

## Two Interviews with FATHER JOSE RAMON GARCIA DE LA RIVA

*Fr. José Ramón was an important witness to the Garabandal events. At the time of the apparitions he was pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows, Barro Llanes), Asturias, Spain.*

### 1974 TESTIMONY

I have witnessed approximately 200 ecstasies. Besides, I witnessed levitations. One of them happened at the small bridge which crossed over a brook in front of the church door. That bridge doesn't exist anymore. It wasn't wide enough for the four girls to go across as they were walking abreast, however, they passed over it with the two girls on the ends walking above the water.

On another occasion Conchita was in ecstasy in her kitchen stretched out full-length on the floor. We were able to see her rise up about ten centimeters, make three movements backward and forward like a hacksaw, and then descend slowly. Doctor [Celestino] Ortiz was the first who witnessed it then Aniceta and all those who happened to be there saw it as well.

I have also witnessed many ecstatic walks forward and backward, up to or back down from the Pines sometimes very rapidly, as if flying. Those descents made backwards were unforgettable their bodies were straight, their heads tilted back and eyes on their Vision. I can assure you that there was no natural explanation for that and for those who doubt I propose the following: go and try to do the same.



I remember that day when they were walking together in ecstasy. They went up to the Pines and we followed them but I stayed behind due to my poor eyesight. Nevertheless, when they started the descent, walking backwards and praying the Rosary they stopped twice to enable me to catch up. There was a third stop and I thought they were going to the Pines again, but that wasn't the case. Actually they were coming to find me. Ceferino [Loli's father] said: "Father, they want you to kiss the crucifix." The girls, heads fixed on their Vision, couldn't know that I was staying behind.

One day, as Father Valentin Marichalar was in Santander reporting to the Commission, Father Andreu was in charge of the parish. Father Valentin had told him to close the church door to prevent the girls in ecstasy from entering it as the Bishop had ordered. I was a good friend of Father Andreu and when they arrived in ecstasy I closed the church door. I could hear them asking why the church was closed and that they wouldn't get into it again. On another occasion Father Valentin was preaching in the pulpit when they arrived but they didn't enter. Father was very happy with that behavior.

**El Cuadro** is a confined space bordered with logs put there by some men of the village to protect the girls from the onlookers approaching too close. They knelt down looking up to their Vision. There was a stone over which Saint Michael appeared but the stone had to be taken to the Saint Michael's chapel because pilgrims had the habit of chipping off small pieces to take with them.

From the Pines they would walk down without looking at the ground, their heads raised, presenting their faces to the Vision, forwards or backwards at inexplicable speed. There is what we call the main Pine of the apparitions, but there were apparitions at all of them. There were also apparitions in every single house of the village, even in the cemetery where the girls would pray the Our Father for the Holy Souls. I wonder why in other apparition sites the Virgin appears in just one place whereas in Garabandal She appeared in every single place. I don't know; it is as if the Virgin had anticipated ecumenism; the message was for everybody. The Virgin seemed to know what was going to happen a few years afterwards: lack of prayer, lack of faith in the Eucharist, lack of personal voluntary sacrifices.

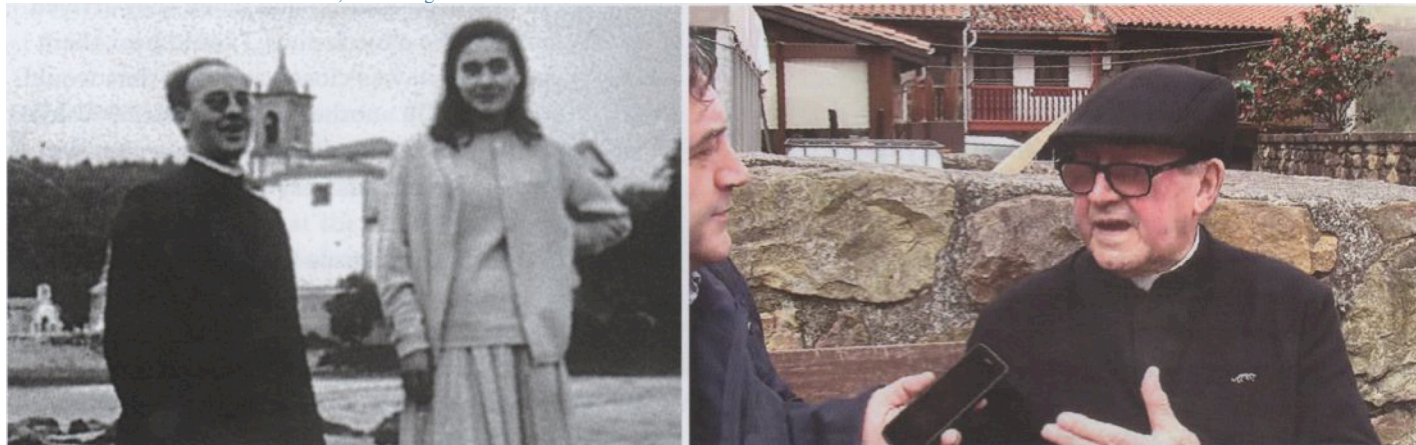
## 2018 INTERVIEW

Q. What about your relationship with Bishop Beitia [Bishop of Santander 1962-1965]?

A. I had the habit of writing the bishop in charge then in Santander to notify him my intention to go to Garabandal. I would always add that if they permitted me to go, it wasn't necessary to tell me. That year, I can't remember the reason, I didn't write him and went directly to see him in Santander. When I got there I was told that he was spending some days in his hometown, so I called him directly by telephone. He told me the following: "You can go up to Garabandal as often as you want but please be aware that the priests who go up there frequently should refrain from giving public testimony of the events." And that's what I did. Of course, my parishioners in Barro knew very well that I believed in Garabandal, but I was never a Garabandal apostle among them.

I know that Cardinal Ottaviani believed, and that Ratzinger believes but I don't have written evidence about that. As far as I am concerned I have plenty of evidence for I was witness to many prodigies.

Fr. Jose Ramon with Conchita circa 1964, and during this 2018 interview



8 Garabandal Journal / January-February 2019

Q. What about Padre Pio?

A. I haven't got the letter with me but I read that famous letter he wrote to the girls.

Q. What can you say about the visionaries?

A. I came here for the first time in August 1961. I keep many photographs of them and you could see when in ecstasy that they had a feminine purity about them. They seemed touched by Heaven; they had virginal faces. The Holy Virgin taught them how to pray, and they prayed slowly.

Q. What about Bishop del Val [1971-1991]?

A. When he witnessed the ecstasies, he believed, but when he saw the girls running around and playing like any other children, he didn't. For me, that attitude didn't make any sense [later he became a believer].

Q. And the denials?

A. The girls felt threatened because the role of the Commission was to destroy. I asked the Bishop to replace its members. I heard them saying: "Let's close the church; we'll tell priests not to come; if this is God's work, it will be made clear one way or another." The Bishop wrote me a letter, but didn't mention the Commission.

Q. To sum up, what have you personally come away with from the events?

A. I never had any doubt in my mind about the veracity of the events. Besides, the Virgin anticipated certain developments in the formal messages: "Less and less importance is being given to the Eucharist," and nobody can deny that this has come true. □