Conchita said, "But you have been here less than a minute!" and the Virgin answered, "An hour." And Conchita said, "Already an hour?" Of the other three girls, Mari Cruz was highest up the hill with Conchita somewhat lower and the other two further down. They were speaking in a low voice and we couldn't hear them, but they could be heard repeating exactly at the same time, "An hour?" A priest checked his watch and said, "Exactly an hour!"

### **Ecstatic Falls**

I don't know about the other girls, but as far as Conchita goes, I have seen her fall a thousand times. Once she was sitting on the stove ledge (the hearth is raised above the floor some 60 centimeters) when she went into ecstasy and fell to the floor on her knees. There was a loud thud as bone hit the stone floor but as usual, when she came out of the trance, there wasn't even a scratch.

### **Blessed Objects**

I saw Conchita carrying big piles of religious objects to be kissed by the Virgin, and then, in ecstasy and without looking, return them to their rightful owners. One time, as she was walking in ecstasy, a lady slipped a wedding ring into her pocket without her knowing it. Awhile later she said to the Virgin, "Ah, I have a wedding ring in my pocket? No I don't." But it appeared that the Virgin insisted, and Conchita put her hand in her pocket, found the wedding ring, and offered it to the Virgin to kiss. She turned around and gave it to a gentleman that was apparently a teacher from Bilbao. [As a proof to see if the girl would return the object to the right owner, often another person would give it to the visionary.] Cases like this happened by the hundreds.

On another occasion, a couple came that looked like a young man accompanied by his fiancée. He gave the impression of being a robber or something! It was raining and we had to come into the house, and this young man told my sister, "Give this crucifix to her." My sister told him that Conchita was already in ecstasy and in this state she did not respond to anyone except the other girls. He then told her to give it to me so I would give it to Conchita, so she came to me and gave me the crucifix telling me what this man wanted. I answered, "How can I give it to her if she won't take it?"

Then the idea came to me; Conchita had her hands together in prayer and the crucifix was hanging on a cord, so I hung the crucifix over her hands. She was still insisting to the Virgin, "I don't have anything, nothing..." and we could hear this although she was speaking very quietly; "Well, then, take it if I have it," she said, and moved forward. But when she lowered her hands the crucifix fell to the floor and as she moved forward, she stepped on it. We heard her say to the Virgin, "Oh, I'm stepping on it?" Then she bent down, picked it up and gave it to her Vision to kiss. She turned, signed him with the crucifix, and gave it to him to kiss. She turned around again and offered the crucifix to her Vision to kiss and said, "The Dominicans wear such a beautiful habit. What a pity he comes dressed like that!" She turned around, took off his glasses and put them in his hand, as he seemed afraid that she would break them, and made the sign of the cross again and placed it around his neck. Conchita then said, "Oh, I put it on backwards?" and removed the crucifix and turned it around, since she had, placed it with the image facing inward. She then took the glasses from his hand and put them back on him. Then she repeated, "What a pity that he comes here like this." We found out later that this man was a Dominican priest with his sister, posing as an engaged couple, testing the veracity of the apparitions. I could tell you many cases like this without making anything up.



Family portrait from left: Miguel, Cetuco, Aniceta, Conchita and Serafin

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### **Levitation**

I did not see it, but once in my kitchen Conchita stretched herself out on the floor and arched upwards. I believe it because the Brigadier Juan Seco, Father Jose Ramon, Doctor Ortiz and several priests saw it and they were talking about levitation. Mercedes Sal- isachs [who apparently was present at the interview] intervened at this point and said, "I heard that there was a levitation but could not see it as there was such a crowd of people. Everyone was saying, 'She is rising, she is rising!' The one I saw levitating was Loli, but for her it was very common."

### **Cosmic Phenomena**

I have never seen anything, no star, nothing; perhaps I'm very bad.

### **The Night of Screams (June 19-20, 1962)**

Conchita did not go the first night. She was sick and stayed home, but she had her ecstasy and during that time she wrote a letter for I don't know who on a sheet of paper holding it in the air without any support and without looking. And she wrote the letter perfectly. Many people saw that.

### **The Little Miracle**

No. I didn't see that either. "Mama," she said to me one night, "If you want, I'll tell you about the miracle, the *milagruco* (little miracle). She had told others in the town, but not me. I didn't want to know about these things before the others because I thought they were such great things. I wanted to wait like everyone else. I never asked her what they would be. I never did. But she said, "I'm allowed to tell you; I'm allowed to tell it to you." One of my sisters [Antonia] was here and she said, "Yes, do it! Go ahead and tell her." And I said, "Don't tell me anything. I'll see it when it comes." Then she said, "Mama, the Virgin told me to tell you!" I said, "Oh, then, if the Virgin ordered you to tell me, then go ahead and do whatever you want, but I'm not interested because I want to be like everybody else, as if I was nothing. When the others see it, I'll see it, too." Then she told me, "The Host will become visible the day that I receive Holy Communion."



“Ay! And you say that this is a little miracle? This is the greatest miracle in the whole world. The greatest there is, the Eucharist!” “Then, after this miracle, will you believe in the apparitions?”

“Yes, yes, completely. Even if the Pope himself tells me, ‘It was not true; it was just a phenomenon or something like that,’ I’ll accept what the Holy Father says, but inside, I’ll always believe you received Communion from the hands of an angel.”

That’s what I told her, but I didn’t see it. I was going to go but my three sons were not living at home although one was there tending the cattle with Conchita. I thought to myself, if they all come, then I’ll go to the church and pray; let another see it. I’ll offer it as a sacrifice but they were all away at different jobs so I stayed home. Serafin, the oldest, did not come because he had just started a new job and didn’t want to ask for time off, although he would have if I’d insisted, but I didn’t really want to either.

I didn’t see it but I heard the screams from the people and thought, “Ay, they are killing my girl!” I thought they were going to kill her, or maybe they were beating them up [Conchita and her brother Miguel who was there] even with all the people and the Civil Guard, but you never know.... I thought she was dead or someone had hurt her, or something bad. What happened? What was going on?

A lady came and got me by my arm and dragged me out, saying, “I saw it, I saw it!”

I asked her, “But what did you see?”

“I saw the Host!”

“Oh, so you saw the Host. Thanks be to God! All is well now.”

I was left totally at peace. Such a great joy overwhelmed me that nothing else was important.

### **The Santander Commission**

No, they never interviewed me here or in Santander or anywhere else; nowhere in the entire world! But I did go to Santander when they took Conchita there to perform some tests.

### **Conchita in Santander**

I don’t have anything to tell, because while I was with her, there was no testing done. I was there innocently, not suspecting any evil intentions from anyone. I went there alone, with only a priest who was the brother-in-law of my brother, and who previously had been a priest in Garabandal.

I was in Santander six days and Conchita eight. By the eighth day the town was venomous and blamed me saying, “You have removed the Virgin from the village!” This was so strange. I am a widow and my children were home, and together we got along well. If they earned money they gave it to me for the household, and we all lived in peace. Now everybody was up in arms saying I had thrown Conchita out, and I had stopped everything. What looks they gave us! and we worked alone in the fields.

The same day we arrived in Santander Conchita had an ecstasy at the same time the other girls did in Garabandal. Somebody heard them say in their ecstasy, “Oh, Conchita is seeing you now also?” Later I heard about this, but of course I did not hear it when I was in Santander.

While in Santander I felt so alone and out of place and very poor. The police had to come. I felt completely alone with Conchita at the door of Consolation Church [where she had fallen into ecstasy]. Some doctors and other men came and carried her inside. She was kneeling in ecstasy, but when they picked her up, she became distorted with her head almost touching her heels. I screamed that for God’s sake leave her be, and not take her away from me, but they said, “Lady, quiet down; nothing is going to happen.” But I saw how she was.

They carried her into the church and put her in an office [the sacristy]. Then they closed the door and left both of us there. Conchita was still in ecstasy in the same position she was in when they left her, however, it had become so altered that only one elbow and one knee touched the floor while all the rest of her body was in the air still in a somewhat kneeling position. I told these gentlemen, “Look at that; look how you left her!” They came in and noted her odd position. It was a beautiful pose because despite her altered position, her long dress still modestly covered her even though part of her was in the air. She was stretched out, supported on one elbow and knee, and gazing up with the face of an angel; it was precious. I don’t know what those men had expected to see. Then the ecstasy ended. I don’t know how long it lasted, and Conchita asked me, “Ay, mama, where am I?”

“In an office! Let’s go.”

I felt like a coward. I had never seen so much of the “world” and never had been among so many people so

alone and abandoned.

“Ay, but where am I, mama?”

“I told you, in an office. Come, let’s go outside.”

“Ay, no! I have to say the rosary.”

I called out and said, “Look, she is out of her ecstasy but wants to say the rosary.”

“Oh, pray, pray! Pray the rosary!”

We prayed the rosary and when it ended we went outside. Conchita was taken somewhere by those men and a canon put me in the sacristy [they may have prayed the rosary in the church proper]. I was so naive; I didn’t suspect any evil intentions anywhere. The canon returned and took me out and I don’t remember what he told me. Then I saw Conchita in the midst of these wolves. She was serious, inhibited and sad. The canon who was with me asked Conchita something and she answered very courteously. Then a doctor asked her, “Hey, how come you don’t talk to me?” Conchita remained quiet. The canon continued talking to her and she answered very politely and smiling. This priest was a canon from the Bishop’s chancery.

I had gone home on the sixth day and returned on the eighth to get Conchita. The canon accompanied us to the bishopric with [Father Francisco] Odriozola, and then the Bishop, Msgr. Doroteo, asked with surprise, “You mean, you are taking the girl back home?” I said, “Yes, since there is no peace at home without her and naturally, I want peace in my home.” He said, “I think that’s a very good idea,” and asked Conchita, “What do you want, to be a young lady or go back home and take care of the sheep?” (Conchita was not taking care of the sheep.) And she answered, “To be a young lady!” Then the Bishop gave us his ring to kiss, and he was very kind. Don Odriozola was there. He was a kindly priest, a firm believer in Garabandal and had brought many albums with pictures of the girls in ecstasy. The Bishop said, “Yes yes, I see that you have brought many photographs.”

This priest, Don Odriozola, had told me many times, “Don’t be afraid, Aniceta, don’t be afraid. Your daughter is a true saint.” He had seen so many ecstasies and said that he has never seen anything like it in his lifetime. He also said, “The holiness of these events is obvious.”

When we left the Bishop’s chancery and were at the door and getting into the canon’s car, Don Odriozola took many more pictures. Conchita was in the front and we were in the back, and she told the canon, “A day will come when we will deny everything and we will contradict each other.” She said that in front the canon, my sister [Maximina] and me.

Oh, yes, I do believe in the prophecies made by Conchita, because I believe Our Lord will never abandon us!

Continued to Part 2 below --- GARABANDAL JOURNAL / July-August 2010

# ANICETA GONZALEZ PART 2

■ Excerpted from GARABANDAL—EL PUEBLO HABLA • Translated from Spanish by Dr. Edward Serrano

I was very busy working, and Conchita had a continuous stream of visitors coming into our house, which made it all the harder for me. So I decided to take her to Pamplona to a boarding school, and I told the Mother Superior not to allow anyone to come to visit her, and if she ever did I would take Conchita out of the school the next day. I said this because I knew the other girls had been taken to the bishopric for questioning. Conchita had not been called yet and I thought maybe they would go there. Mother Superior told me, "Don't you worry about it. I'll not allow anyone to visit her." But, sure enough, three or four days later the Bishop, together with Don José Ramón Olano from Garabandal—altogether maybe five of them—I don't know who they all were, but one of them was with the Bishop when he died [Bishop Vicente Puchol died in an automobile accident on May 8, 1967. The priest with him was Don Agapito Amieva. When his death was announced, Conchita said with sadness, "Now he knows."]. They spent seven hours with her [Conchita was 17 at the time] asking her questions. Conchita said she had to explain to them her *diary* and had told them "absolutely everything," and they wrote everything down. I don't know what they wrote or what questions they asked her. After they left Conchita said that whatever they asked her had been completely erased from her mind, and she did not remember anything. It was not because she was tired or anything else. She noticed that in a mysterious way, her mind was left empty from the

things that were discussed during the interview.



Aniceta, left, with Conchita and an unknown visitor to the village circa 1964

Conchita had a ring like mine on her hand. The Bishop asked her if that ring had been kissed by the Virgin. She said, "I don't really know, but I offered it to her to kiss." Conchita told me the Bishop kissed it, no matter what, and put it on his own finger then returned it to Conchita. Yes, Don Vicente Puchol. That's what happened.

Later on the Bishop asked me to come to Santander. He came to our meeting with a huge

folder containing everything the other girls had told him, and also the answers given to him by Conchita in Pamplona.

I knew Conchita had denied everything [the Blessed Virgin told them in 1961 that they would deny having seen her], but I told the Bishop: "I'm not interested in whether Conchita is now denying everything or not; at this time she is a confused person and a confused person cannot know what happened. You can tell Rome whatever you want. What I saw, I saw, and I stay with it." Then the Bishop told me, "Well, then, explain it to me." I said to him, "What can I explain? Talk to those that have seen what happened, whether they believe or not, but who are people who tell the truth." The Bishop said, "Well then I'll call and talk to Father Andreu, and the Marquis of Santa Maria, and Father Rodrigo [Lucio Rodrigo, S.J., theologian, previous dean of the canonical chair of the Pontifical University of Comillas and witness of many ecstasies]. "No, Father (sic), you don't need to call them. They already



believe. Call people who may not believe, but who always tell the truth."

Then I spoke to him somewhat rudely. "Look, Father, dogs go where they call them. I came here because you called me. Otherwise I would not have come." That's what I said to the Bishop, and in return he was very pleasant.

Conchita offered me the folder and told me, "Mama, here, read what I told the Bishop in Pamplona." it." Nevertheless I reached for my glasses, but I didn't have them with me and I can't read without them. I could have told the lady accompanying me [Mercedes Salisachs] to read it. This lady is a witness of what happened at the Bishop's interview. Everything came out wrong for me that day. It was good that she was there because I don't know what I would have done; later they told me they thought I was going to hit the Bishop, that my voice was—very excited. But at that time I felt the opposite was true; I really thought I was serene and tranquil, and not the least upset.

I told the Bishop I didn't need to read it, that he could send it wherever he wanted, and it didn't matter to me—that Conchita was confused and so on (I knew she denied everything; even there, in front of me she denied it! That she did!) I already knew she was denying everything! But I held to what I had seen to be the truth.

### The Denials

Conchita began denying everything in front of everyone. She denied it—but she didn't deny it. Even when she denied it I thought she was just pretending.

When she first began to deny everything, I suspected that the girls had made the whole thing up. Yet I could not see how they could have done it; it would have been very difficult. One day I grabbed her and pushed her against the wall of the kitchen, and I told her, "Listen, now you have to tell me everything, everything, how you made up the whole thing! Tell me right now how you made up the Holy Communion."

"Oh, Mama! I didn't do it! It was all a lie. I did not make up the Communion, the people wanted so badly to see something that they saw the Communion and it was not true!"

I did not answer her, but inside myself I thought, the people might have convinced themselves that they saw something but the movie camera no. Mr. Damians, who for the first time had a small borrowed movie camera that was not his, was a trustworthy person, and he was not a professional photographer.

People can fool themselves into seeing things, but not a movie camera.

Aniceta with Conchita around 1965



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I just came back from visiting Conchita, who has been working in a clinic at Bilbao for two or three months. While I was there I managed to be alone with the chaplain —when I'm with Conchita I can't say anything to anyone; in fact, if Conchita were here now I wouldn't be talking to you like this either—and I told him all about Conchita. He did not know that Conchita had had visions. Also, I told him that I couldn't care less if Conchita denied everything, for I have seen enough, that she could tell me anything and I would not change my opinion. So he called Conchita and asked her,

"So, did you fool the people?"

"No, Father, I did not fool anyone." "What do you believe? Do you believe the miracle will come?"

"Yes, I believe it will come, because God said so. But I did not fool anyone. All I want to be is a good girl like all

the others.” “That is good, you should not be less than the other girls. Why don’t you go and have fun?” asked the chaplain.

“That’s what I want to do; I don’t want to fool anyone. I want to be a good girl just like the others.”

This happened just recently in June, (1971). In July she went to Barcelona.

### **Pepe Diaz**

I’ll tell you about Pepe. Since one of the boys was away and the youngest was here taking care of the cows, I asked him as a favor to see if he could go along with Conchita and protect her. There were so many people! He went along with her and saw everything that happened, including the apparition of the Host in her mouth. He was the one that told me about it. Benjamin [Gomez] was also present, I had not met him before that.

### **Change in Weight**

One day, one of my boys, the one that died [Cetuco, the second oldest, died in 1966], told me, “Mother, there is a gentleman here who wants to lift Conchita,” and he pointed to Benjamin. “I did not let him, and told him to ask you.” Conchita was walking in ecstasy toward the sunken lane and as she fell on her knees in the sunken lane I told him, “Go ahead and try to lift her.” I don’t know why I said this, but he seemed like a gentleman. He was a tall man, more tanned than usual, with a serious face. He tried to lift her, but could not. Later on he came to our kitchen. Conchita was out of the ecstasy and I told him, “Try to lift her now.” He answered me, “No, no! I have seen enough.”

On another occasion Serafin (Conchita’s oldest brother) told Don Valentin, “There are some guys out there who are troublemakers. I’m going to bring Conchita inside the house.” Don Valentin told him, “Yes, bring her in, bring her in.” Conchita arrived in ecstasy, Serafin unlocked the door of the house for her and picked her up to bring her in. He said in his entire life he had never lifted such a horrendous weight. Conchita was twelve years old. He said he’d never lifted anything so heavy before, and never lifted her again.

I entered the house at the same time, and heard Conchita, talking to her Vision, say, “Ah, they are trying to lock me in, but as you can see I’m going to go with you. I’m going with you.” On hearing this, Serafin tells her, “Go ahead and go—blessed be God!”

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