

The Fifth Visionary of Garabandal Who Died of Joy

Fr. Luis Maria Andre Rodamilans, S.J., was the only person besides the four children to see the Blessed Virgin at Garabandal, and the only person to see, in advance, the Great Miracle which Our Lady promised will take place at Garabandal in the future 'time appointed by God.

By Barry Hanratty

On August 8, 1961, Fr. Luis went to Garabandal with a group of friends. It was his second visit to the village. That evening the visionaries had an ecstatic march, the first of many such marches during the years of the apparitions. It was a very long march which ended at the pines. Fr. Luis and many other people followed the visionaries. Afterwards, Conchita wrote in her Diary:

“It was dark when the Blessed Virgin appeared to us. At the end of the rosary, the four of us went into ecstasy and we began to walk toward the pines. When we arrived at the pines, Fr. Luis Maria, who had followed us, said: ‘Miracle, Miracle,’ and he kept staring upward. We could see him. Now, in our ecstasies we never see anyone (except the Blessed Virgin). But we saw Fr. Luis, and the Blessed Virgin told us that he was seeing her and the Miracle, too.”



In the ecstasy, the children saw Fr. Luis on his knees. Conchita further stated that the Virgin, who was looking at Fr. Luis, seemed to say to him, *“You will soon be with me.”*

“The Happiest Day of My Life”

Fr. Luis left Garabandal in a jeep with friends that same night. Stopping at Cosio, he met the Parish Priest, Don Valentin Marichalar, to whom he said: *“Don Valentin, what the children say is true, but I ask you not to repeat what I have just told you, for the Church can never be prudent enough in this kind of affair.”* Fr. Marichalar wrote these words of Fr. Luis in a notebook that very night. Continuing his journey with Rafael Fontaneda and his family, Fr. Luis showed overwhelming joy the entire trip, constantly repeating:

“I am so happy. What a favour the Blessed Virgin has bestowed on me. How fortunate we are to have a mother like her in heaven! There is no reason to fear the supernatural life. The girls have given us an example of how we must act with the Blessed Virgin. There is no doubt in my mind that the things involving the girls are true. Why should the Blessed Virgin have chosen us? This is the happiest day of my life.”

As the car was passing through Reinoso, Fr. Luis, after repeating these words once again, lifted his head and fell silent. His friend Fontaneda asked him, *“Father, are you all right?”* *“Yes, I am just sleepy.”* Came the reply. Then his head bowed forward onto his chest. He made a slight coughing sound, and died. He experienced no pain,

nor death agony, but died with a smile on his lips.

Fr. Luis died of joy at 4.30 am on August 9, the feast of St. John Vianney (The Cure of Ars), the patron and model of priests.

Fr. Luis' involvement in the Garabandal events did not end with his death. The girls often spoke with him after his death. Conchita relates in her Diary entry of August 16, 1961: "... **at eight or nine o'clock in the evening, the Blessed Virgin ... said to the four of us: 'Father Luis will come now and speak with you.'**

A moment later he came and called us one by one. We didn't see him at all but only heard his voice. It was exactly like the one he had on earth. When he had spoken for a while, giving us advice, he told us certain things for his brother, Fr. Ramon Maria Andreu. He taught us some words in French, in German and in English, and he also taught us to pray in Greek.

Fr. Luis also sent a message through the girls to his mother. Fr. Luis' sudden death was a great shock to his mother for Father had been in excellent health. On the day he died, she was packed and waiting for his return from Garabandal because together they were going to Germany. But, instead of seeing her son with his usual big smile, she received a death notice. Therefore, to console his mother, Fr. Luis sent, through the girls, this beautiful message: "**Be happy and content, for I am in heaven and I see you every day.**" A short time later Fr. Luis' Mother realised her long-time ambition was to enter a convent.

Fr. Luis was buried in the Jesuit cemetery in Ona, Spain. In a locution of July 18, 1964, the Blessed Virgin told Conchita that on the day after the Great Miracle to come, the body of Fr. Luis will be removed from the grave and will be found incorrupt, just as it was on the day he was buried.

Fishers of Men

Fr. Luis' resting place in Ona is just a two and a half hour trip away from his place of birth, in Bilbao, a beautiful harbour city in northern Spain. Father was born on July 3, 1925, the fourth of six children, all boys, in the Andreu family. Four of the six sons became Jesuit priests. Their saintly mother, widowed since 1951, is now a fully professed cloistered nun in the convent of the Visitation, in San Sebastian, Spain. She is 74 years old and her religious name is Sr Luisa Maria.

In Bilbao, the Andreu family lived in a house overlooking the harbour. The boys passed many hours watching the ships coming and going and visiting with the sailors and fishermen.

This contact with the world travelling seamen may have been significant in the early formation of the boys. Perhaps here they had their first inspirations to become "***fishers of men,***" missionary priests bringing the Gospel to people throughout the world.

As a child, Fr. Luis was much the same as other children of his age, even mischievous at times.

His mother cannot recall anything unusual about his childhood, nor can his brothers remember anything particularly outstanding about him. Once he began his life of consecration, the differences became noticeable to those close to him. From the depths of her humble heart, Sr Luis Maria says: "***When Fr. Luis performed his priestly duties he was like an angel.***" She adds: "***Since I am his mother, I do not think I will be a good judge of my son: perhaps others not so close could do it better.***"

The Andreu Brothers

The next best sources of information about Fr. Luis are his brothers, and I would like to introduce them at least by name. The eldest, Jose Maria, and the youngest, Rafael Maria, are married and are living in Spain.

Fr. Alejandro Maria is the second eldest. He came to America since he was 18 and has been the executive secretary of the Superior in Valladolid on



Andreu, of Caracas, Venezuela, has been a missionary in South America since he was 18 years old and is now serving as religious orders in Venezuela. Ramon Maria, who has long been a retreat master for priests and nuns in Spain. Fr. Luis was informed of his brothers' death by his Superior in Valladolid on the morning of August 9, 1961:

"I was preaching a retreat in Valladolid when Fr. Luis went to Garabandal

Fontaneda on August 8, 1961. The next morning I was alone in my room. Everything was so quiet and peaceful. I heard a kind of timid tap on my door, and it was my Superior, who came in hesitatingly, trying to break the news to me as gently as he could. I accepted the news with surprising calm, even though it was a shock to me. I left Valladolid right away and arrived in Reinosa a few hours later."

The fifth Andreu son and the youngest of the four priests is Fr Marcelino Maria, who left for Forhai, China in 1948. As a novice he studied at the seminary in Zi-ka-wei. After the communists took over Shanghai he was expelled with all the other missionaries from mainland China; but, wasting no time, the missionaries began their work on the island of Formosa, which is now called Taiwan.

Many of Our Lady's workers met Fr. Marcelino when he made his mission tour of the US and Canada a few years ago. You may remember how Father described his acceptance of the news of Fr. Luis' death:

"It was a hot, humid summer day and all the students were home on vacation. I took the opportunity to clean up all my mail and decided to keep only the last letter from each person (including those from my family and throw the rest away). I spent my morning throwing away letter after letter and, after finishing, thought I did well. Then went to take a shower because of the extreme heat. Just as I returned to my room, there came a telegram from Spain informing me of the sudden death of Fr. Luis. I'd hardly gotten over the initial grief when my thoughts came upon those letters. Oh, how I wish I had waited for another day to clean up; then I'd have all of Fr. Luis' letters. Now I have only one - his last letter - but this letter is very valuable. In it he speaks of his sufferings over the past year. He said he had never suffered so much as in this past year. Everything seemed to be turning to the opposite way, he says. Yet, those who were close to him during his last year on earth, did not detect any of his inner sufferings, for outwardly, Fr. Luis was always happy pleasant to deal with, always ready to help, and always joking. He even joked on his way to Garabandal the first time. He was telling the others: 'Let's eat well and plenty, for St Ignatius said if our mind and body are weak, we will be easily deceived by the devil.' Once he got up to Garabandal and saw the girls in ecstasy, he became deeply impressed, because he realised this was not just 'a child's play' as some were saying, but something very serious and deserving of much attention."

Indeed, only a week after his first visit, Fr. Luis went to Garabandal again - on August 8, 1961, and that day became the most memorable day of his whole life - the happiest day of his life, as he himself said.

A Promise to Our Lord

Fr. Marcelino recalls a memorable incident which took place on the day of Fr. Luis's first vows in the year 1944. Luis and Marcelino were walking with their mother on the grounds around the house of Loyola. They came to a small window behind the Chapel of the Conversion of St Ignatius. From this window they could see the altar and the Blessed Sacrament. Their mother took this opportunity to tell them once more of her love and her heart's desire for them. She told them that they should promise very sincerely to Our Lord before the Blessed Sacrament to dedicate their lives to becoming real saints. Fr. Luis put his hand over his heart and closed his eyes for a moment as in deep prayer. Fr. Marcelino, while watching Fr. Luis, was sure that he was again making the promise his mother had asked: the dedication of his entire life towards perfect holiness and sanctity. Fr. Luis followed this with 17 years of faithful service as a company of Jesus.

When Fr. Marcelino made his first vows in 1946 and was going to the Juniores for studies, Fr. Luis asked permission to stay with his brother for a few days at Altuna, so that he could personally initiate his younger brother into a life of perfect dedication. There are two things Fr. Marcelino vividly remembers Fr. Luis stressing in a very special way at that time. One was that, even though one should try for high achievement in his studies, for a Jesuit it is still much more important to be excellent in the practising of virtues and in striving for perfect sanctity. This Fr. Luis repeated many, many times during the 10 days they were together so as to make an impression that would last forever with his brother. The other thing stressed by Fr. Luis in a special way was how to say the holy rosary and how to say it well. He explained to his brother at length each of the 15 mysteries of the rosary and how to meditate on each of them. The one that made the most impression on Fr. Marcelino was the second Joyful Mystery - the Visitation. Fr. Luis said it was Our Lady's perfect example of charity and that we should live our lives for others, as Our Lady did. Fr. Marcelino often preaches this, and he himself is surely practicing it. He is in his 24th year as a missionary in China.

I can't help but wonder if it is not more than a coincidence that Fr. Luis stressed the Visitation Mystery. Our Blessed Mother chose July 2, Feast of the Visitation, to appear at Garabandal for the first time; and Fr. Luis' mother eventually entered the Visitation Order, her ardent desire since the death of Fr. Luis' father in 1951.

Divine Providence

Even though the good mother of these four Jesuits bravely offered her sons to God, she suffered much when the time came for the appointments and departures of her sons, who all volunteered to be missionaries. At the time of Fr. Marcelino's first vows, two of her sons were assigned in the Americas. Then came word that Fr. Luis and Fr. Marcelino were going to even further away from Spain, to China. A good Jesuit friend took compassion on the suffering mother and, without letting her know he spoke to the Jesuit Superior. As a result Fr. Luis was to remain in continental Europe in order to be closer to his mother. Looking at it now, we see that Divine Providence had destined that Fr. Luis remain in Spain, for God wished to incorporate this saintly priest in the Garabandal events.

On July 18, 1965, during a Mass celebrated by Fr. Marcelino at Garabandal, Conchita had a locution in which Our Blessed Lady said that Fr. Marcelino Andreu of China will be in Garabandal on the day of the Great Miracle. In another locution Conchita learned that Fr. Alsjandro Andreu of South America will also be in the village for the Miracle.

He Is In Heaven

Fr. Luis was exceptionally intelligent and was sent to study in Innsbruck, Rome, Geneva and Parish. He became an expert in languages. In addition to his native Spanish, he spoke German, French, Italian, Latin, Greek and English.

On July 30, 1955, at Ona, Spain, Fr. Luis was ordained a priest forever by Archbishop Federico Melendro of Anking, China. Fr. Luis celebrated his first Mass on the feast of St Ignatius of Loyola at the Chapel of Loyola. One can imagine the joy that filled his angelic heart!

A little later, after he received his Doctorate in Theology, Fr. Luis joined the Jesuit faculty in Ona and became professor of Theology. This is the position he held when he heard about the apparitions which were taking place at Garabandal. Because of his great love for the Blessed Virgin, he decided to go to the village and investigate. He went to Garabandal for the first time on July 29, 1961, and observed the raptures of the four girls, taking note of everything he saw and heard. He was deeply impressed.”



Fr Luis Andreu early burial site

A week later he wished to go again to Garabandal to study more. He did so on that memorable August 8, never realising that he himself would become the object of much study due to the special blessings Our Lady had in store for him on that day. He would never again return to Ona - except in a coffin. For those who knew and loved him, there can be no grief. He is in heaven!

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By Barry Hanratty