

Sister Maria's Diary

By Father Eusebio Garcia de Pesquera, O.F.M., Cap.
(taken from SHE WENT IN HASTE TO THE MOUNTAIN)

As mentioned in Part 1, Conchita was enrolled in October of 1966, as a boarder at the school run by the Concepcionistas Misioneras de la Enseñanza in Burgos. Directress of the school, Sister Maria Nieves Garcia, became Conchita's confidant and kept a diary of her conversations with the visionary. Part 2 continues with Sister Maria's entry for November 15, 1966.

November 15

CONCHITA: In my village they told me several times to kiss my mother when I displeased her. I couldn't do this and it irritated me. I don't like to kiss. When they embraced me I held out my cheek but I didn't kiss. I really only kissed Loli.

November 16

CONCHITA: Sometimes they judged me bad without reason. I remember

that one day the guards told me something bad that had been said about me. I let out a laugh because I didn't understand. They became angry at my laughter. Later I mentioned it in my home and everyone was very displeased. They even came to threaten the guards for having said such a thing.

November 17

Conchita had heard that there was

danger of war because of the situation in Gibraltar. She was worried, thinking of her brother, Miguel, and she spoke to the Sister as soon as she saw her.

CONCHITA: How afraid I am of war! Will it happen? In 1962, when they were speaking of the threat of war, I told it to the Virgin. "Will there be a war?" I asked her. She only answered me, "God does not want war for His children." That says a lot, doesn't it?

In order to inspire Conchita to be strong in the face of difficulties, the Sister talked to her about Christ. This obviously pleased Conchita. However, she ended up making the following remarks.

CONCHITA: I think more of the Virgin. It's as if I had more feeling for her. The Lord is very serious. And when He speaks to me He seems concerned for everyone whereas with the Virgin, it's as if more for me. Anyhow, to sum it all up, whoever loves the Mother also loves the Son. Isn't that so?

November 25

CONCHITA: To remember my village makes me suffer. I felt imprisoned in it. Others were forever telling me what to do: *Go to Mass; Pray the Rosary; Do this; Give up that.* At times I thought I would be happy to be in a hermitage away from everyone and to work there for God alone and see what I was capable of doing without someone forever telling me.

I have no desire for the feast of the Immaculate Conception to arrive because, first of all, it will be painful for me when that day arrives and I will have nothing (every year since 1961

Conchita with her mother, Aniceta, in 1965. "They told me several times to kiss my mother when I displeased her. I could not do this."





Waiting up for a late "call" from the Virgin. Although Conchita came to have many doubts about her apparitions, she never doubted the "calls."

I have had either an apparition or a locution). And secondly, I'm afraid of what might come to me. Since I started thinking this way, I have had anxieties if it will be so or not.

Do you know something? You gave me one of the envelopes they made for all the girls on the 21st, the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin. It was sealed and I received it with great anticipation to know what the Virgin wanted from me. Do you know what mine contained? What she had told us so many times: "*Faithfulness in everyday life.*"

November 29

CONCHITA: I would like to have brother priests. I have known many. I remember that a young priest from the Heart of Mary (Order), when I wanted to give him the crucifix to kiss, turned away weeping and said, "I am not worthy. I am not worthy." When I had finished seeing the Virgin, I went up to him and, apart from everyone, communicated to him what she had told me. "He wants to take off the habit and leave the congregation." Upon hearing this he began to cry once more. I never saw him again.

December 2

First Thursday of the month, Thursday of the priesthood. When they met, Sister read to Conchita some edifying letters from priests.

CONCHITA: Before the Virgin told me of it, I believed all priests were good. It never occurred to me that they, too, could commit mortal sins.

I have known many. Some appeared holy to me in the beginning; later I saw things I didn't like. I understood much later how people can be deceived. At first I was friendly to all of them but realizing my trust was badly interpreted, I changed.

Sometimes I wonder if among the persons I had known there were any who really loved me. Many compliments, many endearing phrases, but they wanted me for themselves. I saw that even the priests got angry with each other in order to have a bigger part or involvement with me. I'm ashamed that they praise me, and I'm pleased that they tell me what I do wrong.

December 3

The Sister read and explained the parable of the Good Shepherd on this occasion, Conchita was confiding the memories of her life from early youth, *with peace and joy*. She ended this way:

CONCHITA: Everything that happened I see now as if in a dream—the apparitions, the people—I'm sorry that many doubt the apparitions because of my denials. It occurs to me that, although I denied, I would still like to say, *Have hope! Don't be discouraged*. I think that the three other girls feel the same.

When I think about the Virgin, I picture her as something I dreamed. How nice it would be if now she would come here in this parlor with the two of us! What a joy! It isn't necessary to be perfect to see her. I have been a girl with many faults. On the day the Angel appeared to us, I had just fought with Jacinta. And I see that today I still don't like to pray. She comes to make us good.

If you could see how human the Virgin is! Sometimes she repeated comically our badly spoken expressions, and she did this in order that we might have confidence. But we had it from the first moment.

Now I have doubts about many things; but what I don't feel the least doubt about are the *calls*. I remember

them perfectly, and moreover, as if I could feel them right now.

"The Calls"

The "calls" or in Spanish *llamadas*, were a unique feature of the Garabandal apparitions and Conchita told Sister Nieves she never doubted receiving them. Here is how the visionary described these calls in her *Diary*: "It was like an interior voice, but that we did not hear it with our ears nor did we hear ourselves called by name. It is a feeling of joy. There are three calls: the first a weaker feeling of joy; the second is a little stronger; but the third one makes us very excited and very happy. Then the apparition occurs. We only depart for the site of the apparition at the second call, for if we leave at the first, we have to wait there a long while because there is a long delay between the first and the second call."

—OUR LADY COMES TO GARABANDAL

"I give my attention to what I'm saying." Conchita praying the rosary in the village church of Garabandal in 1964.



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Conchita in Rome in 1966 where she was called by Cardinal Ottaviani. With her are Father Luis Luna, her mother, right, and the secretary to Princess Cecile Bourbon Parma.



December 6

CONCHITA: We have not always been treated well. Sometimes they said outrageous things about us and they insulted us. How many times I had to listen to outright lies about us!

SISTER NIEVES: When they acted this way, did it bother you?

CONCHITA: No, I remained quite calm. Actually I was not hurt; and it was this way with the four of us. I don't know the cause. That they say nasty things to me doesn't matter to me; it humiliates you much more when they flatter you.

I don't feel rancor or hate toward anyone. When the priests of the Commission or those in charge of us attacked us, and the others became angry because of this, I did not. I thought that they had to act like this; and I loved them. I love very much the people who seem good, pious; and I also love those who are sick, and those who live their vocation or, having a vocation, are not able to attain it. Perhaps, after the Miracle, I also will be able to become a nun.

Sister Nieves described Conchita as "simple, natural, candid, intelligent, normal and well-balanced."



What a pleasure that would be!

January 27, 1967

Because of certain rumors, the Sister asked Conchita about her diary.

SISTER: Did you write the diary about the apparitions on your own or did they tell you to do it?

CONCHITA: A priest told me that the Bishop said I should write it.

SISTER: You never speak of your conversations with the Virgin.

CONCHITA: What for? We said such stupidities. Nevertheless, she never reprimanded us for it; she listened. One day we asked her something serious: What should we do to practice penance. She answered us, "Always do what your conscience tells you." She didn't say anything else. I seem to remember also that once she told Loli to obey her mother.

January 31

Certain persons had brought water from somewhere or other, and also some relics for Conchita. The Sister did her job in giving them to her saying that a "visionary" had brought them. Conchita noticed something in Sister's reaction.

CONCHITA: It seems that you don't believe anything about this. I don't have much faith in seers either, without denying that some are true.

SISTER: For me not to believe much in these things is logical, but for you who . . .

CONCHITA: That is something very different! I don't know how to explain it; but it's not the same.

SISTER: They said that this visionary sent a message to your mother, saying harsh things, and that you threw it away. Why?

CONCHITA: She said that my mother was acting very badly toward me. The Virgin didn't say that!

SISTER: She is kinder, isn't that right?

CONCHITA: Oh yes! She would never say that.

March 2

CONCHITA: Whenever we prayed the Gloria, the Virgin bowed her head.

SISTER: Did she rest standing on top of the Pines?

CONCHITA: We didn't see the Pines or anything else. We only saw her.

April 10

Many things had occurred during the previous weeks, for example, the "Nota" of Bishop Puchol dated March 17. This "Nota," given to all the news media by the Bishop of Santander, Vicente Puchol, intended to obliterate as false everything about Garabandal. It greatly affected the Sister; and to a lesser degree, Conchita, who was able to notice the effect of the "Nota" in the village (Garabandal) where she spent her Holy Week vacation.

On this day, an issue of *La Gaceta Ilustrada* fell into her hands. It published a pitiless article by the reporter Julio Poo San Román of Santander, speaking out against the events and visionaries of Garabandal.

SISTER: How did this article affect you?

CONCHITA: Very badly. There are many lies in it. For example, it says I didn't want the Bishop to inform the people about my denials, and the truth is that I myself asked that they be published so I would be more at peace with myself. What makes me suffer is that people now look on us in a bad way.

I have only one desire: That the date of the Miracle come—not for the Miracle itself, but in order to see once and for all if it is true or not. If it has been the Virgin, the Miracle will take place because what she says

Conchita in ecstasy extends the cross for veneration. On one occasion a priest turned away saying, "I am not worthy, I am not worthy."



is always fulfilled. As for myself, regardless of whether the Miracle takes place or doesn't take place, it will always be bad for me.

SISTER: Why is that?

CONCHITA: If the thing is true, for having acted badly, denying and not being generous. And if it isn't true . . . well, for everything!

If what happened to us, being good little girls, hasn't been supernatural, and God has permitted it to happen with the consequences that can result, then I couldn't believe that God is good. And my mother and brothers could never believe it.

The Sister advanced some explanations in order to clear up the problem.

CONCHITA: I don't know the first two cases that you mentioned, since we didn't begin with a lie, and I can assure you that we made no agreement among ourselves.

SISTER: And how did it continue?

CONCHITA: The same as at the beginning. It isn't true that we rehearsed this! How could they think and say that?

SISTER: So now you can clearly see that it wasn't something of your own doing.

CONCHITA: I don't know how it happened. I see everything darkly. What is clear to me is that we didn't plan it.

April 19

SISTER: What the Virgin told you about pride and humility, did you receive that together with the Message?

CONCHITA: No. She said it on another occasion: "What God loves most is humility; what most displeases Him is pride."

SISTER: Would you like to see the Virgin again?

CONCHITA: It's all the same to me. I

hope to see her in heaven.

SISTER: Why do you feel that way?

CONCHITA: It would be painful for me now because of my denials.

April 21

They discussed the article in *La Gaceta Ilustrada*.

CONCHITA: It was not a game of ours, nor did we do it to deceive anyone. Nor did the pastor talk to us about guardian angels on that day. He almost never gave us catechism. Nor did we get together to make up the message. Nor did I prepare any dough to make the Host for the Communion.

It's true that we did some stupid things too, that Cardinal Ottaviani read to me in Rome [when Conchita was called there in December, 1966] from a report by the Bishop of Santander. For example, the thing about the powders, the statue of the Virgin that we were going to hide, and some other things.

April 30

To inspire her, the Sister talked to Conchita about how much Our Lord and the Virgin loved her.

CONCHITA: Yes. But they love everyone. When we talked to the Virgin about things that were too personal, she didn't answer us; she was concerned about others.

May 4

Conchita had decided to celebrate this month of the Virgin better than ever. On this day she met with the Sister.

CONCHITA: If the Virgin would present herself to me now, how many things I would ask her! At the time we only said stupid things to her, things without importance. I think

that we did it to make her stay longer so that she wouldn't leave us, for at times she remained silent and didn't look at us.

SISTER: Do you think about the mysteries when you pray the rosary?

CONCHITA: No. I give my attention to what I'm saying.

When I hear the Virgin talked about, whether good or bad, I think it is said to me, since I consider her something mine.

The Virgin is very much like us; there are no distances.

One day she gave me a message for a certain priest and he wept very much.

Here the Sister added that the husband of one of her former students had recounted how Conchita had spoken personally to him in Garabandal about something very hidden in his conscience, and that this had made him resolve to change his way of life.

May 8

Through a telephone call from Francisco Sánchez-Ventura, the Sister received news that the Bishop of Santander had just been killed in a tragic accident. The Sister told Conchita who was overcome and later broke out in tears.

CONCHITA: I'm so sorry about what has happened! He was very good and very young. The poor man! He did everything with good intentions. Isn't that true? This serves as a notice to us that we must be prepared. So many things can happen to us in this life! *Now the Bishop knows everything.*

June 11

The apparitions were discussed.

SISTER: Why did you fall to the ground?

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CONCHITA: We were not aware of that; we were with the Virgin! And we continued the conversation or communication with her, without knowing if we were running or not, if we were kneeling, or lying on the ground.

The Sister makes a note here: *A few days previously Father Laffineur had come and asked how Conchita looked to me. I answered, "Simple, natural, candid, intelligent. She was so normal and well-balanced that I could certify that in my profession as a teacher I haven't known another like her." I also told him that I didn't find a very strong will in her.*

June 14

CONCHITA: The Virgin didn't tell me that she didn't want me to leave the village and be in school.

June 17

SISTER: Our greatest treasure is within. The external appearance doesn't matter much; it should be made agreeable, but without affectation.

CONCHITA: I understand, and I see that you are right. We told the Virgin we wanted to be as beautiful as she was, but she only smiled and was silent. If she had conceded it to us to have her face! How the people would have looked at us! She is so beautiful!

SISTER: At times you did strange things in front of her.

CONCHITA: Yes, we walked sitting down for example. In the beginning I was very surprised in seeing this in the others; afterwards I became accustomed to it. I saw them descend a steep stairway this way.

I recall once having a knee injury. The doctor ordered rest, but I didn't take care of the knee. And it didn't hurt after that. Without taking a treat-

ment, I had a complete cure.

They said that on another occasion I had left blood on a stone; but later I didn't notice anything on my knees, except a little scratch.

SISTER: In some of those things, did you add something of your own invention?

CONCHITA: Yes.

SISTER: Doesn't it seem to you that some of your little deceits, besides having to do with your present doubts, could contribute in some way to cloud the truth?

CONCHITA: It is very possible that could be. Don't think I haven't thought about it.

Conchita passed the summer in her village, with the exception of the last half of August when she took refuge again at the school. In October she returned to Burgos to begin the 1967-1968 school year.

October 18

SISTER: Have you noticed what day it is today? We should do something more in prayer. Shall we make a night vigil? What happened on this day in 1961?

CONCHITA: We announced the first message. We had already seen it beneath the Angel; but we didn't understand what it meant. The Virgin explained it to us.

In what happened to us during those years I see also some intervention from the devil. For example, I remember the voices that we heard in that great darkness that I have already related. And that other day on which Loli and Jacinta intended to jump down from the choir loft of the church. I was not seeing the Virgin then and was standing near the main altar. I remember they came down and touching my face asked me, "Are you Conchita?" That day it certainly seems to have been the devil.



The Pines, site of the future Miracle. "I have only one desire; that the date of the Miracle come, to see once and for all if it is true or not."

On December 22, Aniceta came to Burgos to pick up her daughter. She had not come to take her back only for the Christmas vacation; she was taking her back permanently. There had been strong exterior influences and pressures that caused this.

On one of the last visits Conchita told the Sister, "From time to time I see more clearly that what happened to the four of us girls was true, but we wasted it. Our denials are our own doing. Sometimes, although very briefly, I see this very clearly."

And the Sister closed the long chapter of her remembrances of the extraordinary closeness to the *child* of the Montaña with these lines:

"I give thanks to the Most Holy Virgin for everything. Whether she has appeared or not at Garabandal, I have been moved in everything by her love, and certainly all this has brought me to love her more and to feel closer to her."

May this be the final result for everyone, while we continue to revolve between the light and the shadows of the great mystery of Garabandal. □

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