

# EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY - Part 1

Reprinted with kind permission from [GARABANDAL JOURNAL](#) • September-October 2005

---

*Spanish author Mercedes Salisachs from Barcelona made three trips to Garabandal during the time of the apparitions and stayed for several days each time witnessing a significant number of ecstasies. Her first visit was over Easter in 1962 (recounted in our March-April 2003 edition) about which she gives a moving testimony of how after being distraught over the death of her son in an auto accident she learned (from Our Lady through Loli) on Holy Saturday that he was in heaven. This account represents the first part of an informe (report) of her experiences in Garabandal Our series based on the remainder of her report begins with her still being in the village over Easter of 1962.*

---

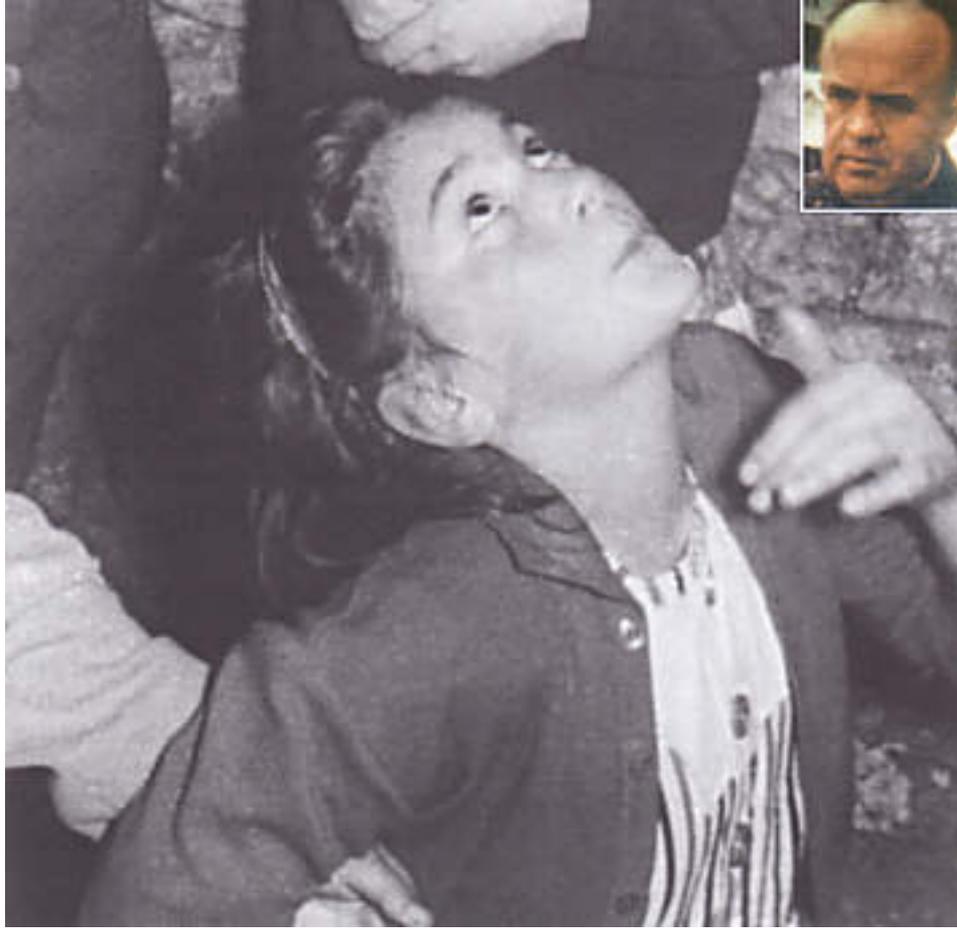
It was Easter and the people of Garabandal were happy and content. In spite of it being this time of year, the sun was shining and it was warm. Joseph (Mercedes's driver) had recovered completely. He had known and loved my son Miguel since his childhood and after hearing my story, could not stop crying.

During the afternoon I recorded conversations with the girls and with people from the town. Everyone was convinced of the truth of the visions.

At the time for which the visions were announced, we went to Conchita's home. She was joyful and spontaneous, and I noted her great personality. She was uneducated but had the spirit of an artist. While she waited for the vision she was writing, drawing, singing and playing jokes on all of us. In the letter that she dedicated to me she recommended that I put religion in my books for the good of humanity. Graciously she drew for us the image of the Angel such as she had seen him; then we recorded songs composed by her and the Hail Holy Queen, accompanied by me. She hesitated to sing it alone.

While we were waiting for her apparition they came to tell us that Jacinta was already in ecstasy. She was alone during her vision; her mother was exhausted and had fallen asleep. When we entered her home, Jacinta was leaving the house, in a trance by herself. Her mother, still half asleep ran down the stairs in a great hurry, and had to return to the house as she'd forgotten her shoes.

Always looking upwards, Jacinta walked fast with the crucifix in her hands. She stopped at the entrance of a house and knocked until they opened.



**Jacinta in ecstasy in 1962. Inset, Father Valentin Marichalar, village pastor.**

She entered the house and climbed the stairs in the dark. Father Corta and I were behind her. First she entered a room on the second floor where apparently two little girls were sleeping. Then she opened the door in front of us. Somebody turned on the light and we saw Don Valentin in bed. Jacinta was laughing, and always looking upwards, offered him the crucifix to kiss but Don Valentin was half asleep and couldn't quite reach it. Jacinta, still laughing, did not give up until he kissed it. Then she made the sign of the cross, and giving it to him to kiss again, left.

Next day Don Valentin confessed to me, "May God forgive me, but I was tired from so many prodigies and doubting so much. I asked the Virgin that if the girls were really seeing her, that night have one of them come to me while I was sleeping and wake me up. Now I cannot doubt. They've never done that before. Besides, did you see how Jacinta was laughing when she gave me the crucifix to kiss?"

I think that night was the first time I saw Jacinta coming down the stairs backwards and running up the steep street. It was extremely difficult to follow her; she was running too fast to keep up with her.



At one time running backwards she slipped and fell in the mud. She immediately got up gracefully and harmoniously. It was as though we were seeing a movie in slow motion. The artistic movements of this child could not have been imitated by the best ballerina. She shook the mud off her coat and continued her backward flight.

In view of the difficulty in following her we decided to wait for her in the square. I must mention that Joseph, the mechanic, in spite of how ill he had been the previous day and in spite of his blood loss, ran after her without any problem.

While we were waiting in the square, a boy from the town (I don't know if on purpose or accidentally) bumped into her while she was running. There was a violent crash as both fell to the ground. Jacinta immediately got up without a scratch; the boy, I was informed later, had two broken fingers.

Later she returned walking normally but still in ecstasy. Once in the square (*el cuadro*), she fell to her knees upon the rock of the first apparitions. She made the sign of the cross and came out of ecstasy.

On seeing where she was, she suggested that we pray the rosary and we did. Later on I found out that whenever any of the girls came out of ecstasy in the square, if any one of those present had not said the rosary yet that day, they proposed that we all do so. This day it was Joseph who had not prayed. Since he was sick he had stayed in bed while the rest of us went to the church to pray our rosary.



**Mercedes was present during this ecstasy in 1962 where Mari Loli levitated off the floor.**

Mari Loli was the last to be in ecstasy that night. Surrounded by a large group of people, she went to the foyer of her house. She placed herself on the floor, arranged her skirt neatly and modestly, and suddenly, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, she raised upwards so that only her heels and the crown of her head touched the floor. At the request of Ceferino (her father) we passed my cane under her body without touching it. This was no illusion; the rest of her body was in the air.

When she sat up her feet were in the air, her body in the shape of an acute angle. Then walking on her knees, she went to Gloria (the niece of Rosario Santa Maria) and removed her medals and chain, offered them to the Virgin to kiss, offered them back to Gloria, and then held them up a bit longer, as if the Virgin were telling her something referring to the medals.

Then Gloria and I changed places. Gloria went to the other side of the room and I took her place. We wanted to see what Mari Loli would do when she came back to return the medals. She came to me in ecstasy and when she started to put the medals back, (without looking at me), she stopped and then said to the Virgin, "What? She is not here? Very well." Still on her knees, she turned around and went directly to Gloria. Without any hesitation she offered the medals to be kissed again and put them back around her neck.

Gloria, between tears, told us, "I asked the Virgin, if the children were truly seeing her, to make Mari Loli take my medals from me and then replace them."

This kind of testing was common in Garabandal. Several times I saw the girls stop during their ecstatic walks, as if someone had called them, and return to a particular person. Or (as what happened to my future son-in-law Alfonso Zuleta), they'd raise their arm above and behind themselves, bend backward, and offer the crucifix to be kissed by someone standing behind them. This was usually in response to a mental request made by one of the onlookers.

Of course, rationalists will explain this by phenomena of suggestion or transmission of thought. But it never worked for me. I desperately tried to get the girls to give me the cross to kiss, and provide answers to calm me about the death of my son. All I got from them was total indifference. Could my subconscious have been trying to keep me ignorant of the answer? Did it think I'd be happier not knowing? In my case, couldn't



a word of consolation have been more effective than the rejection I suffered? What would have happened if I'd left the village before receiving my answer?

Truly, as far as I'm concerned, my lack of success in thought transmission could be blamed by the rationalist on my being a poor medium, but then how do they explain that since Mari Loli revealed the answer to my question my quality as a medium had improved so much?

I went back to Barcelona totally convinced the girls were seeing the Virgin.

( PART 2 )

*Reprinted with kind permission from* GARABANDAL JOURNAL • September-October 2005  
to order [subscription for GARABANDAL JOURNAL](#)

---

Back for more [Garabandal Information](#)



# Mercedes Salisachs (Part two)

## EYEWITNESS

Reprinted with kind permission from [GARABANDAL JOURNAL](#) November-December 2005

Excerpted from LOS MILAGROS O FAVORES DE NUESTRA MADRE DE GARABANDAL by Maria Josefa Villa de Gallego

Translated from Spanish by Dr. Edward Serrano



### The report of Spanish author Mercedes Salisachs continues after she returned to Barcelona from her first trip to Garabandal in April of 1962

I didn't know when I would be able to go back to Garabandal. We were planning a trip to Asia, but I told the girls [visionaries] that perhaps I would return to the village before leaving for Japan.



Twenty days after getting back to Barcelona from Garabandal, I received a cordial and affectionate letter from Conchita which she wrote while waiting for the Virgin to appear. "I know you are going to Japan; have a good trip," she wrote. But in a postscript she added, "I know one of your secrets but I can't tell it to you now. Goodbye."

All through the trip I was wondering what she meant by that. No matter where I was, my devotion to Mary increased, and thinking about the fervent piety of the children only increased it more. The trip itself was happy and interesting. We visited Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Iran, but even the most wonderful sights could not be compared to the slightest occurrence in Garabandal. I was wondering when I would be able to return but my husband said it could not be until after the summer, and I was hoping he would come with me.

On June 24 (1962), when I arrived back in Barcelona from our Asian trip, I found a letter from Conchita dated May 20. She told me the angel continued giving her Communion on the days when there was no Mass and that she was waiting in vain for me to make a quick trip to Garabandal.

As for the secret that she had written about, she said, "Tonight I'll be seeing the Virgin and I'll ask her if I can tell it to you. She still has not allowed me to do so." The emphasis she placed on this secret increased my curiosity more and more, but I was not anxious about it. I was surprised that the Virgin continued talking about me with the children even though I was not present in the village. I also didn't think this was a story that Conchita had invented to keep me in suspense. It just showed me that the Virgin bestows her mercy on those who least deserve it.

Toward the end of July, David Toribio, a native of Garabandal who had grown up knowing the girls and had now been employed in my house for about a month, showed me a letter his brother's wife, Mercedes, had sent. The letter was dated June 21, 1962, two days after the anniversary of the [first] apparition, and the news was terrifying. At this very moment it is in my hands and I can pass on to you the most important paragraphs. It reads thus:

The whole town was frightened because of the visions that occurred last night and the night before last (June 19 and 20). You can imagine how horrible it was when even the men in the town cried as if they were little children. The girls in their visions screamed and said things such as the punishment was near. The Virgin did not tell them the date but she told them what it would consist of. I asked Conchita but she said, "I cannot tell you; you would die of sadness if I did." In ecstasy the girls begged for Mary to "take the children with you so that they don't suffer so. Take them with you for they are innocent." That is what they asked from the Virgin.

To us they asked that we all go to confession (that was Tuesday) and that we prepare ourselves. You can imagine how it was when today 400 of us went to confession with fervor as never before. We cried all through the Mass and even the hymns and chants were relevant. We were lucky a Franciscan priest arrived Wednesday morning. He had permission to hear confessions and celebrate Mass. Last night those who were near him also said that he was crying. When the children screamed he began to pray and everyone prayed with him.

During these two nights almost all the people present were the townsfolk. Visitors have begun to arrive, and although many came last night, there still aren't as many as last year. The Virgin said for the visionaries to stay in the *cuadro* but they said to us, "You can do whatever you want," and many stayed with them.

Today Mari Cruz was the only one having visions. The other girls will not see the Virgin until Saturday. Until now, everything was pretty much like when you were here: we were lukewarm, but now...

This letter was overwhelming but not surprising. When the Virgin shows herself in such an obvious way, it is always for a very powerful reason. If we are to consider her a mediatrix it is logical she would come to warn us to prepare for a future disaster.

It is very strange that many who at the beginning were inclined to believe in the sincerity of the girls paradoxically refused to believe in the visions when they heard about the Chastisement. The opposite should have been true.

It would seem that the desire of the Virgin to reveal such an important message appears incompatible with the place she chose for the revelation; a poor, barren corner of the world forgotten by man and of difficult access. But it is in a place like this where one can find a nucleus of people able to accept the truth and the demands exacted by Christianity. An apparition of the Virgin in such a remote corner of the world makes it, by her very presence, a most comfortable and desirable place, regardless of the material and logistical difficulties incurred in arriving there.

God wants everyone to come to him, and it is up to us, the few who had the privilege of attending and believing in these apparitions, to bring the rest to him. Perhaps this is the true mission of those who live there, or those who have visited and been moved spiritually by the events of Garabandal. Some will argue that the Virgin should make her apparitions where everyone can see them comfortably, and they would become instantly famous. But wouldn't this then, make one have second thoughts about the validity of the apparitions? If it were easy to spread the message, there would be little merit in doing so. Isn't it more convincing when something so difficult to promote at the beginning, such as Lourdes and Fatima, overcomes all obstacles by its piety and authenticity? Since it is natural to absorb what one likes and ignore unpleasantness, should we be surprised that she appears almost secretly with her disturbing messages?

The Virgin is asking for penance and prayer. It would not make any sense if she appeared in a comfortable place. Comfort will have to be sacrificed to go to Garabandal.

In those days, the sister of my future son-in-law, Carmen Zuleta, was in Barcelona living in the home of Jacinto Maristany, a great devotee of the Virgin and very enthusiastic about Garabandal. She wanted to go to Garabandal, but at the same time was very skeptical. One day she came to my home and asked my husband if he would let me accompany her to Garabandal as she did not dare to go there alone. Her visit in my house coincided with the presence of Father Eliseo Buedo, Superior of the Passionists from Santa Gema, a chief of the Civil Guard stationed at that time in Barcelona, and other people interested in the apparitions.

In spite of her skepticism Carmen Zuleta told us what had happened to her the previous night. While she was discussing the Garabandal events with Jacinto Maristany, half jokingly and half seriously, she said, "I'm going to pray three Hail Marys to the Virgin and afterwards I'll open this book to see what she tells me." She picked up the only book in the room without knowing what it was. When she opened it the page began with a title in capital letters saying "Apparition of the Virgin" and below it an image of Our Lady. She was very surprised but did not give much importance to what she considered a coincidence. The book was the Bible and the passage referred to the Apocalypse of St. John.

Father Eliseo Buedo seemed to be interested but also did not appear very impressed by this. Once my husband had given me permission to accompany Carmen on her trip to Garabandal we begged Father Buedo to join us. He said that would be impossible as he needed to ask permission from his provincial superior, who was in a different province. I suggested he telephone him. The line was busy and we were informed it would take three hours before communication could be established.

It was getting late so he decided to go back to the monastery and asked that the telephone conference be transferred there. "If God wants me to go, everything will turn out. If my Superior doesn't allow me to go, then God doesn't want me to go either."

Ten minutes later, as he was about to leave, the phone rang. It was the provincial superior and he gave Father permission to go. The next day, June 29, the feast day of St. Peter, we left Barcelona in two cars. There was plenty of room and Dr. Puncernau, neurologist, and his daughter Margarita joined us. My future son-in-law, Alfonso Zuleta and Guiomar, my daughter, engaged to Alfonso, also joined us and we left Barcelona.



**Mercedes Salisachs (partially hidden) with police chief Juan Alvarez Seco stands behind visionaries from the left: Conchita, Mari Cruz, Mari Loli and Jacinta.**

## **MY SECOND TRIP TO GARABANDAL**

Mercedes, the mechanic's wife, was in town with her husband. She had suffered all her life from terrible headaches but since that Holy Saturday of her previous visit when she had been cured, she had never had another one. Now she appeared to have something on her mind. I thought, but wasn't sure, she was asking Our Lady for a very special spiritual grace which she had not yet received. I suspected what it was, but dared not pry, though I encouraged her by saying, "Trust and be patient, and you'll see how the Virgin hears you." I, too, prayed for her intention with absolute faith that sooner or later Our Lady would answer her.

We arrived at the town the thirtieth of the month and in contrast with my first visit, the reception from the girls was very warm.

That same night while I was in Conchita's house awaiting her visit from Our Lady, I was told that Mari Loli in ecstasy had gone to the rooms in the house where my daughter and I were staying, and blessed my daughter Guiomar's bed and my bed with the crucifix, but skipped the one bed that was empty. How did she know which of the three beds would have been empty that night? It was a happy sign for us that Our Lady was welcoming our presence in the town.

That afternoon I had asked Conchita when was she going to reveal the secret. She told me that she would ask the Virgin that evening. I wanted to be with her as I was curious as to how she would ask and suggested she hold my hand during the apparitions as I knew that once the girls had something in their grasp they did not let go. However, she showed no sign of receiving any "calls" and the time was passing, and we were losing the opportunity of seeing Mari Loli. Both Father Buedo and I asked her if she was sure that she was going to see the Virgin that night, and she shrugged her shoulders, saying, "I think so," but without any sign of impatience. She was remarkably tranquil and unconcerned.

Meanwhile, tired of waiting and afraid we would miss Mari Loli's second ecstasy, we left Conchita with her mother and two other people. No more than a minute after we arrived at the tavern (the main floor of Loli's house where food and drink were served) we heard Conchita had fallen into ecstasy. When I saw her again that night she told me, "You should have seen the Virgin laughing when you left after waiting so long."

**Conchita told me that the only time she saw**

## the Virgin cry was when she delivered the message.

By the way, this is another example of that "lack of solemnity" that so many austere people noted in the apparitions. It was obvious that the Virgin was not trying to give the impression of severity or somberness to the Garabandal apparitions. Conchita told me that the only time she saw the Virgin cry was when she delivered the message.

### An Injured Foot

At all times what was occurring in Garabandal had the seal of happiness. It was as though the Virgin wished to present herself as unceremonious and accessible. An example of this informality was told to us by Mari Loli.

One afternoon she hurt her foot playing. Later, during an apparition, she had twice gone up and down the hill nearly barefoot. When she got back to the house her feet and legs were dirty. My daughter Guiomar offered to treat her injured foot to avoid an infection. First she washed her feet, and then with the help of Father Buedo bandaged her wound. But still a piece of skin was hanging down and Father Buedo was going to cut it off but Mari Loli did not let him.

A short time later Mari Loli fell into ecstasy. Father Buedo was on her left side and I was on her right. Listening to Mari Loli's conversation with the Virgin, Father Buedo said, "This is how we should pray." Mari Loli was talking to the Virgin with innocent charm and openness, as a child to her mother, reporting in exact detail what had happened. "And Guiomar washed my feet and Father wanted to cut the strip of hanging skin, but I didn't let him because I was scared."

Even though she was talking in a soft voice, her laughter was loud enough; it seemed the Virgin also was laughing, because when Mari Loli stopped laughing, she would wait expectantly and then start laughing again.

### The Fat Priest

I believe it was that night that Mari Loli told the Virgin of "a fat priest who doesn't believe." It was a priest who had arrived that afternoon with no intention of believing in anything that was happening. Mari Loli was saying to the Virgin: "He only talks about his supper, that if there was any food available; it seemed to be his only concern. And he is fat, very fat, very, very fat, and he believes in nothing, nothing of what is happening in the village." Then there was a pause, "Then he will believe? He is very good? Ah."

*PHOTO at Left:* Mari Loli with her younger sister Sari.



I don't know whatever happened to the priest, but this was a significant lesson for the girls, even if they didn't realize it. Just before Mari Loli had fallen into ecstasy he had said, "Nobody disturb me; I'm going to bed now. None of this waking me in the middle of the night to kiss a crucifix." And so it was. When she went [in ecstasy] to the house where the priest was staying, she woke the seminarian who was staying in the room next to the priest, offered him the crucifix to kiss, and then went out, opening the door to the priest's room, but passing by without offering it to him.

That day Dr. Puncernau was able to speak privately with the girls. It seems he asked Conchita to pray for a patient with cancer who was going to die soon. This was a person who was not religious and didn't want to know how serious his condition was. Before Dr. Puncernau left the village, Conchita gave him a written message to be given to the patient when he got back to Barcelona, and she forbade him to read it before the patient did.

Dr. Puncernau obeyed and gave him the message. It said if that man repented of everything sinful that he had done in his life, the Virgin would heal him. The patient behaved badly. Not only did he refuse to go to confession, he assured the Doctor that he would cure himself since he was not suffering any serious disease. Unfortunately, this man is already dead and I don't know if in his last hour he ever repented of anything.

According to Dr. Puncernau, something that convinced him as much as anything of the truth of the apparitions was when Conchita asked the Virgin to heal her from bursitis (it had nothing to do with her falling on her knees during ecstasies). Our Lady told Conchita to go to a doctor, since "that's what they are there for."

## **A Note in Russian**

I should narrate now , what happened to Carmen Zuleta. All day long she felt out of place, she saw the children as inaccessible, and her hostility and mistrust were obvious. Before Mari Loli went into ecstasy, Carmen handed her a piece of paper with petitions to be presented to the Virgin. One of them (which is of no interest to us) perhaps because of suspicion or discretion, she wrote in Russian and wrote the initials of the involved person in the same language, using the Russian alphabet.

When Mari Loli gave her the written response, it included the complete name, surname and nickname of the person involved, and it was in Spanish.

Carmen was very unsettled by this and after several hours she decided to leave the village the next day. But after going to bed she began to feel tranquil and when she awoke the next morning she was feeling such peace that she never wanted to leave. Today she has no doubts and believes that what happened there was supernatural.

As far as Father Buedo is concerned, he received so many proofs that he no longer has the slightest doubt. He is also attracted by the religious atmosphere and love for the Virgin in the village. One day he confessed that nothing would make him happier than to be the parish priest of Garabandal. To be in touch with the townspeople was to be exposed to constant piety.

**Our Lady told Conchita to go to a doctor, since that's what they are there for.**

## **A Passionist Emblem**

Padre Buedo has been one of those treated in a privileged way by the girls. Not only have they given him messages of great personal value (whose content we ignore) but also in all the ecstasies they have treated him with special deference. Nevertheless, when Father went to Garabandal he was convinced due to his humility that he was only going to be a spectator.

Father himself would put the girls to the test. Whenever they went into ecstasy, if it seemed they were going over to him with some article of his, he would hide; he would climb to the top of the stairs or go into a hidden niche. The girls always found him. Once I suggested that he detach the Passionist emblem from his habit and add it to the objects Mari Loli would be giving the Virgin to kiss. "Ask the Virgin, if it is true that she kissed it, to have Mari Loli put it back where it belongs."

Father hesitated because the fastener on this emblem was complicated. It had a spring and he said it would be difficult to operate for someone who didn't know how it worked. I said, "Father, one more reason to do it."

And so it was. Mari Loli, after giving the emblem to the Virgin to kiss, went to Father. She stood in front of him and began trying to fasten it back on. Seeing that this was a complex procedure, she stopped and asked in a clear voice, "And now, what do I do?" She seemed concerned but was smiling. She listened for a few moments to the inaudible voice and then with the greatest of ease released the spring and replaced the emblem on the priest's habit. A small part of the safety latch did not make contact with the habit and, with her eyes always looking up she said, "Very well, I'll leave it like that," and she went to deliver the rest of the kissed objects to their owners.

## **A Lost Wedding Ring**



Loli in ecstasy returns a wedding ring kissed by the Blessed Virgin to its rightful owner.

That same evening Father witnessed another surprising event. Mercedes, the wife of the mechanic, was worried that her prayer had not yet been answered, although the girls assured her it would be very soon. She mentally asked the Virgin that if she was really going to answer her prayer, to kiss her wedding ring and her husband's, but to only replace her husband's ring on his finger.

And that's what happened. Mari Loli placed his wedding ring on Jose's finger after it was kissed by the Virgin. Then she went out into the street, taking with her Mercedes's ring, and went to join the other girls who were in ecstasy. That night the girls went to the Pines twice praying the rosary. When they were coming down, a multitude of people followed them, bumping into each other because of the darkness and unevenness of the terrain. Jose, who was very near the girls, remembered hearing a metallic object fall to the ground and roll down the hill. He didn't know what it was or who dropped it, and nobody could have stopped to look for it without being overrun by the crowd.

Next morning, on awakening, Mari Loli realized that she had lost Mercedes's wedding ring. Mercedes was somewhat uneasy about this, but not unduly worried. Mari Loli promised her that she would ask the Virgin where the ring was. "When she tells me I'll go find it."

Later, while in her trance, we heard her ask the Virgin, "Tell me where Mercedes's wedding ring is. I lost it." When she came out of ecstasy she said, "I know where it is", and went out of the house with Jose and Father Buedo, each carrying a flashlight. The girl climbed the hill without any hesitation. When they arrived at some bushes, she said, "It's in there." Father Buedo told them not to move and aimed his flashlight where Loli was pointing. Indeed, under some small rocks, there was Mercedes's wedding ring.

Many were the signs given to Father Buedo and they made him very happy. The night before he left Garabandal, one of the girls in ecstasy (I don't remember which one) went to his room, knelt in front of his door, and walked on her knees into his room. With the crucifix she blessed the pillow of the bed where the priest slept and also a change of clothes he had on a chair. After this, she backed out and went to the room in front where Alfonso slept. He was there at the time, and with identical solemnity she made the sign of the cross on his pillow and went out.

Alfonso also received many signs. All the proofs he had asked for in his skepticism were abundantly given. On one occasion he handed Mari Loli his neck chain with all his medals so that the Virgin would kiss it, and Mari Loli added it to the pile of medals and rosaries that, as usual, were around her neck. The fact that, after the medals were kissed by the Virgin and Mari Loli had come out of the trance, she returned them to their owners without making a mistake was in itself inexplicable, but on this particular occasion, as on many others, she returned the medals in the state of ecstasy. Alfonso asked the Virgin to have the girl, while still in a trance, take his chain from her neck and place it around his. The petition was risky because the chain was very short and to return it to him she would have to open the latch and this would be very difficult without looking.

Without the slightest effort, she opened it and was going to place it on Alfonso's neck when she saw the chain was

tangled up with all the others. Again with no difficulty, she untangled it, the Virgin kissed the medals, and Mari Loli offered them to Alfonso to kiss. He fell on his knees before the girl. He was strong and heavy, but she easily lifted him up and with her little arms behind his neck, she fastened the chain without looking and left the medals hanging on his neck.

Then she came to me and replaced my gold scapular, which I had not brought on my previous visit. Also, I knelt and was lifted without any effort.

[NEXT ... Part 3](#)

Reprinted with kind permission from [GARABANDAL JOURNAL](#) November-December 2005

---



# Mercedes Salisachs (Part Three)

## EYEWITNESS

Reprinted with kind permission from [GARABANDAL JOURNAL](#) January-February 2006

Excerpted from LOS MILAGROS O FAVORES DE NUESTRA MADRE DE GARABANDAL by Maria Josefa Villa de Gallego

Translated from Spanish by Dr. Edward Serrano

### Mercedes Salisachs continues her narration of what happened in Garabandal during her second visit to the village



We witnessed many unusual situations in those days. One of the more remarkable cases was the conversion of a woman who came to Garabandal with a questionable past and the wrong attitude toward prodigies. (Dr. Puncernau could give more detailed information as he conversed with her.) This woman observed the girls in ecstasy and said she was not convinced that this was supernatural.

We don't know what happened to her, but something impacted her so strongly she had to be attended by the doctor. I witnessed her in tears and making public repentance for her sins. Apparently, when Conchita in ecstasy offered her the crucifix to kiss, she always refused it. Then something happened interiorly to her; she became frightened and started to go away. Conchita continued following her but the woman continued to refuse to kiss it. Conchita, pursued her and finally got Spanish author Mercedes Salisachs into a position in which she, with her free hand, pushed the woman's head forward and forced her to kiss the crucifix.

Later, when she had recovered from her experiences, I spoke with her and, by what she said, realized there was going to be a profound change in her life.

The feast of the Visitation of Our Lady fell on a Monday. I remember this well because Conchita usually did not have apparitions on Mondays. That morning I talked to Conchita and told her, "You think you're not going to see the Virgin but I think she will come today. After all, it's the feast of her Visitation and she should visit you." The girl was not convinced and said, "The Virgin usually doesn't appear on Mondays." (I'm telling this because it may be important, to show how far the girls were from preparing these happenings.)

Later, Conchita's mother came in and I repeated to her what I had said to Conchita. Initially, she did not appear interested but then, as though suddenly remembering, said, "Did you say today is the Visitation? What date is it?" I told her the date, then she said, "It was exactly one year ago today the Virgin appeared to the children for the first time." The anniversary of the beginning of the apparitions had already passed, but people had forgotten that the Angel had appeared before this date, but not the Virgin. Conchita was not impressed and continued saying, "In my case, since today is Monday, I won't see the Virgin."

I was right and Conchita was wrong. That same afternoon when coming out of church after saying the rosary, the girls had their "call" and began to run uphill, where they fell on their knees in the *cuadro* [a small corral of trimmed tree trunks put up in the *calleja* to protect the girls from the press of the crowd].

Nobody in the village remembered that this was the anniversary of Our Lady's first apparition but she remembered it very well. It certainly seems to confirm the happenings as supernatural in spite of everybody

and everything. She did not appear on any pre-determined official schedule, but had the effrontery to appear on her own unexpected timetable. The girls and villagers all wondered about the root cause of these apparitions. She showed a predilection for appearing to the girls on her own feast days and Saturdays. I think it is very significant in that it represented the concordance of Our Lady with the religious festivities proclaimed by the Church.

## **OBEDIENCE TO LAWFUL AUTHORITY**

At all times, and the girls repeated it over and over, Our Lady insisted on obedience to the Church and to parents first rather than to her. That is what happened when the Bishop of Santander prohibited the ecstasies from occurring in the church. From then on when the girls felt the call for a coming ecstasy, they left the church immediately and never again had a trance in front of the altar. Also, Our Lady did not appear again inside the church.

Garabandal is pure obedience to the Church and to its catechism. The submission of the girls to the Church's teachings is truly inspiring. A few days after they learned that the Bishop prohibited priests and religious from assisting at Garabandal, the girls were asked if this bothered them since they would have less of a crowd watching them. They humbly answered, "We don't care, as long as the Virgin keeps appearing."

The girls are never happier than when attending religious functions or hearing a sermon. Somebody asked Conchita if she preferred to receive Communion from a priest or from the angel. Without hesitation, she answered, "From the angel. But if I get to attend the Mass and a priest gives it to me then I would rather receive Communion from a priest."

Everything they do during their ecstasies is accompanied by the sign of the cross, and wherever they go they leave in their wake signs of complete obedience to the Church. I remembered that the first night of my second trip to Garabandal when the girls went to the Pines praying the rosary, they stopped in front of each of the nine pine trees and blessed themselves. (Many years before, each of these pine trees had been planted by a child on the day of their First Communion.)

I must confess that the way the girls blessed themselves was inspirational. The way they concentrated, the aura of respect and devotion with which they did it while in ecstasy, was a total education for me. Such solemnity seemed entirely out of character in these unsophisticated girls.

Two days after my arrival, Conchita called me to her house to give me the written message the Virgin had given her for me shortly before I went to Japan. When she gave it to me she said, "Now, I'm going to give you the secret I promised you and a 'little extra'." Apparently the Virgin had added a postscript the previous evening. I was excited and couldn't imagine what it would be, but she told me, "Don't think it's going to be something great; it's just one of those little things the Virgin says."



**Jacinta and Mari Loli in ecstasy in 1962 by the church door.**

We were alone by the kitchen window; she had a yellow sheet of paper folded in half with the message written on one side. I keep that sheet of paper in an envelope together with three messages that Mari Loli gave me later. The girls told me that nobody else should know these messages. Nevertheless the "little extra" that Conchita gave me, according to her instruction, was shared with my husband and my son Javier during my third trip to the village. When this "little extra" occurs, it can then be revealed to the world. Today, looking at these revelations, it is impossible for me to doubt Garabandal.

The "little extra" message refers to something that is "about to happen." I asked her if she knew how and when it will happen. She answered that she did not know. Then I told her, "Well, when it does happen, I want you to ask..." and I gave her a question only I would have the answer to, and a correct answer would dispel all my doubts. Conchita was unconcerned, and smiled as she answered, "Well, when it happens, I'll ask. Then you will be convinced that this is true."

The conversation I had with Conchita that afternoon was delightful, and her serene intelligence showed surprising maturity in everything we talked about. She again talked to me about my son Miguel and that he was extremely happy in heaven and that the Virgin "loved him very much since he was three years old."

I didn't understand that, "What does she mean? What was so important about that age, that since then she loves him so much?" Conchita shrugged her shoulders, "I didn't understand that either when she said it, but that's what she said." It was actually while watching television some time later that I found out that the age when children reach the partial use of reason was at three years.

Later when we talked about the chastisement prophesied by the Virgin, Conchita's face became very sad and she told me, "Imagine an immense fire above and below you that burns very slowly; it's even worse than that." I asked her if that was going to be the end of the world and she said, "No. The world doesn't end." I didn't know if she understood my question, and tried to clarify, but suddenly she asked me, "Would you like to be the only one left in the world?" I said no, then I asked her the same question, and she answered, "If I had the Virgin I wouldn't care."

## **PADRE PIO**

Her mother, Aniceta, arrived and the conversation turned to Padre Pio. I found out that shortly after I left the village the first time, Conchita had received an unsigned letter from Italy. Unfortunately the envelope had been destroyed and I couldn't see it. Thinking it was an anonymous prank, Conchita was ready to toss the letter, which was typewritten in Italian, but her mother told her to ask the Virgin who sent it. The Virgin answered that the author of the letter was Padre Pio and ordered her to answer to the address the Virgin was going to give her.

Conchita obeyed the Virgin and shortly thereafter she received a card from the Father Guardian of Pietrelcina. (as happened with anyone attempting to communicate with Padre Pio) showing that the address she had written was correct. Also, at the same time, she received another letter from Padre Pio with a message that was to be given to Don Valentin (the parish priest of Garabandal). Conchita told me she had delivered it.



During my third trip to the village, Conchita told me that she had gotten another message from Padre Pio with a message for herself. She told me confidentially this was probably the most important of all four messages.

The first time Padre Pio wrote to Conchita she didn't know who he was. This last letter I have held in my own hands, and this is what it said:

My Dear Children,

At nine o'clock in the morning, the Holy Virgin told me to say to you: "O blessed girls of San Sebastian de Garabandal! I promise you that I will be with you until the end of the times, and you will be with me at the end of the world and later, united with me in the glory of paradise."

I am sending you a copy of the holy rosary of Fatima, which the Virgin told me to send you. The rosary was composed by the Virgin and should be propagated for the salvation of sinners and preservation of humanity from the terrible punishments with which the Good God is threatening it.

I give you only one counsel: pray and make others pray, because the world is at the beginning of perdition. They do not believe in you or in your conversations with the Lady in white. They will believe when it is too late.

March 3, 1962

That note was followed up with the rules for praying the rosary of Fatima. The authenticity of these letters has not been proved.

That night I held Conchita's hand while she went into ecstasy. However, I seem to remember that she let go of my hand for a moment to perform some chore, but then offered it again to me. Together, holding hands, we walked through the streets of the town until suddenly she stopped, rose up on her tiptoes and, letting my hand go, ran at great speed into the night.

I don't remember if it was when she returned from that ecstasy or perhaps in the ecstasy after that one when I could again grab her hand and entwine my arm around hers. She offered no resistance. Father Buedo was on her other side. Both of us heard what Conchita said about the coming miracle of the Communion. "That you will do a little prodigy when the Angel gives me Communion the next time?"

When she came out of the ecstasy we told her what we had heard. Smilingly she said. "Ah, so now you know? The Virgin told me that when the Angel gives me Communion she will do a little miracle." The news spread like wildfire through the whole town. But Conchita did not know what the little miracle was going to be.

The last evening of this trip was very emotional. Our Lady finally answered two petitions I had requested and thought she wasn't going to answer. One was for my mother and the other was for Mother Maria Luisa Riera, Superior of the Dominicans of Barcelona.

When Mari Loli went into ecstasy, she again asked these questions of Our Lady. When she came out of ecstasy she went searching for several holy cards and wrote on them what the Virgin had answered. But she did not limit herself to the two previous answers, but on three more holy cards wrote messages in which the Virgin asked something from me. I consulted with Father Buedo about this. After some hesitation he told me to do what the Virgin asked. Now I don't worry any more about that petition of the Virgin.

That afternoon before all this happened, we had been in the country watching the peasants gathering hay. Father Buedo and Alfonso decided to help, to the great amusement of Mari Loli who kept playing jokes on them.

## **ANOTHER "VISIONARY"**

We were having a picnic on the hill when we saw two women arrive. They had climbed to Garabandal from Cosio on foot. By their accent I knew they were from Andalucia. One of them had an unconvincing mystical air. The other one looked like a rural schoolteacher.

At that time there were only a few tourists in Garabandal and when these women saw me they came to ask me about the girls. Since I was ignorant of their intentions I left to find the four visionaries. The first one I found was Man Loli. I watched them talking, but I was too far away to hear what they said. It looked like an animated conversation and Mari Loli seemed very interested in them.

The other girls gradually returned from working in the fields; I began to introduce them to the two visiting women. These women, who were acting strangely, wanted to speak to the girls alone.

The first girl that gave the alarm was Conchita. She told us, "Those women are telling us that one of them sees the Virgin." Then Mari Loli said, "One of them says she sees the Virgin but she tells me the Virgin doesn't talk to her." I don't know how Jacinta and Mari Cruz reacted, but Conchita and Mari Loli told me that they felt frightened when they heard them saying this. Nevertheless, at the insistence of the two women, Conchita and Mari Loli promised that in the next vision they would ask the Virgin if the visions of this woman were real and what did the Virgin expect from them.

The scene was deplorable. When Conchita fell into ecstasy and approached the supposed visionary to give her the crucifix to kiss and bless her with the sign of the cross, the woman became completely hysterical.

After the ecstasy the women asked what the Virgin had said, and Conchita answered, "She won't give her answer until tomorrow." But privately to us, she said that the woman was not going to be pleased since Our Lady had told her that she was not seeing her.

Conchita's reserve must have put them on guard, because when we reached the tavern to await Mari Loli's ecstasy, these women came and in a threatening tone warned Mari Loli that if Conchita didn't change what she'd said, she was going to "see the devil."

Mari Loli was frightened when she came to tell me what had happened. These women realized what was going on and began to complain loudly. One of them, the supposed visionary, began to swear by the Blessed Sacrament that she had been seeing the Virgin for several months and that the vision had ceased and that she had come to Garabandal to find out what to do. Her argumentative bearing and obvious nervousness left no room for doubt [that whatever she was experiencing wasn't from God]. It was in complete contrast with the calm and peace of the Garabandal children.

On my third trip. I was told that these women had returned to Garabandal to make amends, and confessed that whatever it was that happened to them had been just a dream.

Whatever else went on, the fact is that when Mari Loli fell into ecstasy she gave the crucifix to kiss to everyone present but the two women. However, perhaps to ease their disappointment, before coming out of ecstasy she returned to them and gave them the crucifix to kiss. But also, after coming out of ecstasy, she gave them the same answer that Conchita had given them. Some people speculated that these women had gone to Garabandal to test the veracity of the girls' visions. To me it seemed that they were just two hysterical women.

***PHOTO:* Conchita by her house in 1962 with her mother, Aniceta, by the door.**



Several days after I returned to Barcelona, Paquita Subietas, (very devoted to Garabandal) called me to tell me that Conchita had written her telling her that the miracle of the visible Communion had been announced for July 18, precisely ten days after the date of the letter.

Paquita sent me a copy of the letter. It said:

"Dear Paquita,

Just two words to tell you that the Angel told me that God was going to give a proof the eighteenth of this month. When I receive Communion from the angel the Host will become visible for anyone to see.

"Give a kiss to Toni and another to Maria Antonia, and receive an embrace from this one who does not forget you.

— Conchita Gonzalez"

Unfortunately, I could not be present when the prodigy of the Visible Host occurred, but a hundred other people were, and apparently photographs and movies were taken of it. So, collective suggestion was ruled out.

Here is a paragraph copied from a letter David Toribio received from his fiancée, Maria Teresa Ruiz, who signed the letter July 19, 1962, the day after the occurrence of the prodigy.

They saw Conchita leave her house and, in the little street in front of Matilde's house, she knelt and opened her mouth. They saw her tongue clearly, and in an instant the Host appeared on her tongue. She kept her mouth open for a minute and a half. The Host was the size of the ones we take for Communion but thicker. I was not fortunate to see it, for I had just gone home, but many people saw it, among them Don Juan (a priest born in Garabandal), Pepe, Clementina,

Raimundo, Emiliano, Mari (daughter of Mr. Cuenca) and Paco, my sisters, Estela and Celina, and several priests. It was wonderful. It happened at 2:00 A.M. Manin, the professor, was also present. He saw it all perfectly. He said it was the most impressive moment of his life. He could not go to sleep that night and spent all night long writing to his family. I am so very sorry not to have seen it, but I'm happy that so many others did. Nevertheless, you can find people that saw it and still don't believe it. I heard that a Franciscan priest said she was carrying the host hidden in her mouth, that her uncle Elias had given it to her. Can you believe that? The things that one hears! Anyway, I think all this should alert the Church to take these events more seriously and keep an eye on them. Don Valentin (the parish priest) went today to see His Excellency the Bishop to inform him of the events.

This same girl (Maria Teresa Ruiz) several days later (August 5) wrote another letter to David, her fiance. She again mentioned the Franciscan priest, saying, "Remember the Franciscan priest that I told you about July 18? Well, he has written to Conchita asking forgiveness and he sent four of his companions to visit Conchita in her village. They returned home very happy. I also have a cheerful and enthusiastic letter from Don Valentin dated July 22:

Very Dear Dona Mercedes,

I'm going to tell you what happened the night of the eighteenth in Garabandal. You already know that Conchita had announced that the Angel was going to give her visible Communion. There was great expectation in the village, and it kept building up from the middle of the afternoon on.

When night came my nerves were shot since nothing had happened. I remembered what happened to you that Good Friday. One A.M. came and nothing happened but I still continued believing in what the girls had said. Two o'clock in the morning arrived [when the prodigy occurred] and the happiness was beyond description. Everyone who had seen the Host on Conchita's tongue was running around looking for me. They wanted me to take down their testimony as witnesses. There were about fifty of them, including two Dominicans and one Franciscan and two parish priests. How I thought of you! Soon I'll have the happiness of talking about this with you in person. May Our Lady help us! Greetings to your family.

Yours in Christ,  
Father Valentin Marichalar

Father had sent this letter to Barcelona and when he discovered I was out of town, he wrote again. About ten days later I received the following letter:

My distinguished friend,

A few days ago I wrote you in Barcelona, telling you what happened on the eighteenth in Garabandal. Truly this was something magnificent: the Host was seen by several priests, (two Dominicans, a Franciscan, two priests) and all swear that they saw a pure white host, slightly larger than usual. Only Conchita took Communion, and although Mass had been said that morning only the other girls took Communion then.

There were many people there, and besides the priests some fifty others (all that would fit in the street) also saw this. They were shouting, "Miracle! Miracle!" They were all driving me crazy, wanting me to take their testimony as witnesses.

Well, let's see if we have the good fortune to talk about this some time, calmly, because I think it's worth it.

Greetings to your daughter and her fiance.

Affectionately yours in Christ,  
Valentin Marichalar

Some days later I found out about the Mari Cruz contradiction. It made a big ruckus at the time, but was not of excessive importance. For purely infantile reasons Mari Cruz let herself be overtaken by jealousy and, without assessing the possible extent of the damage, said that the prodigy of the Visible Communion was a trick produced by Conchita and that she had discussed it with all of them. Conchita received this attack with great serenity and humility.

I wrote to Conchita consoling her and asking her not to give any importance to these accusations. I didn't get her answer until I returned to Garabandal. She had written the wrong address twice, and they had returned the letter, which was returned to her the day I arrived. She gave it to me without opening.

In one of the paragraphs she said, "Mercedes, you said that I must be very hurt by the insult of Mary Cruz. I don't pay any attention to it. I forgave her. She will continue being my friend and I'll continue loving her the same." Soon after, I learned that Mari Cruz made a public retraction of her accusations.

*[\(continued - Part 4\)](#)*

Reprinted with kind permission from [GARABANDAL JOURNAL](#) January-February 2006

---



# Mercedes Salisachs (Part Four)

## EYEWITNESS

Reprinted with kind permission from [GARABANDAL JOURNAL](#) March-April 2006

Excerpted from LOS MILAGROS O FAVORES DE NUESTRA MADRE DE GARABANDAL by Maria Josefa Villa de Gallego

Translated from Spanish by Dr. Edward Serrano

---

### The author from Barcelona continues her narration in describing her third trip to Garabandal.

---



As planned, I left Barcelona September 23, 1962, with the intention of staying in Garabandal until October 1. Two very important dates were included for me in that week: the feast of Our Lady of Mercy and the feast of Saint Michael.

Same as before, we traveled in two cars. Jose, the mechanic and his wife Mercedes took our car, a Seat (Spanish version of Fiat) while travelling in the other car with owner Lucy Vidal Quadras and her chauffeur were Nati Solano, Father Eliseo Buedo and myself. A third car with David Toribio, my husband, our fifteen-year-old son Javier, and two Dominicans: Mother Superior Maria Luisa and Sister Rosa, were scheduled to leave Barcelona on September 26 due to arrive the following day.

The two cars that left on September 23 arrived in Cosio at 1:30 the morning of the twenty-fourth. Lucy Vidal Quadras and Nati Solano, not knowing what to expect and afraid of getting stuck, chose to stop in Cosio and wait for Fidel [local taxi driver] to drive them up the narrow rough dirt road (today wide and paved) between Cosio and Garabandal. The rest of us, Father Buedo, Jose, Mercedes and I, decided to try our luck and drive up to Garabandal in the Seat. It was a clear night, the temperature was good and we wanted to arrive as soon as possible.

In the final kilometer before reaching the village, our car got stuck in the mud and Father Buedo hurried to the village for help. Mercedes and I also started walking while Jose stayed with the car. Our unexpected stroll did not tire us in the least so strong was our desire to be there again.

Ceferino's tavern was open and the lights on which meant that his daughter Mari Loli was expecting an ecstasy. Soon she came out, delighted to see us. She welcomed us with a hug, and it was clear our presence made her happy. She explained how surprised she was when, dozing off, she saw Father Buedo's cassock: "I was falling asleep in the kitchen, then I started shouting Father Eliseo! Father Eliseo! They thought I was crazy!"

She told us she hadn't slept for several nights, keeping watch, and had to sleep during the day. Ceferino was in bed with an abscess, and Julia (Mari Loli's mother) was taking on his responsibilities. She brought us up to date on what had happened in our absence. She told us the pattern of the apparitions had changed in the previous week: "The Virgin told Mari Loli that if she hadn't had the first call by 10 P.M., to go to bed." But so far only three days had gone by without a vision. Nevertheless, the girl didn't go into ecstasy until 7:00 the next morning.

This new circumstance obliged everyone to stay up. People did not understand "that change." They asked a

thousand questions and there were a thousand suppositions. "Before, the girls would fall into ecstasy shortly after receiving the calls; now we have to wait all night." Also, they told us that Conchita was having apparitions four days a week, but if for any reason out of her control she missed Communion, the angel would give her the Sacred Host. Jacinta had not seen the Virgin for twenty days, and for Mari Cruz it was even worse; almost a month had passed without visions.

While Padre Buedo was busy trying to find help to get our car out of the mud, and getting Fidel to go fetch Nati and Lucy, I visited with Mari Loli for a while and then went to Conchita's house where I found her sitting in the kitchen with a small group of people. She also was happy to see me. She asked about my family and wanted to know if my husband was coming ("They told us he was coming...") and I told her my husband would be here on the twenty-seventh.



As soon as we were alone she revealed to me "that" which had been announced for me by the Virgin on my previous visit (and for which I was awaiting so eagerly), was going to happen "in awhile."

With the greatest simplicity she told me, "The Virgin again mentioned 'that' last month (August) and assured me it will happen soon." I asked if I should keep it to myself once it occurred and she said no. "On the contrary, you can tell it to everyone." The possibility of obtaining such a thing still seemed remote to me. "Don't forget to give me the proof; remember, I asked for proof of this." Conchita remembered very well. "I'll give you the proof."

It was that night when I was euphoric with happiness that I implored Conchita to ask the Virgin, "What kind of present could I give Miguel [Mercedes' son Miguel, to whom she was very attached, was killed in an auto accident several years before. His death was a shattering blow. At first, Mercedes rebelled against her religion, but over time came to a better understanding of her Faith. Miguel had lived a good life and had gone to daily Mass and Communion the week before he died, but Mercedes was still concerned about his salvation. During her first trip to Garabandal over Easter of 1962, she requested that the visionaries ask the Virgin the whereabouts of her son and Mari Loli, after much anxiety on the part of Mercedes, told her on behalf of the Blessed Virgin that Miguel was in Heaven and extremely happy. Needless to say, Mercedes experienced intense and prolonged joy.] for his Saint's day?"

When she went into ecstasy I could hear fragments of the conversation. More or less, she said something like this: "Do you know who is here?" (And she said my name. It was very noisy around us and I only could hear fragments of the conversation. She confirmed it later, however, when she came out of ecstasy.)

[Conchita speaking in ecstasy] "She [Mercedes] asked me when it's going to happen..." and she quoted in an undertone "that" announced in the famous message. "She asked for proof; will you give it to her? She also

wants me to give you a hug...will you accept it? She'll be happy... I want it to happen now..." (and she laughed softly).

Mari Loli's house in Garabandal during the time of the events was a busy place.

After her own personal colloquy, she then asked about my gift for Miguel; unfortunately it became noisier and noisier and I have only a vague remembrance of that moment.

She spoke also of "the great Miracle" that the Virgin has announced. "Please don't let me be the only one; let it be the other three, or all four..." She was asking the Virgin to allow all four girls to announce the Miracle. In her silences we understood that the Virgin was speaking. "If you perform the miracle will there still be a chastisement?"

After several sentences that I could not understand, she asked, "So, we should consult with Father Eliseo about this?" After that she referred to Dr. Puncernau, but I could not understand the message for him.

When Conchita came out of the ecstasy I asked her what answer was given about the gift I should give my son for his Saint's day. The Virgin did not answer, but smiled. When I asked Conchita if she had given the Virgin the embrace I sent her, she said yes, and that she accepted it very happily. (Three days later, when I no longer expected an answer to the present for Miguel, I got the answer in an unexpected way.)

Lucy and Nati had attended the most recent ecstasy of Conchita. Providentially, the apparitions didn't begin until the two arrived. However, Nati, worn out and tired from the trip, very uncomfortable and unable to adapt herself to the rustic town and muddy streets, felt she'd been deceived. She couldn't understand why the girls were running all over in ecstasy. She thought it ridiculous that they not stay in one place.

On top of all this, that night Conchita did not offer her the crucifix to kiss, and her misery from that point on continued to get worse. She tried to follow the girl in ecstasy but Conchita's speed and Nati's inability to run through the muddy places stopped her from following. Depressed, she stayed in the kitchen with Conchita's aunt wailing for the girl to return. Both of them started to pray the rosary.

Suddenly they saw Mari Loli, followed by a group of people, pass in front of Conchita's house. When Nati saw the beatific expression of the child and the way she walked, she was profoundly moved. This was not something of this world. Nati told me later that seeing this had been all she needed to believe in the apparitions. The next day, however, she received even more concrete proof. She was saddened by the way the girls in ecstasy ignored her. She suspected (as I had in my first visit, and I believe happens to a majority of the people who go there in good faith), that perhaps she was not completely free from sin and that was the reason why she was not offered the crucifix to kiss. She prayed to the Virgin that if she was in a state of grace, as she thought she was, to give her a sign, otherwise she would go to confession.

I was a witness to what happened next. We were in Mari Loli's kitchen the night of the twenty-fourth to twenty-fifth. Mari Loli went into ecstasy in front of Nati. She stood up, gave the crucifix to kiss to those who were across from Nati. Then suddenly she turned and resolutely went over and stood in front of Nati, who was kneeling. She first offered the crucifix to Our Lady to kiss and then put it to Nati's lips, and held it there for a long time. She then took it away, raised it again for the Virgin to kiss, and again, as in a solemn ceremony, pressed it against Nati's lips. It was the answer to her prayer. From then on the seers always offered Nati the crucifix.

The night we arrived was an "action" night. The first thing Mari Loli did was go out into the street and bless our car. (The mark appeared on our windshield.)

As I was worn out, when Conchita's ecstasy was over, I went to bed and waited for Mari Loli's second call.

At five o'clock that morning they told me it had come, but the ecstasy wasn't until 7:30. After it was over, we went to the church. Don Valentin had just arrived to celebrate Mass. When they heard the church bells the girls came to the church, except for Conchita. She had gone to bed late, didn't know that Don Valentin had come to celebrate Mass, and therefore she missed Communion. (At that time Father Buedo didn't have permission yet to celebrate Mass in Garabandal.) That afternoon at 3:30 while the rest of us were still sleeping, Conchita was sitting down to eat when she felt the call of the angel. She ran out of the house toward the church where she received Communion from the angel at the door.

This was the last time she received the Blessed Sacrament from the angel. The next day Father Buedo received permission from Don Valentin to celebrate Mass in exchange for four seminars on the Council. Three days later (the twenty-seventh) when I had forgotten about Conchita's angelic Communion and my own petition, she came to me and answered my question. She told me that after receiving Communion, the angel gave her a message concerning the gift. "The angel told me that what Miguel wants is that you pray much for the Holy Souls in Purgatory; that is the gift that would please him the most."

It took awhile for me to react. I couldn't understand why the answer was so long in coming. Now I know that the Virgin wanted this "gift" to begin on Friday the twenty-eighth and finish up on Saturday the twenty-ninth, the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel. However, it was obvious that these dates were not significant to Conchita.



**Conchita in ecstasy on the church portico about to receive mystical Communion from the angel.**

By the time I found out what my son wanted, his Saint's day was very close. But I decided from that very moment to use every possible means to give him a great many prayers. I also didn't know where this was going to lead me. I supposed this petition of my son was logical; like every blissfully happy soul he wanted to bring to others the joy of possessing God and he needed help to do it. I didn't suspect at that time the "secret" behind that request.

Therefore, the next morning I had no other intention than to fulfill his will, offering all for the Holy Souls. I began by going to church, attending Mass and praying many rosaries and prayers. The pilgrims that came

and joined me prayed for the same intentions. Those who were awaiting the ecstasies also came and their prayers also went for the same intention. Mother Maria Luisa also joined me on several occasions, so she also contributed to Miguel's present. That night of Saturday the twenty-ninth when I saw Conchita, I told her, "Miguel will be very pleased," and I told her how many rosaries we had prayed and dedicated to him as his gift.

When Conchita next went into ecstasy I believe I heard her talking to the Virgin about this, but there were so many visitors in town that it was impossible for me to get near her.



**Mercedes with her son Miguel**

Conchita was walking in the street of the town praying the rosary and the tone of her voice and the way she pronounced the Hail Marys was what convinced Mother Luisa. She said it was not possible to pray that way without supernatural help. A short time before she heard Conchita praying in a normal state and could not believe this was the same person.

## **PENANCE AND SACRIFICE**

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

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

The people in town understood from the beginning the necessity of performing penance. I will not forget the lesson that I learned from the three women who owned the house where I was staying. One early morning, at about five o'clock, I was going to my room for something when I found them and their three

daughters seated in the kitchen. I asked them why they weren't in bed, since they weren't with the seers. The answer was irrevocable. "Because it's Saturday, and we must make some kind of sacrifice. After the girls have their vision we'll sleep." Actually, they weren't staying up "to see the girls in ecstasy," but they were happy to be united with the girls in the penance of staying up with them. These subtleties were not perceived by the visitors to Garabandal even by those whose intentions were exemplary.

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

When Conchita returned to normality, all she did was look at me and I knew she had something to tell me. "The Virgin has given me a message for you. She told me that Miguel is very happy, because thanks to your prayers, two of his friends who were in purgatory went to Heaven today."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

( [continued - PART 5](#) )

# Mercedes Salisachs (Part Five)

## EYEWITNESS

---

Our Spanish author takes up the narrative of her second visit to Garabandal in September-October 1962 by explaining how Father Jacinto Aguado almost got talked out of taking the road up to Garabandal.

---

*Reprinted with kind permission from [GARABANDAL JOURNAL](#) May-June 2006*

*Excerpted from LOS MILAGROS O FAVORES DE NUESTRA MADRE DE GARABANDAL by Maria Josefa Villa de Gallego*

*Translated from Spanish by Dr. Edward Serrano*



The second day I was in Garabandal I saw Father Jacinto Aguado, who was stationed at the Minor Seminary for the Missions at Alzola. I had met him previously at Lloret de Mar where he worked as Provisional Coadjutor. At that time I told him about the events of Garabandal and he refused to even consider them until the Church passed judgment. All my explanations did not satisfy him, so I gave up talking to him on this subject. Later on, after leaving Lloret de Mar, I received a letter from him telling me that after all I had told him he would try to visit Garabandal the same time we would be there. On his journey he met another priest who was opposed to Garabandal and who almost talked him into going back. Later he told me that by the time he arrived at Cosio he had had so many trials he had no incentive to continue and almost gave up the whole thing.

The night of September 25 he saw his first ecstasy, and he left the village on the thirtieth. I have a letter from him dated October 5, 1962. Here are some parts of it.



The road to the village in 1961.

\* \* \*

When I returned to the seminary I was surprised as to how impressed all the seminarians were about what I told them concerning Garabandal. They all wanted to go there. The first one that asked me to take him to Garabandal was the Rector, who was amazed at everything I told him. I liked this reaction very much; at least they will be going to Garabandal with a better attitude than I did.

I must say that I went there just to please you and out of curiosity, but the Virgin used my trip to give me a strong desire to get closer to God and to her. Thinking of what I saw and felt in those days, my time there seemed so short and I felt so happy. I'm anxious to return the first chance I get.

\* \* \*

Father Aguado's enthusiasm is easy to understand. He witnessed a beautiful ecstasy of Conchita. In his letter was a brief report of what he heard Conchita say to the Virgin.

\* \* \*

San Sebastian de Garabandal, night of Tuesday to Wednesday 25-26 of September of 1962.  
Conchita's conversation with the Blessed Virgin Mary during the ecstasy from 6:08 A.M. to 6:55 A.M.

At 6:06 A.M., the Angelus was prayed, directed by a priest. As soon as the Angelus ended, Conchita fell on her knees in ecstasy. She made the sign of the cross with a crucifix and then gave it to the Virgin to kiss. After that she offered it to several people to kiss and then she went outside the church and walked very fast through the streets of the town.

After talking with the Virgin about some papers a priest had given her to ask about, and about which one could not understand what she said, she asked, "Do we eat in heaven? Then people must be very thin. Are there chairs in heaven? Ah, then people don't sit down.... then they must be very tired.... one does not walk? And how is heaven inside?.... Are there any flowers?...."

Then she talked about a question from a lady who wanted to know whether her deceased mother was in heaven or not. One could not understand the answer. She continued saying: "We cannot enter heaven even if we have a little sin? Even a very teensy sin? Well, then, if there is fire in purgatory they will come out of there all burned up. Ah, no?"

Two or three times she spoke about something the Virgin wanted to use Conchita for, some miracle or extraordinary prodigy. I could hear the following sentences. "Don't do it with me alone; they will not believe me. Do it with the other three, or all four, but not with me alone. With me you already did the little miracle, letting the Host be seen as the Angel gave it to me. Do this one with the other three. But let your will be done..."

Walking in ecstasy toward the church she was talking about the Vatican Council in this way. "It will be very great? The best of all? And very successful? Oh, good! Then they will know you better and they will love you more and you will be very happy..."

Also she was heard saying: "Why can't everyone else hear you when you speak? Then they would believe. There are many who don't believe. May many sinners come and many good people come, so that the sinners will be converted and the good become better..."

She also spoke of how difficult it is to convert a sinner, but when a sinner converted there was more joy in heaven than for many righteous entering heaven. (About this the words could not be heard very well.)

Then she began to talk of the different petitions requested by priests and other persons who were there that night: D. Luis wants to know if the gentleman that died without the sacraments repented at the time of his death....he repented? Ah, yes? Because D. Luis thought he had not repented. That the baby that was just born will become a priest. The little blind man is asking

that his cousin who cannot have any children, have children. That Father Eliseo becomes a saint....for my brother Michael who has stomach pain; don't take the pain away completely but diminish it. Let him have a little pain left.... For Jacinta and Mari Cruz, they are sad because you have not come to see them for a long time... Why don't you come to see Mari Cruz?.... You haven't come to see her for 20 days now...."

She made other petitions but it wasn't possible to understand what she was talking about. She mentioned a priest she called "the serious one" but I couldn't understand what she said about him or if she was praying for his intentions.

When she started walking toward her home she said: "And is that better than being a wife? Will I be a nun?... If you want me to...make it so they let me go when I'm fourteen... Are you leaving? Don't leave so soon! Wait a little while."

Then she went into her home, fell to her knees, kissed the crucifix, made the sign of the cross, said goodbye to the Virgin, and became normal again.

\* \* \*

After saying farewell to me the morning of the thirtieth, Father Aguado told me he could never thank me enough for the favor I had done by talking to him about the events occurring in San Sebastian of Garabandal. But Father Aguado wasn't the only enthusiastic one among the members of our group. It is worth relating what happened to two Sisters who also came along.

## Two RELIGIOUS SISTERS

**She told me that for a long time she had been begging the Virgin never to allow her or me to go to Garabandal if the apparitions were false. In fact, the opposite occurred: the Virgin paved the way for both of us to get to the village.**

I had told a great friend of mine, Mother Maria Luisa Riera, about the apparitions and on many occasions she mentioned how much she would like to visit Garabandal and talk to the visionaries. But there were so many obstacles that whenever we talked about it, she seemed to think it an impossible dream. That summer I wanted to go to the village to celebrate my saint's day, and my son's saint's day, and I went to ask her if she would like to come. She was sure she wouldn't get permission to go, but I told her it wouldn't hurt to ask anyway. She didn't want to bother her superiors with such a request, but I told her that if they said no, it would be an opportunity to offer it as a sacrifice. That finally was what inspired her to ask permission, and she assured me that although she really wanted to go, whatever answer she received would be happily obeyed.

The Provincial Mother of her Order returned from her retreat in Gerona and Mother Maria Luisa was able to speak directly to her. It happened to be on the feast of Our Lady of the Angels. Mother Provincial had no qualms in granting her permission and a few days later Mother Maria Luisa wrote to me, and among other things she told me: "I was profoundly happy to get the permission so easily to go to Garabandal. I went right away to thank the Virgin. It was so providential, and when I see you I'll tell you in detail how this happened. I saw the hand of the Virgin and your prayers in this. I also remembered how easily Father Buedo got permission to go to Garabandal. What does Our Lady want from us?"

When we met she gave me the background, which was very revealing. She told me that for a long time she had been begging the Virgin never to allow her or me to go to Garabandal if the apparitions were false. In fact, the opposite occurred: the Virgin paved the way for both of us to get to the village.

My husband and Mother Maria Luisa left Barcelona at 8:00 A.M. [September 26, 1962]. They didn't know it, but a terrible flood was taking place that early morning between the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth. If they'd left Barcelona later than 8:00 A.M., it would have been impossible for them to cross Molins de Rev and they would never have been able to leave Barcelona. They arrived in Santander that evening and the next day at two in the afternoon reached Garabandal. At this time they found out about the disaster of the flooding.

As happens to everybody, once they reached the village the enthusiasm they'd felt beforehand faded away. The disorientation of the long trip, the tremendous contrast between Barcelona and Garabandal, meeting the girls in person, and the worries caused by the floods caused a letdown. Mother Maria Luisa and Sister Rosa seemed distant and my husband said that when he arrived in Garabandal he would have left immediately if he could. Nevertheless, Mother Maria Luisa was still hopeful. Always obedient and attentive to the laws of the Church, she didn't want to be influenced by shallow appearances or sentimentality. Sister Rosa had completely cooled off and didn't even seem curious.

I think I have already said that, previous to this visit, I had given Mother a message from the Virgin written by Mari Loli in answer to my request. It was a secret message but with Mari Loli's permission I had read it. This message was so extraordinary and consoling that Mother Maria Luisa had difficulty believing its authenticity. It was obvious that these two Sisters were going to coldly analyze everything, but it was also obvious that they wanted very much to believe. I suggested that they ask for proof from the Virgin, that they give their religious rings to someone and have that person give them to Mari Loli to be kissed by the Virgin and then returned to their fingers. Although they were somewhat afraid of losing the rings, they agreed.

Mari Loli already had two other wedding rings belonging to a married couple and when she got these rings she assumed they also were wedding rings. (To this day Mari Loli doesn't know to whom she returned the rings.) PHOTO (Right): Mari Loli in ecstasy in 1962.

The first night Mari Loli had a tranquil ecstasy and did not offer Our Lady any of the rings to kiss. The two Sisters were still hopeful but so far they were also unimpressed. The girls offered them the crucifix to kiss but did not carry out any extraordinary acts capable of convincing the Sisters. As is usual with newcomers to Garabandal, it appeared that it was also necessary for the Sisters to go through the "doubts" phase. They saw how Mari Loli placed around my husband's neck his chain and medal that had been combined with many others. They saw how the girls did the same with my son Javier and with another person. They also saw how, while Mari Loli was in ecstasy, Ceferino (her father) asked my husband to lift the kneeling girl from the ground and my husband could not budge her. Next day when she was not in ecstasy, he easily lifted her.

Of our group the only one who immediately accepted these events as supernatural (perhaps because of his youth) was my son Javier. He is a boy with cool logic and seems remote, but since the first ecstasy he has not once doubted the authenticity of the apparitions.



Friday night (September 27) in front of a large group of people, after giving the crucifix to kiss to most of the people who were there, Mari Loli fell on her knees in front of Mother Maria Luisa, offered her the crucifix to kiss, took from her pocket Mother Maria Luisa's ring, offered it to the Virgin to kiss, then offered it to Mother to kiss, and then replaced it on her ring finger. Mother Maria Luisa could hardly believe what was happening. She checked the ring, broke into tears, and trembling, said: **"It's mine."**

The girl on her knees continued over to where Sister Rosa was and repeated the same procedure. A photograph exists of this second phenomenon. Sister Rosa still wasn't convinced, and doubted that it was her ring. **"It can't be,"** she repeated, but after she confirmed that indeed it was her ring, she began to suspect that someone (maybe me) might have informed the girls that those were their rings. "Maybe YOU told her these were our rings," she insisted. She didn't understand that once the girls were in ecstasy they lost contact with their surroundings.

But Our Lady had something in store for her in payment for her doubts. It happened two days later on the thirtieth and it happened when Conchita was in ecstasy. (Unfortunately, my husband wasn't there to see it as he had already left.)

Sister Rosa, who was gradually coming around to belief but not totally convinced and wanting further proof, asked Conchita to hold her crucifix during her next ecstasy. Conchita agreed, and that night she had in her hand Sister's crucifix when the trance started. Sister Rosa had previously asked the Virgin that if she were truly appearing, the girl would use it to make the sign of the cross over her. However, Conchita did something even more remarkable.



She left the house and offered the crucifix to be kissed by the people outside, then returned to the kitchen. (It was during this short but sweet trance that she asked: "Does Mercedes' husband believe yet?") Sister Rosa, either out of humility or to test Conchita further, had hidden herself behind everybody so that between her and Conchita there was a wall of people.

Conchita made her way through the people until she was in front of Sister Rosa and fell to her knees in front of her. As I have said before, when the girls were in ecstasy their weight increased to such a degree that it was impossible for a strong man to lift them from the ground; they appeared to be made of stone and felt as hard. *PHOTO (Left):* Conchita walking in ecstasy (1962).

She offered Sister Rosa her own crucifix to kiss and stood up again. Then, coming forward until she was so close to her that they almost touched, she fell on her knees with all her extra heavy weight — right on the foot of Sister Rosa. The pain must have been agonizing. She stifled a scream and shuddered, and tried to pull her foot out from under Conchita's knee but it was impossible. Conchita gave the crucifix to the Virgin to kiss, then pressed it against the lips of Sister Rose for an extended time. The next step was somewhat unusual; she simply returned the crucifix a few minutes before the trance ended. That night she ended her ecstasy without a crucifix in her hands. Later, Sister Rosa confided to me that she could see drops of blood under the nail of her big toe. Also, she has no doubts now.

Shortly after returning to Barcelona, the newspapers reported the prohibition of the Bishop of Santander. Mother Luisa also saw in this the hand of Providence. She remembers how hard she prayed to Our Lady not to let her go to Garabandal if the apparitions were false. If she had not gone at that time she would have

thought the prohibition was the answer to her prayers and would then never have gone, and would have thought that the apparitions were false. Our Lady let us go and come back before the prohibition started.

This prohibition has upset her. "I would like to believe with all my soul that what is happening there is the result of natural phenomena, but I can't. Of course, I will respect the order to not return to the village, and of course I hold the Bishop in the highest esteem. But not to believe in it?" She prays every day that the mystery clears. Like everyone else who has gone to Garabandal, she feels in the depth of her soul the inescapable fascination with the increase in fervor that has taken place, and the absolute certainty that the miracle announced by Conchita will take place soon.

*(to be continued - Part 6)*

Reprinted with kind permission from [GARABANDAL JOURNAL](http://GARABANDAL JOURNAL) May-June 2006

---

