

FirstHand Witness - Juan A. Seco

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Translated from Spanish by Dr. Edward Serano

When it comes to witnesses to the Garabandal events, no one outside the villagers and the pastor was consistently closer to the action from the beginning than Juan Alvarez Seco, Brigadier of the Spanish Civil Guard and Commander in Chief of the section of Puenteansa which included San Sebastian de Garabandal. He was in charge of maintaining order in the village in 1961-62. This is his testimony.

When my promotion to Brigadier was approaching, I hoped I wouldn't be stationed in the north, and I didn't know why Divine Providence arranged that I be sent to Santander. Later when I thought it over, I realized my destiny was in the north of Spain, and especially in the area covering the provinces of Palencia, Asturias, and Santander, on the Nansa River. So, on April 1, 1961, I assumed command of the detachment of the Civil Guard in the already mentioned demarcation. My superiors felt I was well qualified to replace the previous commander who was transferred to other duties.



It was just two months of getting acquainted with my new demarcation and barely getting a feel for the whole area that on June 18, 1961, the most wonderful events began to occur in my command area. I heard about this on June 20 when I visited my physician, Dr. Jose Luis, who had been surprised when two women from Garabandal told him that St. Michael the Archangel was appearing to four little girls in the village.

I had gone to see the doctor for a hearing problem, but I seem to recall that I never got a prescription for treatment. Since I heard perfectly well what he told me the two women said, I had no further complaints with my hearing. I returned to barracks and ordered Corporal Jose Fernandez Codesido to go to San Sebastian de Garabandal as soon as possible and find out what was going on.

On returning the Corporal informed me that indeed four girls were involved in this alleged apparition of the angel, and they were: Conchita Gonzalez (12) whose father was deceased; Maria Dolores Mazon Gonzalez (12), daughter of Ceferino, president of the town council; Jacinta Gonzalez Gonzalez, (12), with both parents and siblings; and the youngest, Maria Cruz Gonzalez Barrido (11).

Corporal Fernandez questioned each of the girls separately and they all told him the same story. They were playing jacks at the entrance to the *calleja* called *La Ventuca* near a small garden that belonged to the schoolteacher where there was an apple tree full of fruit, and they took some apples without giving it a second thought I felt I should include in my report this childish prank that occurred before the apparitions began.

The twenty-first of that month I decided to visit the parish priest, but along the way, I came across him sitting in the car of the Indiano [An Indiano was a villager who went abroad to make his fortune and then returned to the village.] who was taking him to Santander to report the happenings to the Bishop. I then hurried back to the barracks and turned in my report to my superior.

The next day, I decided to go to Garabandal with my orderly and find out for myself what was happening there. Garabandal is a small mountain hamlet composed of approximately 70 houses. These people distinguish themselves by their natural hospitality. The village is nestled in the crags of the mountain chain called Picos de Europa, near the Peña Sagra. This zone borders the provinces of Asturias, Palencia and Santander. To climb to Garabandal one must navigate a hard and rough road that starts at Cosio and winds up

the mountain for seven kilometers before reaching Garabandal.

As I approached the little village, I was able to enjoy wonderful scenery that reminded me of the nativity scenes that are set up in Catalunya at Christmas time. I noticed how the water ran through the streets of the village, along with chickens and piglets; and the tinkling of bells announced that sheep, goats and cows were not lacking either.

They are a very religious people. As soon as the clock strikes noon, they stop whatever they're doing and pray the Angelus. In the afternoon they pray the rosary led by the parish priest, and in his absence, by the lady school teacher or by the widow Maximina. When evening comes Simon's wife (mother of the visionary Jacinta) goes through the town with a lantern, ringing a small bell to remind everyone to say the last prayers of the day. On Sundays, after having heard Holy Mass in the old and humble church, they rest. Later in the afternoon the young people get together to sing and enjoy themselves to the sound of a tambourine. I couldn't help notice that everything was done with respect and modesty in their voices and movements.

THE EVENTS

Once I had arrived in town with my orderly, Celemin, I was introduced to a very kind lady called Valentina who treated me as if I were an old acquaintance. I didn't have to ask her twice to tell me about the first apparition that took place on Sunday the eighteenth. [The Brigadier then recounts Valentina's version of the familiar beginning of the events with the appearance of Saint Michael to the four visionaries.] From this day on I was satisfied and assigned a pair of guards to the village. News traveled to all the neighboring villages and people began to arrive every day from all over making the vigilance justifiable.

After the angel's third or fourth apparition there were eight or nine days without new apparitions and that made people distrustful. But the angel returned and every day there were present in Garabandal from 500 to 3,000 visitors who came to observe the events. I remembered the girls saying that they received three [interior] calls before each apparition.



A Civil Guardsman stands by the *cuadro*, the corral set up to protect the girls in ecstasy from the crowd.

After several visions of the angel, a teacher arrived in San Sebastian de Garabandal who was there to tutor the Indiano Etaquio's son who had failed several subjects in school. The parish priest, Don Valentin, asked the teacher to follow the girls during the visions and listen to what they said and take notes.

The out of town visitors began saying the girls were being hypnotized or given drugs and things like that. After the visions the teacher would take Conchita to the Indiano's home to debrief her and write down what had been said during the apparition. One of my sergeants told me of the rumor being spread that it was the teacher who was providing drugs. I immediately went to the house of Etaquio and found the teacher talking to Conchita. I asked him what he was doing and he explained that at the request of Don Valentin he was gathering information from the seer about what they said with the angel and what he wanted; and the teacher

was preparing a report that Don Valentin would take to the Bishop.

It was also being said by some that Conchita was the ringleader in arranging with the others to go out at the same time for the apparition. Others said it was an illness which prompted Man Loli's father to request the presence of Dr. Jose Luis, Health Commissioner for this area, who came to Garabandal together with an assistant and the Mayor. They were taken to Ceferino's bar to question the girls detained in the room where Ceferino kept the bread. After the doctor examined each girl and let her go, she shot out of the room and ran to the meeting with the angel.

The doctor said the girls were ill and epileptic, and that everything that happened was due to this illness that they had. But I could see that the girls were as healthy as can be and every day they looked prettier and sharper while their parents and siblings appeared run down as though they weren't getting enough sleep and rest.

The parish priest and others decided to separate the girls into groups of two, to see if they went at the same time to the place of the apparitions. They put them in different places and after the last call, all four ran at the same time to the meeting place with the angel.

The four girls come out of ecstasy with the same ease they enter it. They appear completely happy and totally normal; all the onlookers are impressed. Everyone wants to touch their hair and the women want to kiss them. The two guards protect them until the crowd drifts away.

On Saturday, June 24, people from different places were wandering all over the village. At the spot where the apparitions were occurring they erected a wooden fence like a small corral to keep the girls from being maltreated or pinched or crushed by the large crowd. Only priests and doctors were allowed inside the enclosure. After the vision they went to the church sacristy to explain to Don Valentin and anyone else there what they had seen.

June 24 and 25, saw the largest crowd yet with several priests and doctors in attendance. One doctor tried to lift Conchita from the ground, but because of the increase in weight that the girls experience while in ecstasy, he dropped her, causing her knees to hit the rocks with a loud thud. When the ecstasy ended the injury to Conchita's knees was clearly visible. Also, all the girls have marks from pinches, scratches and blows delivered by the onlookers to see if all this is a put-on, and to see if they can get any reaction from the girls. The girls don't feel anything while in ecstasy; there is no visible reaction facially or physically while the abuse is being inflicted, and there is no pain afterwards; only the marks are left.

On Saturday, July 1, 1961, a great number of people from all walks of life, including several medical doctors, was present. About 7:00 P.M., the girls fell into ecstasy and remained that way for two hours. When it was over the girls complained that it was too short, that it lasted only two or three minutes. It was humanly impossible to stay in that position [kneeling on sharp rocks] for longer than a few seconds, and even less with angelical expressions on their faces. This time the angel told them that the next day they would see the Blessed Virgin Mary.

OUR LADY APPEARS

On Sunday, July 2, 1961, the lane was packed with people praying the rosary. Everyone wanted to see the ecstasy. Next to me was the Second Commander of Salto del Nansa, Mr. Rocha, who had come with Dr. Morales and Biñana, [Not Biñana but Piñal.] members of the investigative commission appointed by Bishop Fernandez. I remember Commander Rocha telling me, "This afternoon the girls won't go to the *cuadro* as usual to have their vision." I answered by saying doctors have no control over divine events.

I saw at the bend in the lane the girls approaching. Dr. Morales attempted to stop them *from* reaching the cuadro in order to prevent the apparition from happening, but he was not able to do so as they went right past him without difficulty to the astonishment of Commander Rocha. Once in the *cuadro* they got on their knees and began reciting the rosary. After the first mystery they fell into ecstasy.



The four girls in ecstasy shouted at the same time "the Virgin!" Initially the girls thought it was Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and then they were heard saying it was Our Lady of Mount Carmel, as she came with the Infant Jesus and both carried in their hands the scapular.

The Virgin was surrounded by six angels. Conchita could clearly be heard counting them. [As Conchita tells us in her diary, there were only two angels, not six, with the Virgin on her first visit. But what then was she counting that Juan A. Seco heard so clearly? In his notes, Father Valentin Marichalar records that Conchita was counting the six words of the "secret of the angel" which has never been revealed.] She also said, "That Eye," which later was found out to be the Most Holy Trinity in the form of an eye. To the right of the Virgin there was a square shaped area of fire. [This fiery frame has no other reference and may have been mistakenly told to J.A.S. by someone else.] The rigidity of the girls was accentuated; their eyes were full of tears and their faces seemed emaciated and with a waxen pallor. The one crying the most was Mari Cruz. A doctor grabbed her around the neck and tried to rotate her head away from the vision, but could not. A loud cracking sound was heard and we thought he had injured her, but she was unhurt.

As the vision continued their faces became more peaceful. The girls were lined up, and to my right were Mari Dolores, Conchita and Jacinta, and on my left Mari Cruz. All had their rosaries and were talking to the Virgin about their daily duties. This was heard with all clarity. Mari Loli showed her teeth. Later we learned that the Virgin had told her that she had pretty teeth. Then Conchita, with her mouth open and twisted to the side, showed the Virgin where she had a cavity. The Virgin also asked them about the priest. The girls said he was ugly but very good. Don Valentin (the parish priest) was present and could clearly hear this, as could many others close by.

The girls told the Virgin that they were praying for the Civil Guards who were protecting them from being harmed by the curious crowds. Then they asked the Virgin if they could hold her crown. She finally agreed and we could see how they passed it from one to the other. Conchita asked the Virgin to let her keep one of the stars so she could put it in her hair, and everyone could see it and believe. The answer of the Virgin: "Eventually they will believe."

The girls describe the Virgin as follows: White dress, blue mantle, crown of golden stars, hands outstretched, and a brown scapular, long, dark brown hair parted in the middle and a very beautiful face. She appeared to be about 17 years old, on the tall side and all the girls agreed she has an unmistakable and most beautiful voice.

After this vision I have been a witness of many of the apparitions and ecstasies, and of hundreds of ecstatic runs, as they ran with great speed through the streets of the town, sometimes backwards. During those runs, at times, some of the girls were in ecstasy while the others not, and those not in ecstasy could not catch up with the others. Even the young men of the town found it impossible to run fast enough to catch up with them.

I also witnessed many times how in ecstasy the seers offered all those rosaries and medals for Our Lady to kiss and returned them to their rightful owners without making a mistake. Some people gave their kissed objects to other people to give to the girls and have the Virgin kiss them once more. The Virgin identified them and said she would not kiss them because they already had been kissed. Others gave their rings to be kissed, but the Virgin would only kiss wedding rings.

I have met the girls and thought them very plain, but during their trances their faces became transformed and acquired an angelic look. I have seen them in their ecstasies fall on their heads and hit stones with a loud thud. It hurt me more than them, as nothing ever happened to them.



A failed attempt to twist Mari Cruz's head while she is in ecstasy.

These marvels occurred so many times and so often (there could be two or three ecstasies each day) it is impossible to recount them all. I only record certain cases which I witnessed. In my mind I remember so many and with such precision that I will never forget them as long as I live, God willing. [Juan ASeco died on July 5,1988.]

ABOUT THE FIRST MESSAGE

The girls in ecstasy in the *cuadro* were very serious and intensely listening to what the Virgin was telling them. Some had big tears coming out of their eyes. Many of the onlookers also felt this emotion. When the ecstasy ended, the four girls in the total silence surrounding them, announced to Father Valentin that they had received a message from the Virgin that they couldn't tell him, their parents or the Bishop.

The next day the girls told me that they had to go alone to the Pines because the Virgin said so. They said two little girls about three years old who are too little to know anything about this should accompany them and keep a lookout. Also, Maria Dolores said to me: "Brigadier, you and my father come to 300 feet to the right of the Pines. Father Valentin and two religious are to be 300 feet to the left of the Pines. The rest of the people are to stay far away."

We did as they told us, and we could see the moment they entered into ecstasy. They began to cry so much

that the little girls that accompanied them were frightened and also began to cry. This was described as the Vision of the Chalice, which was filling with the sins of mankind, and they were to reveal this on October 18, 1961.

With empty wooden fruit crates they devised a small altar at the foot of the Pines and covered it with flowers from the countryside. They spent all morning preparing it and did a very nice job.

Another day the Virgin appeared to the girls in the Pines. A civil guard from Reinosa and his friend had gone there to see an ecstasy were witnesses. They heard Conchita say to the Virgin: "Aren't you going to hurt yourself in those branches?" She said this because the Virgin was appearing in the top branches of the tree. Present this time were also the daughter of Primitiva, by name Elvira, and another person from the village.

CONCHITA IN SANTANDER

On July 27 in Santander, Conchita had her braids cut off. Apparently in a previous apparition she had offered them to the Virgin. The doctors who were in Garabandal for only a day, had an agreement with the Bishop to bring her from Garabandal to Santander. I happened to be in Santander that same day, but never got to see her. The day before, since I wouldn't be in Garabandal for the apparitions, I told the guards to watch and let me know what happens.

When I returned from Santander the two guards I had left there informed me that on the twenty-seventh of July, Conchita had been taken to a convent in Santander. The girls in the boarding school attached to the convent were asked to take her out to see Santander and entertain her so she would forget about her "illness."

I returned to Puentenansa and contacted the guards, who told me that at 1:00 P.M., Mari Loli, Mari Cruz and Jacinta saw Saint Michael the Archangel, and they were heard telling him what a pity that when the Virgin comes Conchita would not be with them; but the angel said that Conchita will see the Virgin in Santander at the same time they see her in Garabandal.

The next day about 8:00 A.M., in Puentenansa I got a phone call from Brigadier Crecencio of Civil Guard headquarters [in Santander] who asked me what had happened in Garabandal the previous day. I told him at 1:00 P.M., the angel appeared to Mari Cruz, Jacinta and Maria Dolores and had told them that Conchita in Santander would see the Virgin at the same time as them. Brigadier Crecencio confirmed that indeed Conchita had her vision at 1:00 P.M., next to the convent fence.

A young man from Garabandal who knew the four girls very well was in Santander at that time and he told me he had seen Conchita returning to the convent with some of the girls, and on the overpass to the railway station she suddenly went into ecstasy in the middle of the street.

When Conchita's mother returned to Garabandal she said her daughter was a sick girl and that was the reason she was having visions, that everything was a lie and that this was what the ecclesiastical authority had told her.

I was near the water fountain that had been a gift to the town from Etaquio, where two women were telling Mari Cruz's mother that everything was a lie. Had I not been there Mari Cruz's mother would have fought with them, but fortunately nothing happened.

When Conchita's brother Serafin returned from cutting wood in Navarre, he asked his mother about Conchita. When she told him she was in Santander, Serafin told her to bring her home.

Back in Garabandal, Conchita was playing with a little girl, the niece of Mrs. Primitiva, when she recognized the voice of the Virgin but couldn't see her. She even looked under her bed. The Virgin told her to

go with the other girls on the next day, to the place of the visions. When the four girls were reunited Conchita told them not to leave Garabandal if anybody wanted to take them out.

THE STONE KISSED BY THE VIRGIN

Mari Loli came out of her house in ecstasy and arriving at the lane fell on her knees. We surrounded her. Next to me was Father Ramon Andreu. We watched her pick up stones and give them to the Virgin to kiss. She said to the Virgin: "This stone is for a friend and her family who live in Cadiz." She took another stone and offering it to the Virgin, said it was for another friend who does not live in Garabandal.

She then picked up another stone and didn't say anything. The Virgin kissed it and Mari Loli put it back on the ground. Then I picked it up and put it in my pocket as Loli continued looking up the whole time. Then the Virgin asked her to show her the last stone she kissed. While continuing to look upwards, Loli felt around the ground with her hand and didn't find the stone. We then placed two or three stones by her side which she touched but then ignored. Father Andreu said to me: "Brigadier, take the stone from your pocket and put it on the ground." I did, and apparently the Virgin told her it was now on the ground.

Without looking, Loli touched several stones and found the one I put there. She picked it up, showed it to the Virgin and then was happy. She put it back on the ground, and I again picked it up and put it in my pocket. At the end of the ecstasy I asked Loli if that last stone the Virgin kissed was for anyone in particular, and she said no, so I kept it for myself.

ECSTATIC FALL

One day an important person came to Garabandal accompanied by Mr. Emilio Valle and his daughters. The daughters gave me several medals to give to Maria Dolores (Loli) so she could have them kissed by the Virgin. I did as requested. Loli had her vision at the Pines. I remember a very curious thing happened. Maria Dolores was on the ground lying flat on her back talking to the angel and told him: "If you don't help me I can't get up." Then I saw how she extended her arm and slowly began to raise up until she reached a sitting position just as though someone had given her a hand and helped her to sit up.



RECOGNITION OF PRIESTS

When his Excellency Doroteo Fernandez y Fernandez published his first *nota* from the Bishopric recommending that priests abstain from going to Garabandal, the priests would come in civilian clothes. I remember Conchita in ecstasy, repeating the Virgin's words that, "Today there are three priests in the village,"

but Conchita herself said there was only one. Two gentlemen dressed as civilians came closer to try and hear this murmured conversation, and identified themselves as priests, explaining that they were dressed that way in view of the Bishop's prohibition. [There was no official prohibition in Bishop Fernandez's first *nota* but simply a "desire" that priests abstain from going there.] We did not see them in town after that. Another day two lieutenants from the Air Force were in town. I recognized them but didn't say anything, and the girls found out from the Virgin that they were chaplains.

On October 12, 1961, I was offered the crucifix to kiss by each of the girls in ecstasy. It was my patronal feast day, and the Virgin congratulated me. I had chosen to spend the day in Garabandal.

(to be continued)

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(Part 2 of 2)

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Translated from Spanish by Dr. Edward Serano

In this second and final segment of his testimony, police chief Juan A. Seco, who was in charge of maintaining order in Garabandal during 1961-62, continues narrating his experiences.

I was a witness from the first apparitions of the four seers: Conchita, Mari Cruz, Jacinta and Mari Loli. Today, more than seven years later [1969], I still think about them every day. Being appointed to this command post gave me the opportunity of cleansing my soul that needed it so much.



The apparitions made such an impression on me that I went so far as to take religious education classes and join the Nocturnal Adoration Society. I always feel as though I haven't done enough. For me there are no doubts. I'll never forget the apparitions as long as I live.

I will always hold in fond memory a holy rosary and two pictures kissed by the Virgin that are now owned by two persons. One day, I was in Cabezón de la Sal to share impressions with and receive orders from my Captain. Afterwards, I traveled to San Vicente de la Barquera to greet my good friend Exposito. We met in a cafe-bar and I saw on the wall several calendar pages with somewhat immoral figures, and among them was a picture of the Virgin of Fatima. Since this picture had nothing to do with the rest, I asked the owner if I could have it, but he refused and gave me one of Saint Michael instead. Later I also got hold of the one of Fatima.

Back in Garabandal and while Mari Loli was in ecstasy I gave the Fatima picture to Jacinta who was not in ecstasy so she could give it to Mari Loli for the Virgin to kiss. When Mari Loli returned it, Jacinta asked her, "Who is that on the picture?" Mari Loli, in ecstasy, said she didn't know, and Jacinta told her to ask the Virgin which Mari Loli did. "The Virgin says that those pictures are the Virgin of Fatima and Saint Michael." You cannot imagine how that scene struck me. Today my friend and benefactress Julia de Costa and the blind daughter of a corporal of the Civil Guard have them and every day they pray for humanity which so badly is in need of God's protection.

What occurred on March 19, 1962

On my way up the road to Garabandal, I came across my friend Fidelin who offered to give me a lift. In his car were Father Jose Silva, the founder of Boystown in Orense, another young priest, and a boy that had a heart disease. Upon their arrival at 11:45 P.M., they encountered Maria Dolores in ecstasy, in her family's establishment. As the vision continued past midnight into March 19 [feast of Saint Joseph], she went to the counter of the cafe and opening a drawer, took out a pencil and a holy card. She then held the holy card against the wall and wrote on it what was being told to her by the vision: "The Virgin congratulates Father Jose." The Father mentioned to me that he had not told anyone his name and that for him this was a marvelous proof. It jolted him and he was somewhat pale. Later we went to Conchita's house. The priest told her about a Holy Hour, and she asked, "What is that?" Father Silva explained to her what it was, but we did not have the keys to the church or the tabernacle so that Holy Communion could be distributed, and Don Valentin, the parish priest, was asleep in Primitiva's house.

Mr. Matutano from Reinosa, another civil guard, and I went to the priest and asked for the key to the church but he wouldn't let us have it, even though Father Silva was going to preside at the Holy Hour. When Matutano and I returned to Conchita's house, Maximina suggested we try the church door to see if it might be open. About twenty of us, including Conchita and Maria Dolores—I remember that the Marquis and Marquise of Santa Maria were present—went and we found the church door open, but we didn't have the key to the sacristy to open it and get the key for the tabernacle. But Father Silva found that while the sacristy was locked, the tabernacle was open. So the Holy Hour was prayed by all present with almost everybody taking Holy Communion. It was wonderful, the Santa Marias, Matutano and others (whose names I no longer remember) can testify that this is what happened. Father Silva preached to us, saying that Garabandal was totally true.

I saw Conchita suspended horizontally in the air

One of the most impressive ecstasies occurred in Conchita's kitchen witnessed also by my good friend Dr. Ortiz (who saw many ecstasies), a priest named Don Jose Ramon Vazquez, a seminarian from Reinosa and several others. Jacinta was present but not in ecstasy.

Conchita went into ecstasy and reaching up to offer some medals to the Virgin, said, "I can't reach." We deduced that the Virgin wanted to kiss them, so we tried with all our might to lift Conchita, but it was useless; we couldn't even get her feet off the floor. It seemed as though she weighed thousands of pounds. Conchita said to Jacinta, "You jump up because I can't reach." Then Jacinta, naturally much weaker than a man, without help from anyone, was able to lift her. I was very perplexed by this, but the best was yet to come, something even more surprising that I will never forget.



I was standing near the kitchen door. To my right was Dr. Ortiz, the priest from Llanes (Asturias) and somebody else. Conchita in ecstasy had fallen flat on her back. Suddenly I saw her body hovering in the air. I tried to confirm this by passing my hand between her and the floor but I wasn't able because it only lasted a few seconds. I'll never forget it.

My glasses and the sign of the cross

I was in Conchita's house with others when she went into ecstasy. She started to make the sign of the cross over me, saying "by the sign..." but then stopped and touching my glasses, asked me for them. At first I refused but she kept her hand out waiting for me to give them to her. Urged by those present, I relented but still afraid they might get broken. She took them in her hand, folded them and returned them to me. Then she made the sign of the cross over me in a way that I myself had never done. Again she asked me for my glasses and put them on me as I had never done. As long as I live, each time I bless myself, I will remember it. The Virgin told her to take my glasses off so she could make the sign of the cross on me properly.

Another curious event

One afternoon a friend of mine, a painter, came back to Garabandal with a married couple. He already had been to Garabandal and witnessed a previous apparition, and had been given a medal kissed by the Virgin. But now he returned wondering if the medal had really been kissed. I remember very well what happened that day. We were in Ceferino's cafe. The painter gave two of his own medals and a third one to Mari Loli. One was an ordinary medal of the Virgin, and the other was oval shaped with the word "Alicia" on one side

and a cross imprinted on the reverse. Mari Loli was somewhat surprised, and not particularly interested in presenting it to the Virgin as she could not see Her image on it. Finally she agreed to offer it to Our Lady to kiss.



Mari Loli in ecstasy returns a ring to the rightful owner

When she went into ecstasy and offered the painter's medal, Mari Loli said, "Just look how ugly you look here, when you are so beautiful." When she offered my friend's medal to the Virgin we heard Mari Loli ask, "This one has been kissed already?" My friend became very pale and disconcerted at this wonderful proof for all of us. His wife, who had wanted to take a nap instead of coming to see the ecstasy, was grateful that she saw with her own eyes how the Virgin identified the already kissed medal.

What happened with Damians and a cross

[Mr. Damians](#) had given a chain with a medal and tiny gold cross to Conchita so she could have it kissed by the Virgin when she had her next ecstasy. She went into ecstasy and we all followed her to the church. In the doorway she offered Mr. Damians' articles to the Virgin to kiss and afterwards placed the chain around his neck. She returned home still in ecstasy. When Mr. Damians noticed that only the medal was on the chain and not the tiny gold cross, he told this to Conchita as soon as she came out of ecstasy. "Yes, you're right," she answered. "The Virgin just told me that it fell by the church door." We all went back to the church and I don't know how, but Conchita went straight to the place where the little crucifix was. We all witnessed this. [ED: *Mr. Damians also took the famous picture of the [Miracle of the Visible Host](#) in Garabandal*]

Return this kissed ring...

In another ecstasy Conchita had five gold wedding rings (see also story: [Wedding Rings](#)) on the kitchen table. One was Dr. Ortiz's, another his wife's, and I don't remember to whom the others belonged. She picked them up, offered them to the Virgin to kiss and put them back on the table. She came toward me and I thought she was going to offer me the crucifix to kiss as she and the other seers always did when I was in Garabandal. Instead, she offered me one of the rings, telling me, "Take it, so you can take it to Barcelona." The ring belonged to a sister of Paquita Olivella from Barcelona, who told me that one day she saw it gleaming.

The priest who had replaced Don Valentin was present at that ecstasy and Conchita was heard telling the Virgin, "A new priest has arrived to relieve Father Valentin." She then preceded to remove the priest's glasses so she could make the sign of the cross over him. From his first day in Garabandal, this priest received plenty of proofs. According to what I was told, when Don Valentin came back to the village and his replacement returned to his destination, the Bishop said to him, "I sent you to prove that the apparitions were false, and you come back more convinced of their truth than the girls themselves."

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Conchita's name day, all the seers congratulated the Virgin. Later while still in ecstasy they played hide and seek. I remember an occasion when Jacinta came out wearing a pinafore and it was understood that the Virgin told her that it was too short. I was watching her during her vision as she pulled it down and Our Lady showed her more or less what length she wanted it. She had to go change. Today what scandal with those miniskirts.

What I saw one Sunday



Mari Loli and Jacinta, with visitors to the village were once afraid of the Civil Guard

I was near Conchita's house. Her mother told her, "Daughter, why are you wearing your new coat? If you have an apparition in this bad weather you're going to get it all dirty." Conchita was walking to the church and as she arrived in front of the house of a deaf lady near Loli's house, she went in ecstasy and fell to the ground, but holding up the crucifix she held in her hand.

She was smiling as she got back on her feet, and with her gaze still fixed on her vision, she turned and walked toward her home as I and others followed. First she went to the washroom and found the wash bowl empty. She then went to the kitchen and under the table was an empty water jug; I followed her every step. She went down two steps and over to the outdoor fountain, filled the jug, returned to the house and filled the wash bowl. She then washed herself and her crucifix, which had gotten stained, and changed her coat to an older one as her mother had ordered her to do. Still in ecstasy, she went back to the church and prayed. When she came out of ecstasy she was surprised to see herself wearing a different coat—and smiled.

A cold

Jacinta had been sick in bed for several days with a cold and fever. Her parents had told her that as long as she had a fever not to get out of bed. Of course, she was obedient, but she wasn't seeing the Virgin. When I found out she was sick I went to visit. While I was talking to her parents she ran to the door and the moment she left the house she fell into ecstasy, smiling with an angelic expression [Since the Virgin never went against the parents' orders, it can only be assumed that Jacinta was suddenly well again.—editor].

Also, Mari Loli got that same cold (flu?) and I went to see her. She told me that she used to be afraid of the Civil Guard. I asked her why, and she told me that she and Jacinta had stolen a hammer, sold it for one peseta and bought a chocolate bar that they ate. Every time they saw a Civil Guard they thought he was coming to arrest them. On another occasion they went into somebody's garden and took some turnips. They tried to hide behind a cart but were caught by the owner of the garden who told them, "Don't hide. I know who you are, and when the Civil Guard gets here they'll take you away." Now they weren't afraid anymore because the guards escorted and protected them. I asked if they had confessed their sins, and they said, yes and that it had been a long time ago.

One day, Mari Loli went up to the second floor of her house, where she had had many apparitions. Her father had ordered that whenever she went back downstairs she was to unscrew the light bulb as there was no switch. She went into ecstasy, grabbed the light bulb, and wouldn't let go. Her mother was beside herself and we all thought she was going to burn her hand as we tried unsuccessfully to pry the bulb loose. We were

afraid that by using too much force we could break the light bulb and cause even more harm. We called Mari Cruz who was not in ecstasy and she easily removed the bulb from Loli's hand, and they went down to the first floor.

One day I saw how Jacinta, near the fountain that the Latin American had given to the town as a present, was insisting that the Virgin let her hold the Child Jesus. Apparently the Virgin said, "No, because you could drop Him." Jacinta kept it up, "No! No! I won't let him fall!" Finally the Virgin agreed to let her hold the Baby Jesus and Jacinta, with both palms of her hands facing up, carried the Child Jesus through the streets of Garabandal. The palms of her hands were very close together, as though the Child were very small. She walked very carefully so as to not let Him fall and as the ecstasy was ending, said, "Here, take Him. See how I didn't drop Him?" as she moved her hands upward to give the Child Jesus back to His mother.

One afternoon Jacinta and Mari Loli approached me and told me that the priest from Llanes (Asturias), Don Ramon [Fr. Jose Ramon Garcia de la Riva], had given Mari Loli a camera and told her that when she went into ecstasy, to take a picture of the Virgin. Jacinta and Mari Loli told me that the Virgin showed them how to take the pictures and Maria Dolores snapped the shutter when she saw the Virgin in the viewfinder, and did it three times.

The priest from Llanes took the camera and had the pictures developed, but the Virgin did not appear in any of them. Six months later Mari Loli's father told her, "When you see the Virgin again, tell her to guide your hand so you can draw her and we know what she looks like." After the ecstasy Ceferino asked his daughter, "What did the Virgin tell you?" Loli replied, "She says she'll let me know later."

One day while in ecstasy Loli was heard to say to the Virgin, "You are in one of the three pictures that I took of you." Then she went to a shoe box where she kept religious cards and photos, and picked out three photos. She brought them to the Virgin and took one of them. After the ecstasy when asked about the photo that she separated from the others, she said the Virgin was in that photo, just the way she is and how she is dressed. In that photo apparently some see her, some don't. At three A.M., the daughter of the Latin American took the photo to her home and saw the Virgin in the photo.

Returning from inspecting a post at Tudanca, I came across Jacinta's mother in Cosio, on her way to Puenteansa, and she said to me, "Brigadier, did you know that the Virgin appeared in one of those photos that Loli took?" Without delay and without going to Puenteansa I went straight to Garabandal and asked Ceferino about the photo. He shows it to me and said, "Here it is." I turned the photo around, and with my own eyes I saw the silhouette of the Virgin. She had large eyes, like those of the statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, a small but perfect nose, small full lips, with her hair combed backward and very long. Ceferino keeps this photo. I have not heard about it anymore.

I have prayed the rosary with the seers and with the Virgin, as well as other people who were following Conchita. During one of the mysteries of the rosary, Conchita in ecstasy headed for the cemetery, going over a path filled with mud and water at times ten inches deep. We all were praying with great devotion and fervor, but that wasn't all. When we arrived at the cemetery, Conchita put her hand holding the crucifix through the iron gate, and it seemed she was giving it to be kissed by the souls within. When it seemed she had finished and had walked some 150 feet toward the village, she returned to the cemetery, reintroduced the crucifix and offered it perhaps to "someone" who had not initially kissed it or had arrived later.

The Brigadier in 1962 with the visionaries from left: Conchita, Mari Cruz, Loli and Jacinta



About the Surprise for Etaquio

The story is as follows: The Indiano's elderly mother lived in Garabandal and he came to visit her from Mexico leaving his wife behind to manage his business. As soon as his daughter finished her school year, she and her mother came to join him. Having learned what was happening in Garabandal, Etaquio's wife brought with her a medal that Etaquio had left in Mexico.

Once in Garabandal, without telling him anything, she gave four chains, each with an attached medal, to Loli and told her, "After you give these medals to the Virgin to kiss, put them on each of their respective owners."

Loli fell into ecstasy in her room and I went upstairs to witness the scene. After offering the medals to the Virgin to kiss, she took one and placed it around Etaquio's wife's neck who upon seeing it was so overwhelmed that she began to cry. Then Loli took another medal and placed it on their daughter. A third medal belonging to their son, who was not present, was given by Loli to the wife for him. Holding onto the last one, she went downstairs to the bar-cafe below and walked through a crowd of people until she found the Indiano who was having a few drinks. When she was about to place the medal around his neck, he backed off and said, "This girl is mistaken. I didn't give her any medals." But then, he looked at the medal and said, "Dear God, this is the

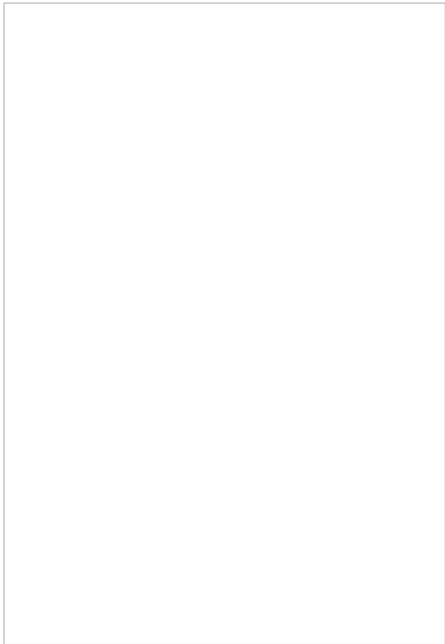
medal I left in Mexico." His wife had wanted to carry out this test witnessed by all of us. It was just one of so many wonderful events that occurred in Garabandal.

Mari Loli climbed and descended those steep stairs many times gracefully and with dignity, never looking where she was putting her feet and with her head tilted back, looking at her vision. One day in ecstasy she went through the village giving her crucifix to kiss to the sick and crippled, and saw me as I was coming out the door. Again she came to me, took my glasses off, and made the sign of the cross over me with the crucifix in a beautiful manner.

Another day I was told that the evening before the wedding of a cousin of hers to a townsman from the village now residing in Cadiz, Mari Loli in ecstasy touched the cross to all the wedding clothes of the couple.

Another Indiano, cousin of a man named Joseito from Cosio, had given several medals to Mari Loli for the Virgin to kiss. I remember that among those medals Loli, in ecstasy, picked up one and said, "This medal has been kissed by Pope Pius X)" (or XI; I don't remember exactly which). In any case the Indiano confirmed what Loli said.

One afternoon a Belgian priest arrived in Garabandal and told us he had made mistakes in talking about some apparitions as true and he had asked the Virgin to help him understand and know the truth, and that was why he'd come to Garabandal. If he could be convinced of the veracity of the Garabandal apparitions he would come back and many would come with him. Conchita, in ecstasy, went to the Belgian, unbuttoned the neck of his shirt, pulled out a medal, and gave it to the Virgin to kiss. The Belgian then disappeared. Three days later he was back.



I also witnessed how Conchita received a letter from Padre Pio from Rome [should be San Giovanni Rotondo]. She asked Our Lady if that letter was really from Padre Pio and Our Lady said, "Yes, it is from Padre Pio."

Another day she received a Letter from Valladolid, apparently from Father Andreu. She was not supposed to open the letter, but send it back unopened with the answer from the Virgin. I sent the envelope back to Father Andreu, unopened, in another envelope with the answer from the Virgin. I still have the receipt dated March 28, 1962, posted from Santander, number 130 or 140 sent to Valladolid. I assume Father Andreu has the answer.

One day my friend Brigadier Crecencio of the Santander Civil Guard and nephew of Don Valentin (the priest at Garabandal) gave me a medal to give to one of the girls to have kissed by the Virgin. I don't remember for sure, but I think I gave it to Loli. When this was done I returned the medal to him in Santander. After some time another nephew of Don Valentin was hospitalized at the Casa de Salud de Valdecilla with an inflamed abdomen. They said only a miracle could save him. They applied the above mentioned medal kissed by the Virgin, and he began to urinate something like a "poison" and was miraculously healed.

Other interesting facts

I mentioned that the doctors sent by the Bishop's commission in July, 1961, were only in the village three days. The first day, as reported to me by Mr. Roche de la Nansa, was when the girls were [supposedly] not going to the *cuadro* to meet the Virgin because Dr. Morales was going to stop them in the street and hypnotize them. This turned out to be a great failure for Dr. Morales.

The second day they were there was October 18, 1961, when the first message was delivered. The girls were escorted by the Civil Guard to protect them from the crowd. Dr. Morales' behavior was less than edifying.

The third time was when they tried to sneak the girls out of town at night when everyone was asleep, without permission from their parents or the town.

I keep in my possession some handwritten verses by Conchita. They were sung by the four girls and the whole town March 25, 1962, feast of the Annunciation and the Incarnation of the Son of God.

*Today day of the Virgin
Day of the Incarnation
We congratulate you
With all our hearts.*

*Little Virgin, Little Virgin
How you please us*

*With your sweet laugh
And your eyes so intense.*

*Men, women and
children
Now you know our
message
The Virgin wants it
fulfilled
For the good of all
mankind.*

*Here come your little
daughters
Accompanying you
So you make them a
place
To be near you.*

*Christians, follow the
Virgin
With humility and fervor
So she makes a place for
us all
In the celestial mansion.*

I must also testify that during the filming of the girls in ecstasy, powerful beams of light were aimed at their eyes causing them no harm. I have seen them pinched, and they only knew it because the Virgin told them so. I have seen people asking them silly questions, making fun of them in very poor taste. I heard Mari Cruz complain to the Virgin about a priest who was irritating to the nth degree.

Two priests from Bilbao were making fun of Conchita while she was in ecstasy and offering the crucifix to the pilgrims to kiss. She did not offer it to them, and repentant, they went to Jacinta and asked her to pray a rosary with them in reparation for their behavior. After the rosary, Mari Cruz in ecstasy came and offered them the crucifix and they felt at peace, and thanked the girls.

I don't believe the devil can take from me the peace I enjoy today and that I was lacking before. My life is much more tranquil because the two messages revealed by the Virgin for the world are continually with me, as they should be for everybody.

After all that I have written and described, I want to tell all Christians of good faith that the most important of all of this is to obey the [message of June 18, 1965](#).

Satan has been unleashed, but we are in the age of Mary and her Immaculate Heart will triumph, and us with her, if we are in that heart.

Barcelona, March 7, 1969
Juan Alvarez Seco

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