

GARABANDAL IN 1965

The writer of this report may be Abel Storez but that is not certain

Translated from French by Deacon Andrew Usera



Under the simple freedom of a layman, I spent my vacations in this village at the invitation of my good Spanish friends—my second family. These friends are very good, hospitable, and very cheerful. I felt very good among them!

It pained me, however, to read the attacks in the newspapers and news agencies, inasmuch as their errors could have been easily refuted if the press and agencies were willing to publish rectifications! A certain correspondent from Madrid transmitted some gross errors, claiming that the Bishop of Santander “had enough” after seeing the “merchants of souvenirs and lemonade” expand in Garabandal.

If this correspondent had wanted to come in person or simply asked some witnesses, he would have found out that there are no merchants selling souvenirs or lemonade in Garabandal. The sale of beverages is quite modest, with three small grocery-taverns in the village. The main one is run by the father of six children (Loli’s father). He is not rich, and did chores to help the town mason. His oldest daughter went down to Cosio every morning to get the indispensable items for the grocery store. Her vehicle? A donkey that is the preferred mode of transportation of the poor mountain folks. Anyway, if the grocery store were sufficiently profitable, the oldest daughter would have gotten a motorcycle.

It appears then that the attacks against Garabandal are proof in favor of the veracity of the apparitions. As happened in Lourdes and Fatima, the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin caused unleashed tempests, perhaps diabolical tempests.

It was only after five years of inquiry that the Bishop of La Salette declared in 1851 that the apparitions of La Salette were certain and unmistakable.

JUNE 18, 1965

Certain radio stations announced and certain newspapers reproduced on the basis of information provided by the same press agencies alluded to previously, that nothing took place on June 18! Gross error! I was at Garabandal at 11:30 p.m. Conchita was in ecstasy several meters in front of me as if St. Michael wanted to crown this day of prayers. Yes, this 18th of June of 1965 will remain fixed in my memory. There was such fervor beginning in the morning on the part of around 2,000 persons, most of all Spaniards, and around 150 were French, English, American, German, Italian, etc. There were around twenty priests.

In the morning, there were several Masses attended with great fervor by numerous pilgrims. What silence! Many times there were not sufficient Hosts to go around. The priest announced that there would be another Mass so that all pilgrims could receive Communion.

As the day progressed, many Rosaries were prayed in various languages. The Chaplet of St. Michael was prayed at the Pines.

When the midday Mass finished, Conchita was besieged by the crowd. The photographers climbed the walls around the Church to photograph her. Many persons rushed Conchita to embrace her and to speak with her. Conchita, hemmed in from all sides, smiled untiringly, without showing the slightest impatience. She edified everyone by her patience and her sweetness, by her very joy. On the vigil, she had been ill. During the afternoon of the 18th, under the full sun, she signed autographs and images to please people. That evening, beginning around 8:00 p.m., the wait became tenser among some of the folks. A friend of mine gently asked: "Let us pray another Rosary, so St. Michael does not delay in coming."

Around 10:30 p.m., Conchita told us to return to the place of St. Michael's first apparition (June 18, 1961) on the path to the Pines, a little above the "apple tree". There were some 2,000 pilgrims who went stumbling (but not too much, given that we had some special graces!) over the unlikely stony path, without a doubt the rockiest in all of Spain! The mountain was illuminated by lights and television flashes from professionals and amateurs of Spanish and Italian TV stations.

All of a sudden, Conchita passed by very quickly, supported by two Civil Guard gendarmes who protected her, followed by a priest, a French order priest, who also moved quickly despite his 88 years, propped up by two friends. Within a very short period of time, Conchita fell to her knees on the hard and pointy rocks. Her gaze changed as it did during each apparition. It was transfigured, transparent, as if from another world.

Poor Conchita was hemmed in by the shouting crowd, so much so that the megaphone placed in front of her lips could only record a confusing noise. Her face was constantly and brusquely lit up by the flash from photographers, filmmakers and television crews. Conchita had no reaction, fixed entirely on her vision. She did not blink during the period of the apparition, which lasted approximately fifteen minutes. A man, pushed by the crowd, stepped on Conchita's foot that was extended. No reaction. The young girl had a serious look, perhaps a little pained.

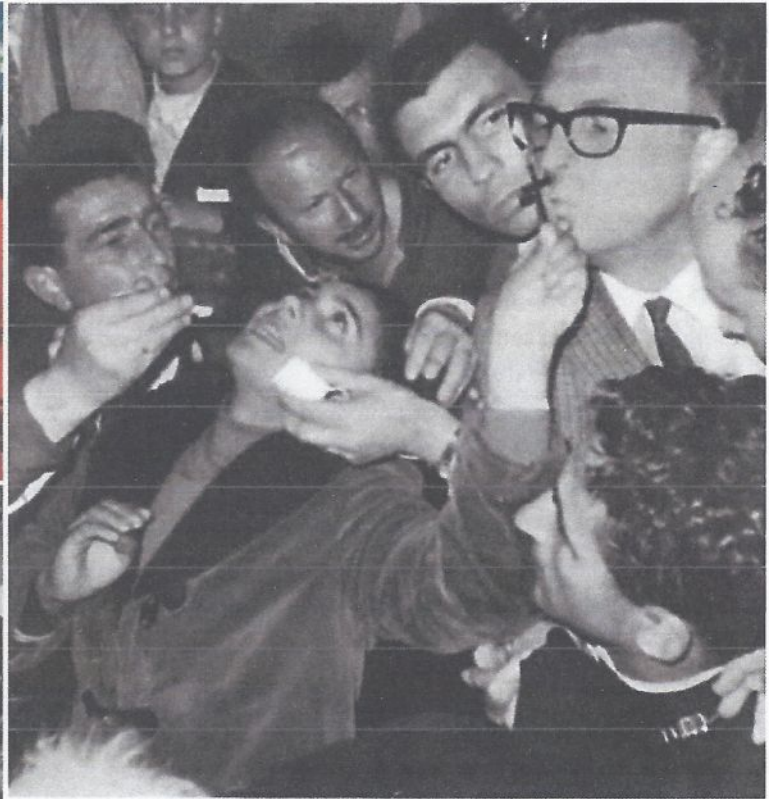
Le Monde et la Vie (The World and the Life), in its August 1965 issue published a very good article, where one can find other details. I will simply share the fact that during her ecstasy, and at the indication of St. Michael the Archangel, Conchita gave her crucifix to three Frenchmen to kiss: an aged holy priest, the father of a family and a young professor.

The next day, Saturday the 19th, prior to our departure, Conchita signed many images tirelessly and kissed crosses and medals. An additional detail. An old friend of mine who was unable to approach Conchita had someone give the young girl a cross (known as the cross of the 7 scapulars), a St. Michael medal and a medal of St. Joan of Arc [for Conchita to kiss]. When she returned home, one of her grandchildren, two years of age who was held by the arms of his mother in front of his grandmother, wanted to be put down. When he was put down, the child

precipitated himself toward the cross and medals kissed by Conchita and embraced them ardently. Was this a sign? The child could not speak yet, so no one could ask him any questions.

Conchita presented herself like she always did, incredibly patient and amiable, possessing a simplicity and kindness, in short, exercising perfect charity toward all those people who harassed her so much.

Another pleasant memory of this 18th of June was the picnic on the grass in back of the Church, under the sun with the company of two charming French royal princesses.



Conchita with her cousin Lucia on June 18, 1965, when later she will receive Our Lady's second message from St. Michael. Below, Civil Guards escort Conchita to the lane where the vision will occur. Conchita in ecstasy offers the crucifix to kiss to one of three Frenchmen, the only ones to be given this privilege.

THE EVENTS OF GARABANDAL

God granted me the grace to see a miracle in 1964. A German man came to Garabandal on August 1, 1965, to thank the Blessed Virgin. This German, a Protestant, had married a Spanish woman from Bilbao. He was operated on for stomach cancer during which they removed three quarters of this organ. Eight hours after the operation, he was worse. They did a second operation, but the surgeon closed him up without doing anything. The disease was too advanced. This man was doomed to die and as a result his sister-in-law, a very fervent Spaniard, came to Garabandal. She prayed for him every day. One day when she was praying the Rosary at the Pines, Conchita arrived and she told her that she had a relative who was very sick, and asked if she could pray for him, adding that she had prayed the Rosary and had already prayed two decades. She gave her Rosary to Conchita who prayed the remaining three decades with her. Conchita kissed the crucifix and returned the Rosary to its owner who placed it for an instant on one of the nine pine trees.

A little while later, she received a telegram from Germany asking that she return urgently because her brother-in-law was agonizing. When she had barely arrived, she wiped the brow of the dying man with the kerchief which contained the Rosary kissed by Conchita. At that very instant, the sick man could not feel his illness. His

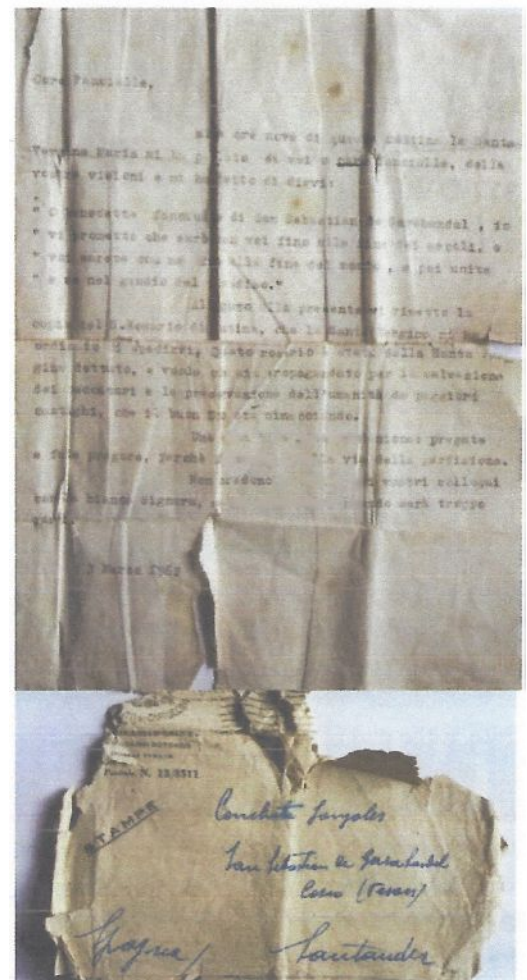
sister-in-law told him: "I know that you do not have faith, but I do believe that the Virgin has come to Garabandal. On account of the faith that I have..." As she said this, she extended her Rosary to him. He ended up taking it, kissed the crucifix and passed the Rosary over the operation wound. One of his friends who was present, a German and Protestant like him, took the Rosary when it was his turn, held it in his hands and then full of emotion returned it to the young woman saying: "You have a beautiful faith." After that day, the dying man felt better. After 25 days in the hospital he left and drove home in his automobile and his friends accompanied him on a walk. Subsequently, he ate normally and was able to digest the quite large German meals. The dying man saw his weight go up from 65 kilos (143 lbs.) to 85 kilos (187 lbs.). When I saw him on August 1, 1965, in Garabandal, I urged him to send to the Holy Office the certifications from four physicians who ministered to him or operated on him.

There were many conversions at the village and people who returned to God. There were also many marvelous events that occurred, not to satisfy the spiritual hunger of the people, but always to make them understand a virtue that needs to be practiced. I will share three of these:

- A young lady with her chest amply uncovered arrived one day when the girls were in ecstasy. Shortly thereafter the young lady heard the young girls saying that indecent fashions in this world lead to the eternal fire. All of a sudden, the young lady understood and donned a jacket. By this event, there was a lesson on modesty and purity.
- One day, Conchita while in ecstasy prayed at the gates of the cemetery. Ten persons were there. Conchita made the sign of the cross over only nine of them. The tenth, a gentleman, was very afflicted by this and examined his conscience to see if there was a hidden sin. But Conchita told him quite the contrary: "You, you make the sign of the cross when you wake up, while the others do not." Therefore, in this manner Our Lord taught the other nine to make the sign of the cross when they wake up and to offer that day to God.
- On a very dark night, there was a crowd in front of Conchita's home that included five priests dressed in civilian clothing. Conchita, while in ecstasy, came out and took each priest by the hand and had them come in. Inside the house, she spoke to them as priests of Our Lord. If Conchita by a special privilege had recognized the sacred character of the priesthood, it was because Our Lord had her pray in an intense manner for the priesthood.

I also recall the memorable day of Monday, August 12, 1965. That afternoon, in the kitchen in Conchita's home, her mother was sewing next to the window. Conchita blew on the embers in the foyer, because outside there was a cold downpour. We were two priests, three Frenchmen and me. A French friend of mine told Conchita: "The matter of Padre Pio's letter is discussed very much. Is it true that Padre Pio wrote you?" "Yes," Conchita said. The Spanish priest who knew the family very well told her to "go get the letter." Conchita went to her room and came back with a piece of paper in poor condition, typed on a typewriter. Padre Pio had dictated it to a secretary, like the president of a corporation dictates his personal correspondence to a secretary. **RIGHT: The letter from St. Pio and the envelope it came in.**

Upon seeing the paper, the Frenchman laughed and told her that he would give her some Scotch tape to put over the tears. The priest read the letter in Italian, and then translated it into Spanish, and afterwards into French. This letter is a testimony of encouragement toward the seers: love for Our Lady, prayers for sinners, redemption of souls through repentance, sacrifice, the Holy Rosary of Fatima.



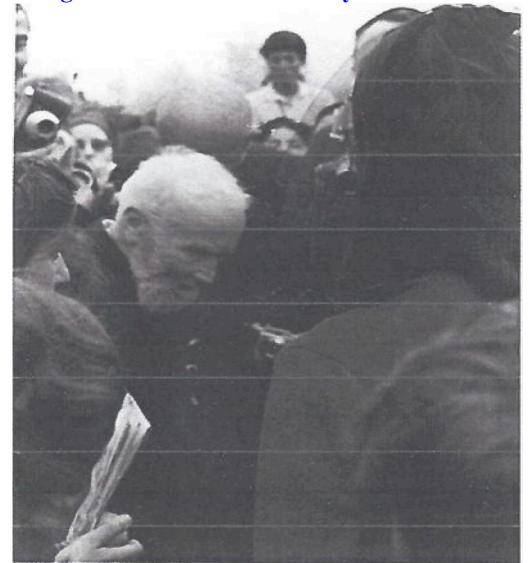
Let us imitate Padre Pio and the seers in their sacrifice, rather than merely talking about the timeliness of the letter.

I also make note of a very important event that took place in front of Conchita's home. On a beautiful fall day, I served as interpreter for a very fervent and edifying priest. I said to myself that I hoped I was able to translate well in case there were theological words!

I was asked to translate a very personal interior communication which was that of a saint. Very moved, this good priest told Conchita also: "You will suffer much." He also told her: "See, it has been 40 years that I have been working for the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary." How well this went with the Garabandal messages. What a beautiful concordance!

How would I ever repay the Good Lord for having been the instrument for such an edifying conversation and for having seen face to face the visionary of the Blessed Virgin and the holy priest, defender of the Eucharist and of the Virgin. Oh, were everyone so fervent in our paganized world!

Holy man Fr. Constant Pell with Conchita on the right. He was one of the three Frenchmen who were given the crucifix to kiss by the seer.



THE SPIRITUALITY AT SAN SEBASTIAN DE GARABANDAL

During my visit, I admired the fervor of folks who came here "on vacation." They did not come here out of curiosity, as one goes to a circus. They were different from those visitors from 1961-1962 who came out of "spiritual greed," and who did much damage to the cause of the Blessed Virgin. Now, I see these folks "on vacation" who come here out of piety. They go to Mass, followed by Matins; they pray the Rosary, and attend Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament every evening.

Despite the work in the fields of which there is a lot in the mountains, there are many villagers at the morning Mass and at the pious evening devotions. Visitors also pray much at the Pines and pray the Rosary with fervor. I will never forget the Rosary prayed on August 4, 1965, prayed with fervor for France by 23 Frenchmen and 3 Spaniards under a very blue sky and brilliant sunshine. Religious fervor is a good sign that often comes into play to obtain the canonical approval. I was edified many times by the attitude of the many priests who came to Garabandal with the authorization of the Bishop of Santander. INDISPENSABLE. They were rays of purity, humility and charity. One of the priests (the brother of the young Jesuit who died of joy at seeing in advance the "Great Miracle"), a missionary, blessed me on account of my apostolate in France devoted to the Virgin of Mount Carmel. We should wish that all priests had the same zeal as those I saw at Garabandal.

THE GREAT MIRACLE!

Without trying to ascertain the date of the Great Miracle that won't be known until eight days beforehand, a physiotherapist who has become an ardent supporter of Garabandal and who lives in the Paris suburbs, asked Conchita at the end of this month of August the following question: "How could those who are seriously ill, those who walk with difficulty or not at all and those on stretchers, etc., be able to come? Could they see the miracle, for example, from Cosio?" "No," Conchita replied. "They would need to come up here. But they need to do what they can and the Blessed Virgin will do the rest."



THE *NOTA* OF JULY 8 FROM THE BISHOP OF SANTANDER

Very few French newspapers reproduced this *Nota* which is much better than the preceding ones. The Bishop cited at the beginning the canonical requirements in all cases of apparitions. Then he pointed out how much he deemed the religious fervor of the visitors to Garabandal to be respectable. He recognized that the Messages do not contain anything that is contrary to Catholic dogma, inasmuch as they preached sacrifice, prayer, and devotion to the Eucharist and Our Lady “under forms that are traditionally commendable.”

The Holy Office responded to the Bishop of Santander on July 28, 1965. Its letter was rather favorable, inasmuch as it did not deny the facts. The Holy Office thanked the Bishop for his very clear documentation he had sent and for the prudence that the Bishop of Santander had shown in this matter, further recommending that he “continue to follow the facts” with vigilance and in the future, “if possible to inform the Holy Office of any new facts.”

I know that the Vatican is following very closely the facts of Garabandal and it is not forbidden to think that His Holiness Paul VI follows these favorably, having read his Apostolic Exhortation of August 28, 1965, centered on the mystery of the cross addressed to all of the world’s bishops. In it, the Holy Father indicated that on the opening day of the Council, the Conciliar Fathers would accompany him in a penitential procession from the Basilica of the Holy Cross to St. John Lateran. Furthermore, His Holiness Paul VI asked the faithful in all five continents to elevate a choir of prayers and penitence, and asked that on September 14, 1965, in each church of every parish, a penitential ceremony be carried out during which innocent children, generous young people, fathers and mothers, the sick and infirm are summoned.

Similarly, the magnificent Encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* of September 3 promotes Eucharistic devotion. What providential concordance with the Eucharistic messages of Garabandal!

In concluding, let us all pray together this prayer: “O Holy Virgin, Our Lady of Mercy, you see your children heading toward a frightful eternal blaze. You multiply your tender calls so that we amend ourselves. How sad it is to see many people laughing, mocking and balking with pride. You trouble yourself from heaven on our behalf and we do not turn our heads toward you! Could this humble token convert and save a single soul? Give us the grace to practice more your messages for our priests, our sacrifices, a stronger Eucharistic devotion and a radiant charity!” □