



The Church's Position on Garabandal

By Joseph A. Pelletier, A.A.

The Apparitions of Our Lady at Garabandal

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Padre Pio at Garabandal

God Speaks at Garabandal



Joseph A. Pelletier, A.A.
1912-1986

From the Writings of Father Joe

Compiled by Irene Dutra

Over the course of the years, from 1972 to 1981, Fr. Joseph Pelletier was the most prolific contributing writer for GARABANDAL Magazine (formerly called NEEDLES) with a total of 58 articles. The publishers will always be grateful to Father Joe for this great and generous contribution that added significantly to the integrity of the publication. In his articles, Father Joe's keen discerning mind explored the various aspects of the Garabandal Message, showing their relationship to Church doctrine. The following excerpts summarize his most important thoughts on the significance of Garabandal.

Garabandal, in its simplest terms, is the story of a faithful and forgiving God reaching out to His bewildered and suffering children to help them, not to punish them. The conditional chastisement of Garabandal must never be allowed to overshadow the main reason for God's intervention at that Spanish mountain village. That reason is love. This love reaches its peak in forgiveness, the love which

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Christ revealed on the cross.

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... the message of Garabandal is very significant. It appears as a preventive antidote prepared by an all-wise and loving God in view of a spiritual tempest about to break upon the Church. Though in preparation for some years before the opening of the Ecumenical Council, Vatican II, in the fall of 1962, the storm only manifested itself in a serious way during the Council. That storm grew in fury during the Council and in the first few years after it. God anticipated all this and gave the remedy to His Church through the apparitions of Garabandal. . . . The Messages received through these apparitions gave us the answer to the problems that began to beset the Church. Mary and the rosary, the Eucharist and the priesthood, were among the major things that came under attack. [The doctrines of] purgatory and hell also suffered from the onslaught of some of the new thinking. All these points of Catholic doctrine were affirmed at Garabandal in one way or another.

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Looking at the Message(s) of Garabandal from another point of view, we can say that it deals with two things: the end or purpose of Our

Lady's coming, which was the renewal of the Church or repentance and change of life which in the 1961 Message she stressed in a positive way: "First, that is, above all, we must lead good lives." Then, the means for attaining that end. All the other things mentioned in the Message are in one way or another, means directed toward aiding us to come to repentance and a holy life: prayer, the Eucharist, and sacrifice.

Prayer

Our Lady's plea for prayer is the most important part of her entire Garabandal Message. Prayer is indeed the great vitalizing factor of our spiritual life. If it is poor and inadequate, everything will be affected: the Sacraments, Penance and the Eucharist, simply will not produce in us the rich fruit Christ intended they should and every area of our Christian life will be weak and anemic.

* * *

We strengthen our feeble prayer immeasurably when we join it to that of Mary, when we ask her to present our petitions to her divine Son and intercede for us. We please our heavenly Father, for we are acknowledging and following His plan. Also, since His one desire is to give to us, for He is love and it is the nature of love to give, it delights Him, as it were, to be put in a position where He has to give because of the increased value of our prayer. That is the very reason He gave Mary to us as our Mother and perfect intercessor.

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Our vocal prayers should normally involve thinking. The thinking can be about God, Jesus, Mary, or the words of the prayers we are saying, or the mysteries of the rosary, if we are reciting that prayer. But there must



be some thinking, some working of our mind as we pray, not just an empty motion of our lips. A considerable degree of slowness is required in saying the words if the mind is to have time to function, even in a simple way.

* * *

We should therefore have tremendous confidence when we pray with, to, and through Mary. This, of course, is what we do when we say the rosary.

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Pray the rosary, Our Lady said. Pray it well. Pray it slowly, think about what you are saying.

* * *

We are body and soul and not just soul. We need to be concerned with the externals of prayer, with a quiet place, a relaxed moment of the day, a slow and deliberate pace of prayer. None of these things must be neglected . . . But, by themselves they do not suffice. They are only the

preliminary steps that lead us to the threshold of prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who lifts us over the threshold, brings us into the presence of God and helps us establish effective contact with Him. It is only by repeatedly calling on His life-giving assistance that the helpful formula for meaningful prayer given by Our Lady at Garabandal will bear the full fruit that she intended it should.

The Eucharist

One of the powerful signs of the authenticity of the Garabandal Message is that it is Christ-centered. Its Christ-centeredness comes principally from its Eucharistic thrust: Communion (taught by way of the mystical Communion given to the girls by the angel), visiting the Blessed Sacrament, prayer for priests and thinking about the passion of Jesus. Mary's mission was, and always is, to draw us to Jesus, and it is by this drawing to Jesus that we

The four girls, reading from bottom up: Mari Cruz, Jacinta, Conchita and Mari Loli are surrounded by priests during one of their ecstasies. Fr. Pelletier's writings show how deeply he was affected by Our Lady's special care and concern for priests during her appearances at Garabandal.

are able to recognize her authentic presence.

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It would seem that we are just beginning now to understand the full meaning and importance of the Eucharistic message of Garabandal. This message was seen at first as a reminder and defense of the traditional Catholic view of the Eucharist and especially of the reality of the divine presence. This understanding of the Eucharistic message of Garabandal is, of course correct and was very much needed in the days of unbelievable confusion that followed

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Ecumenical Council Vatican II.

However, the Holy Spirit, with whom Mary is inseparably bound, is leading the Church to a fuller and richer understanding of all of the channels of grace, among which the Eucharist is one of the most important and far-reaching. This fuller and richer understanding is not really something new. It is more accurately a return to the belief—and practice—of the early Church. The Holy Spirit is reminding us of something that, at least in practice, we had forgotten, namely, that the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and Penance, have important functions of healing.

* * *

Too often we freeze and get up tight when we are before the Blessed Sacrament. We suddenly become very formal. We do not know what to say. We wait for God to put some fancy words in our mouth. As nothing comes forth, we soon give up and leave, without really having said anything to Our Lord.

If we would only “talk” to him—as we talk to the friend we meet on the bus or with whom we share our coffee break, the neighbor we visit for a chat. Just start “talking” to Jesus: “Jesus, I thank you for staying with us night and day, so that we can come and talk with you.”

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When Conchita was asked . . . : “Did the Blessed Virgin speak frequently about the Eucharist?” She replied by saying, “Yes, but not strictly about the Eucharist.” She gave us many examples. For instance, she told us about the worth (*el valor*) of a priest. She compared him with an angel and said that if we saw an angel and a priest, we should acknowledge the priest first, or fall on our knees in front of the priest rather than the

angel. She said that it was because the priest consecrated, because he held Jesus Christ in his hands and the angel did not. She told us that it was a greater grace to receive Jesus (in Holy Communion) than to see her [Our Lady].

The Priesthood

We could say that one of the principal reasons Our Lady revealed herself in visions to the four seers from 1961 to 1965, was the crisis of the Church. With equal truth we could say it was the crisis of the priesthood, for this crisis is at the very heart of the crisis of the Church. As goes the priesthood, so goes the Church.

Therefore it seems evident that the urgent concern of our Blessed Mother as she spoke with the four girls at Garabandal was the crisis of the priesthood and the way to deal with that crisis. She spoke more of the priest, his problems and needs, than of any other single topic, with the possible exception of the rosary. Other things that she spoke of frequently, such as prayer and sacrifice, she more often related to priests than to any other subject. She was continually asking the girls to pray and make sacrifices for priests.

* * *

An event that illustrates just how much prayer for priests eventually became a part of the lives of the girls of Garabandal is the fact that when Conchita was under anesthesia for an appendix operation in 1969, she was heard praying for priests: “We must pray for priests . . . let us pray for priests . . . how we must pray for priests!” . . .

Penance and Sacrifice

There . . . exists a superabundance of evidence that the solution Our Lady proposed to alleviate this crisis of

priesthood, was prayer and sacrifice. . . . The sacrifice she explicitly sought above all else was fidelity to daily duty and the acceptance of all the suffering, pain and hardship it involves. When the girls asked Our Lady how to make sacrifices, she told them to be obedient and to be patient. Every day God’s providence provides disagreeable things that irk us and cause us to suffer in various degrees. He is asking us to accept all this suffering in atonement for the sins of the world and particularly of the priesthood, and to join these to the rosary and other prayers that we offer for these same intentions.

* * *

Our Lady is not asking for anything extraordinary, long hours of prayer or fasting. When Loli asked for a cross so she could suffer for priests, Our Lady told her, “. . . endure everything with patience, be humble, recite the rosary every day, pray for priests. . . .” Our Lady asked her—and asks us—to practice simple virtues of humility, obedience, modesty and especially patience. She asks us to intercede for her beloved priests with prayer and sacrifice. She knows the duties and obligations of our daily life provide us with opportunities, to offer sacrifices to God with love. If only we were continually alert to these golden opportunities, and made the most of them, how quickly the priesthood, the Church, the world, would be renewed!

Thinking about the Passion of Jesus

A word needs to be said about the relationship between penance or sacrifice and the passion of Jesus, the closing thought of all Our Lady said in both Messages. This is very closely connected with both sin and

sacrifice, which in turn are also intimately related.

Nothing, absolutely nothing has the power to motivate us more to detest sin, repent and change our lives, than thinking about the passion of Jesus. It is in reflecting on His sufferings, what our sins cost Him particularly during His passion and death, that the

Holy Spirit enlightens us on the evil of sin, and inspires us to detest and leave our sinful ways. Also, through this same meditation on the sufferings of Jesus, He stirs our hearts to atone for our sins and those of others through prayer and especially penance or sacrifice. The saints, our models, have always been powerfully

drawn to reflection on the passion of Jesus and this has been the source of their hatred and avoidance of sin, even the smallest sin. Likewise, it has been the source of their generosity in practicing penance, to atone for their own sins and those of the sinners they seek to bring back to Christ. □

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