

# No Comparisons Can Be Made



*On July 19, 1989, in Garabandal, associate editor of this publication, Marie FitzPatrick, with professional translator and Garabandal promoter, Consuelo Bascuas of Coral Gables, Florida, interviewed Jaime Garcia Llorente. Mr. Llorente is a resident of Garabandal but not a native of the village. In fact, he has done what no one else has. A successful landowner whose wife is descended from royalty, he decided to move, with his family, to take up permanent residence in Garabandal, a remote mountain village. Being an "outsider," (although fully accepted by the villagers), Jaime provides his own observations about the village, its history, its people and the effect the apparitions have had on them.*



**Q. Where are you from?**

**A.** We are from Seville, Seville and Argentina. My parents are Argentinian and my wife is from Seville. However, we have found here that the people have treated us as though we were from the village. We have never felt like foreigners. Everything I can tell you about the people here is very positive. I have always found them to be hospitable.

**Q. What made you decide to move to Garabandal?**

**A.** The reason I'm here in Garabandal is the same reason why everyone comes here.

*Top, in August, 1971, Jaime Llorente and his wife Pilar, stood in front of their then recently built home and—the apple tree where the Garabandal events began. Left, this holy card, kissed by the Virgin and given to Jaime by Mari Loli on the first visit to Garabandal, proved to be prophetic. Portions of the bottom corners have been cut off and given away as "relics."*

From the first moment I believed the Virgin was appearing here, I felt there wouldn't be a better place in which to live and raise my family than this holy place. I will never forget a statement made by Father [Lucio] Rodrigo: "If there is a window in this world through which one can contemplate heaven, Garabandal is it." I feel that Father Rodrigo believed in Garabandal because before he died he told me that the Lord granted him the grace of being confirmed in the truth about Garabandal.

Besides, I think that Garabandal, for the one who can understand it, is the village where God speaks so much to us today. And why do I say that? I remember on one occasion I ran into an elderly priest, one of those from the old guard, and in speaking with him about Garabandal, he said that Garabandal was a village so well thought of by

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all the priests that any one of them would have liked to have been the parish priest here.

On the other hand, I knew of a bishop, Monsignor José Eguino y Trecu, who died in the odor of sanctity shortly before the apparitions. He knew the village very well, having had a great deal of pastoral experience, and said that *something had to happen in this village* (emphasis added).

I must tell you an anecdote of something very beautiful that happened to me. I arrived in this village for the first time on September 15, 1965, the feast day of Nuestra Señora Bien Aparecida, patroness of the diocese of Santander. In parenthesis I want to say something that is interesting. Always during the Rosary in the village church, the Virgin is invoked under her title Bien Aparecida (truly appeared). She is invoked three times as Our Lady truly appeared, Queen and Mother of the mountain and I came to the conclusion that there couldn't be a false apparition here where Our Lady is invoked as having "truly appeared."

I was about to tell you this anecdote about the first time I came to Garabandal. When I arrived in the village, Mari Loli, whom I didn't know, gave me a holy picture kissed by the Virgin. On this holy picture appeared the Sacred Heart, an apple tree and some children. Who could have told me then that two years later I would come to purchase the plot of land where the apple tree stood and next to the place where the Sacred Heart



appeared to Jacinta. (Editor's note: What Jaime failed to mention was that he and his wife have 11 children and anyone who has been to Garabandal over the years will have remembered seeing their children and other village children playing in the courtyard of their home right next to the lane [*calleja*] where the apparitions first began.)

This holy picture was to become for me, in the future, a confirmation of the truth of the Garabandal apparitions. **Q. Can you tell us something about the history of the village?**

**A.** Garabandal is the land of the *Garabas*, a thorny plant with yellow flowers that grows wild and is abundant in this area. Garabandal then is the land of the *Garabas*, or, the land of the thorns which

reminds me a little of the Message of Garabandal especially the last part that tells us to think of the passion of Jesus. And the way I understand it, is that the Virgin wants us to see that we are

*This stone carved coat of arms built into the wall of one of the Garabandal village homes, indicates noble ancestry and bears the name "Cossio."*



living in a world of thorns and brambles.

I think that here in Garabandal we have had what we are now experiencing in the new pastoral of the true people of God where above all we live for God and in charity with our neighbor. For example, the spirituality of these villagers was so delicate that on account of a very small fault, they would not receive Communion. And they would not receive Communion unless they had gone to confession first. They are still the same way. You can see elderly people today who will go to confession because of some small fault before receiving Communion. This is an indication of how delicate their consciences are.

Another aspect of what I call "the people of God" is the profound charity they show



By July, 1970, the Llorente home was well on its way to completion. Above the wall, left center, can be seen the apple tree and beyond that, the pines.

old building believed to have belonged to the people who owned the house right next to it [now the home of Mari Cruz' mother].

**Q. Who were the first settlers here?**

**A.** The first people to settle here were shepherds and herdsmen who looked after their cows and sheep. The surname "Gonzalez" is very common in Garabandal. This name dates back to the time of the reconquest when Castile was established. And even though Gonzalez, like Garcia, is a very common surname here in Spain, I believe it has its origins in the Counts of Castile who were actually the first ones to build Spain in the 9th or 10th century. These Gonzalezes, as well as the Cosios,

came up here from the valleys to graze their cows on the mountains. At first they made *invernales* (stone shelters) and *cuadras* (fenced off areas) in the mountains. Later, they found themselves here in a place sufficiently flat at the convergence of two rivers, the Vendul and the Serrano.

**Q. Did the Moors ever get this far?**

**A.** It is believed that the Moors reached this area, but there are no traces of the Moors ever being in Garabandal.

(At this point, Jamie has shown pictures of stone carvings that are built into the outer walls of many of the village houses. He continues:)

The coats of arms [stone carvings] were brought here

by the shepherds and herdsmen because they were from noble families like Gonzalez. Gonzalez and Cosio belonged to the nobility and they brought their coats of arms with them to their new settlement. These were the coats of arms of their ancestors because don't forget, they were descendants from the Counts of Castile who were actually the first kings of Spain.

**Q. When was the village church built and by whom?**

**A.** No one knows who built the church which dates back to the end of the 17th century,

*Winter houses ("invernales") that provided shelter for both men and beasts were the first structures built by the shepherds and herdsmen who eventually settled in Garabandal.*

toward one another. This charity was always very common among them. For example, if one of the villagers was about to be married, the townsfolk would help to prepare the new home. Or whenever someone died, the neighbors would do the work in the fields for the relatives of the deceased. If someone fell ill and didn't have any close relatives, there was always some villager who would cook for them and clean their house. This custom is still observed. And even though everything has changed nowadays, these traditions and good customs are still maintained. Included also is the daily rosary. This custom has been preserved for centuries. For a period of time, the rosary was said in the chapel at the entrance to the village. This chapel is an



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around 1670 or 1680. It was built in a style quite common throughout the region so there is nothing particularly distinctive about it.

**Q. Were all the people who settled here Catholic?**

**A.** Yes, always and the parish priest represented authority in all matters. He even had the authority to administer fines to those who worked on Sundays or feast days.

**Q. What kind of political system do they have in Garabandal?**

**A.** This village belongs to a municipality made up of a number of small villages which each has its representation at the municipal council. In Garabandal, the person vested with authority is called the president. Currently, Juan José Gonzalez holds the post.

**Q. Is he in some way related to any of the visionaries?**

**A.** He is Jacinta's uncle, the brother of Jacinta's mother, Maria (R.I.P.).

**Q. How long is the term of office?**

**A.** Presently, four years.

**Q. How is the president elected?**

**A.** By the villagers during elections held every four years.

**Q. Has the village changed since the time of the apparitions?**

**A.** Undoubtedly life has changed very much economically. Before the apparitions, in times past, there was a lot of poverty here, but it was a noble poverty. They lacked necessities even though people in those days were accustomed to getting along with fewer things than they are today. This explains why on

June 18, 1961, the girls went to take apples, which were actually quite small, from a neighbor's tree. Today, no one would think of taking apples from their neighbor because now they have everything they need.

So this is the principal difference and it conditions many things, such as the customs and to a certain extent, the religiosity, especially of the young people. But these changes have nothing to do with the apparitions because this village has changed just like all the other villages.

**Q. So the many visitors to the village have had nothing to do with that?**

**A.** Actually, they have. With Garabandal being known all over the world, this has influenced the people because they live, in a certain way, the religious spirit of the people who come here. So I think the people coming here is a good thing for the village.

**Q. You mean that people coming here actually increases their spirituality?**

**A.** That's what I'm trying to say. At least it is preserving it in many ways.

**Q. How about the young adults? They don't seem to be very religious.**

**A.** The young people here reflect the very great crisis of faith that exists everywhere. No matter where you go the young people are falling away completely. But, I believe that here, they are always very impressed by the faith of the people who come.

*Before the church was built, the villagers prayed the daily rosary in this small chapel.*

There are two things happening. On the one hand you have the progressive, modernistic and hedonistic way of contemporary life supported by the media such as television and in fashions, etc., and

that is causing a loss of faith. In this progressive and hedonistic current the apparitions of Garabandal have an impact. Unfortunately, the decline of faith in the village is being blamed on the apparitions.



*"...in looking for comparisons they realize that what happened here is so much greater that no comparisons can be made."*

This is not true. The progressive and modernistic movement has coincided with the apparitions.

Actually, rather than causing a loss of faith, the apparitions have had just the

opposite effect. Thanks to the apparitions, the faith and customs here are being preserved. An example of this is something I have been able to observe. Every year, a number of the village women go up to pray the rosary in the *calleja* where the Virgin first appeared. I've seen this on June 18th.

**Q. How did the villagers react to the girls at the time of the apparitions?**

**A.** The villagers did not think it was something the girls were doing on their own like acting in a theatre. Generally speaking, the villagers would say: "We don't know if it's from God or from the devil but the girls themselves are not doing it." Actually, the people of the village compare. I'm referring to other alleged apparitions occurring in the world. These other alleged apparitions have made them stop and think and in looking for comparisons they realize that what happened here is so much greater that no comparisons can be made.

**Q. Do most of the villagers still believe in the apparitions?**

**A.** In general, the people believe in the apparitions. They talk very little about it but when the subject comes up in conversation, they react favorably. And as time goes by, they realize that what happened here was very important and extraordinary and that it cannot be explained naturally.

**Q. How do the villagers feel about all the visitors who come here?**

**A.** Generally speaking they don't mind. There is, of



*Jamie and translator, Consuelo Bascuas, stand beside the remains of the apple tree which was blown over in a storm.*

course, the human element. There may be some negative reactions or a little envy because some can accommodate visitors and others not. But generally, the people have become more understanding toward visitors from outside since many of the families

here are now "international" with relatives living in Mexico, Costa Rica or the United States.

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The interview ended with Jaime showing his interviewers his precious relic, the trunk of the apple tree (uprooted in a storm) where the entire Garabandal phenomenon began. □



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