

RESPONDING TO BAD PRESS

Translated from French by Deacon Andrew Usera

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On the trip to Rome from left: Fr. Luis Luna, Princess Cecile de Bourbon, Conchita, the Princess's secretary and Aniceta, Conchita's mother.



Letter from Maurice Briollet (left) to Fr. Constant Pel dated June 24, 1966, Feast of St. John the Baptist.



I am not ignorant of the unfortunate attacks made once again by *La Croix* and *Le Figaro* against the Garabandal apparitions. That does not surprise me coming from such newspapers, inasmuch as for several years now I have perceived their harmful work. From the beginning, without knowing anything about Garabandal, without having gone there (a fact that Abbot Galais, the author of this campaign in *La Croix* confirmed to me), they have taken a position that is contrary. They have tried very well to justify their opinion. But one of the most harmful ways of lying is lying by omission or by garbling, that is to say, by presenting only a portion of the text while omitting the most important part, and thereby arriving at what is contrary to the truth without the air of having lied. *La Croix* dared to print that on June 18, 1965, there were only one thousand persons at Garabandal, and that nothing happened. I was there and I can affirm that Abbot Galais is a liar. He lied also in writing that the Bishop of Santander had

forbidden priests from going to Garabandal, while omitting what the Bishop added, which was *without previously requesting authorization* from the Bishop which is not the same thing, and if anything, it is the contrary. The false pope Collin and certain bishops of his went to Garabandal (and the seers wanted them to leave). The Bishop of Santander wanted to control the visits by priests, and that was his right, and I would say, his duty. Bishop Eugenio Beitia Aldazabal gave his authorization to go to all priests who requested it. So much for the interdiction. And the Bishop never prohibited lay people from going. He only requested that they not contribute to disturbances. We see the misleading manner in which *La Croix* and *Le Figaro* distorted the facts in order to benefit their cause. What these newspapers need to do if they are searching for the truth is to present the facts in an impartial manner, providing that which is for and that which is against. However, despite the various letters that I and several theologians have addressed to them, these newspapers have always refused to publish anything that is favorable to Garabandal, such as:

•The letter of July 8, 1965, from the Bishop of Santander (cited and skewed by these newspapers), in which the Bishop declared: "We point out that we have not found anything deserving of ecclesiastical censorship or condemnation either in the doctrine or in the spiritual recommendations that have been publicized as having been addressed to the faithful, for these contain an exhortation to prayer and sacrifice, to Eucharistic devotion, to veneration of Our Lady in traditional praiseworthy ways, and the holy fear of God offended by our sins. They simply repeat the common doctrine of the Church in these matters."

That does not sound like a condemnation to me.

•Conchita's visit to the Holy Office in the presence of three cardinals, including Cardinals Ottaviani and Marella,

•Conchita's visit to Padre Pio himself in San Giovanni Rotondo in the presence of the Father Guardian.

•The two audiences (one in private and the other in public) with Pope Paul VI. All of these receptions were made in a very favorable light and the participants returned home very glad. Divine Providence has given me the great grace of encountering the three witnesses to these exchanges, whom I met with individually, both in France and in Spain. What they said does not remotely resemble what *La Croix* wrote. I personally know Father Luna, Princess Cecile de Bourbon and Aniceta, Conchita's mother, and I can affirm that these persons are not liars.



Bishop Eugenio Beitia was fair Garabandal

Let us see the biased manner in which these newspapers described the account involving Padre Pio. The article that you sent me encompassed two parts, the heading (of the highest fantasy) and the first paragraph, which represent the personal opinion of Abbot Galais, but not the opinion of Father Guardian at San Giovanni Rotondo. Let's look at the text: PADRE PIO HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE EVENTS AT GARABANDAL. (We should point out that the note from Father Guardian did not say anything of the sort.) Abbot Galais treats his wishes as reality. Here is the first paragraph: "Some of our compatriots have been making an impassioned campaign in favor of the events of Garabandal and have been arbitrarily mixing in the name of Padre Pio, the stigmatist of San Giovanni Rotondo, and as a result Father Guardian had the following notice affixed on the door of the convent" (In this paragraph published in *La Croix*, the qualifiers *impassioned* and *arbitrarily* did not come from Father Guardian, but exclusively from the progressive Abbot Galais). Let us now read, very slowly, the text from Father Guardian: "In the square of our church, some of the faithful have distributed sheets and booklets regarding the 'apparitions of San Sebastian de Garabandal' and borrowed the name of Padre Pio in presenting the facts as having been approved by him. We exhort the faithful not to abuse the name of Padre Pio to back up the facts and events, about which only the competent ecclesiastical authority is qualified to render a judgment." -Father Guardian

This note is fine and personally as a believer in the authenticity of the apparitions of Garabandal, I could have signed it myself (inasmuch as the Church has not declared the contrary). The Father Guardian did not take a position against, but he simply wished to be prudent.

•He pointed out that the distribution was being done *in the square of the church* and that disturbed him. That is understandable.

• He requested that the name of *Padre Pio* not be *abused*, and in that regard, I also agree with him. But *Father Guardian* in no way denied that Padre Pio had corresponded with Conchita several times or that Padre Pio had received Conchita this past January. In the course of the meetings with my witnesses, they discussed precisely these letters and the fact that Padre Pio was convinced of the authenticity of the apparitions of Garabandal. Father Guardian only wanted to ensure that the opinion of Padre Pio (who has no jurisdiction over Garabandal), was not opposed to that of the Church, of the competent ecclesiastical authority. And there again, I am in complete agreement, and is something that I point out in each of my conferences. The attitude of Father Guardian regarding the hierarchy takes into account the juridical competencies, and being prudent and correct, he did not wish that the fate of Garabandal be tied to that of Padre Pio. It is obvious that Padre Pio is not infallible (and neither is the Bishop of Santander, as far as I know), but for those who know Padre Pio's prudence, his total willingness to submit to the Church, and the fact that he was often enlightened in a supernatural manner, his judgment has a certain importance and in no way was he opposed (*because he believed in Garabandal*, and I have personal proof of such) to the eminent members of the Church, quite the contrary. Neither the pope nor the Holy Office have yet to declare the apparitions of Garabandal to be authentic, but the fact that Conchita was

received in an audience, that these meetings took place in a very favorable atmosphere, and that they ended with a very particular blessing, allows us to affirm that the Church is not against Garabandal, despite the fact that *La Croix* and Abbot Galais are opposed to it. But how could you expect this Abbot to believe in Garabandal when he does not believe in Lourdes, La Salette or Fatima, as he has told a friend of mine?

CONCLUSION

Do not believe that I am stubborn with respect to Garabandal and that I follow my own judgment (which has no value). NO. But I, like any historian, have gone out and done interviews, both in Spain and in France, regarding the facts. I was personally present during the ecstasy of June 18, 1965, and have a lot more advantages than Abbot Galais. I have seen many doctors who assisted during ecstasies and who declared them to be *supernatural*, of divine origin. I have consulted many renowned theologians who have also gone to Garabandal and I have taken into account their points of view. Their viewpoint (which like mine is docile toward the judgment of the Church) is formal. Dom Rodrigo, reputed in Spain to be a saint, the Spanish Padre Pio, superior of the Pontifical University of Spain, three weeks ago granted me a five hour meeting with him. He believes formally in these events which he has followed and possesses a number of documents of great importance regarding this matter. Dom Guerard des Lauriers, the eminent Dominican, has told me the same thing, as have ten other French theologians.

The priests of Solesmes also believe (I have personal letters to that effect).

If I share with you all of this confidential information, it is to show you that it is not my opinion that guides me, but that I have relied on renowned individuals who have encouraged me to continue my conferences. In addition to these, many priests and theologians and even two bishops who have helped me have found nothing to reproach, quite the contrary, they have urged me formally to continue. They believe it would be lazy for one to condition one's belief in the apparitions until the Church has made a determination. In that sense, the Church would never have recognized Lourdes, Fatima, etc. And if the crowd would have waited for the Church to first recognize Fatima which took several years, the great miracle of October 13, 1917, would have never taken place (Not necessarily). Inasmuch as these messages are in conformity with Church dogma, tradition and teachings, and inasmuch as they confirm and explain what has preceded, and have unfolded in a process that appears normal, these theologians have stated that it is reasonable and prudent to believe because the Church would not state the contrary, this coming from God.



Fr. Constant Pel at Garabandal on the right

I should add that on three occasions, the Pope [St. Paul VI] recently made an allusion that is quite clear to the messages of the Virgin of Garabandal, and declared formally that the world would undergo the greatest cataclysms that it had ever experienced, and that it would only be saved through a miracle from the Virgin. That is precisely what Mary came to say at Garabandal.

In addition to the Holy Father, there is Cardinal Ottaviani, Padre Pio, Dom Rodrigo, Dom Guerard des Lauriers, the very holy Father [Constant Luis Marie] Pel who recently died in the odor of sanctity, who was the spiritual and cherished son of Father [Antoine] Crozier [the saint of Lyons] who bore the [invisible] stigmata for 15 years, the monks of Solesmes and so many others encourage me to continue to contribute testimony to what I have seen and understood, while utterly deriding the opinion of certain newspapers or Christian Democratic or progressive abbots whose faith vacillates.

Like the great St. Teresa of Avila, I wish to die a son of the Church. Regarding prophecies, St. Paul tells us that we should not reject them but test them. The Virgin prophesied five times in Garabandal. Two already have been fulfilled, which is a good sign for what is to come. There are three other ones and we prudently wait for these to be fulfilled, but we do not take a contrary position as to these. The Virgin announced a great Warning which will make the world believe in

the end, instilling a beneficial fear that will force humanity to turn toward God and His Mother. After this there will be a Great Miracle, greater even than the one at Fatima, which will take place in Garabandal, accompanied by physical healings and conversions. Finally, there will be a Great Chastisement (already announced at La Salette, Fatima, etc.). Just wait. He who laughs last laughs best, and it certainly won't be the incredulous Abbot Galais.

ADDENDUM

On many occasions I had the great joy of seeing Padre Pio. On the 30th and 31st of May, 1957, while undertaking certain sensational assignments which Father Pel had entrusted to me and which were miraculously successful, I went to Padre Pio to bring him up to date and made the commitment to obey him. Padre Pio gave me a formal order, which he confirmed in writing, to blindly obey Father Pel. I obeyed, with regret, but never repented of doing so.



During the Conclave of 1963, I was the anonymous instrument of Divine Providence to lead Father Pel to Padre Pio. I helped to facilitate the meeting of these two saints (whom I consider to be so in my estimation). They took each other by the arm and embraced even though this was the first time that they had officially seen each other. They spent many days together and both at that point believed in Garabandal with Padre Pio already having corresponded with Conchita in that regard. On many occasions previously, Padre Pio asked French pilgrims who had come to visit him in Italy: "Why do you come to see me? You have Father Pel in France." Father Pel was a miracle worker, former theology professor who knew virtually all the contemporary mystics and who had either witnessed or performed numerous miracles. When he came to Versailles, he stayed with me and went to celebrate Mass that lasted about an hour at the Capuchins of Versailles. It was that very frail 89-year-old Father Pel who found himself next to Conchita on June 18, 1965, at the moment of her ecstasy. In that compacted crowd, one pressed against the other, it was impossible to advance. I myself could not move a millimeter, although I was a meter and a half from the girl in ecstasy. When Father Pel saw the crowd, without realizing it or wishing it, a path opened up to give way to the miniscule elderly priest to whom Conchita had turned her back and ignored his presence. It was like the Red Sea dividing to let the Hebrews pass. The witnesses of this event were dumbfounded. Then, while still remaining in ecstasy, Conchita extended her crucifix to St. Michael and she immediately applied it to Father Pel's lips, the priest being stunned by the honor. None of this has anything diabolical about it, nor did it occur just by happenstance. The presence of this expert and saint, Father Pel, during the ecstasy confirmed the authenticity of the ecstasy and the crucifix presented to him by Conchita, also

confirmed the holiness of Father Pel, guaranteed as well by Padre Pio. During tire ecstasy and before kissing the crucifix, Father Pel remarked in a loud voice, which I heard: "This is from God, this is from God, this is indisputably from God." Obviously he is not the Church's authority, but his expert testimony is of interest. Subsequently, in all of his retreats, while noting that he submitted himself to the Church's authority, he spoke about Garabandal and he ordered me to continue my conferences.

It is therefore not in rebellion against the Church (that has never condemned Garabandal) that I speak, but in a spirit of obedience and submission, after having obtained the views of saints and theologians. I should add that Father Pel died just three months ago (1966). I

attended his funeral, during which the priest said at the moment of absolution that "among the great saints that have given honor to the Church, there are few, perhaps St. Francis of Assisi, who have succeeded in imitating Christ's virtues as Father Pel. His principal virtues were humility, piety and charity." This is then what I have heard said about he who like me and with me, went to Garabandal. Many letters have already been sent asking that a process for his beatification be opened. This was the man who Padre Pio ordered me to obey blindly, no matter what he told me. The opinion of *La Croix* and Abbot Galais is not important to me. □

Conchita in ecstasy on June 18, 1965, with Fr. Pel (1) and Maurice Briollet (2) nearby

