

Rewarding Research At Garabandal

By Joseph A. Pelletier, A.A.

THIS YEAR'S TRIP to Garabandal (July-August, 1974) was one of the most pleasant that we have ever made. We were there three full days and four nights and did not have a drop of rain. And that makes a lot of difference in the village, where the streets become very muddy and the way to the pines very slippery when it rains. Also, Jacinta was there the whole time of our stay and this gave the people in our group a good chance to meet her and get photos of her.

For me personally, this was the most rewarding of my visits, with the exception of the very first one in 1968, which I made by myself along with one companion. At that time, I obtained a photostatic copy of Conchita's original, handwritten DIARY, and an excellent annotated French translation of same. These two items really launched me on my way to writing about Garabandal.

But now I am looking for new details and more depth in my new work, since the essential facts have been told in English in my two first books, *GOD SPEAKS AT GARABANDAL* and *OUR LADY COMES TO GARABANDAL*. This summer proved to be extremely fruitful in that regard. I obtained nine taped interviews while I was in the village with our group. The Lord really worked things out beautifully for me. Every time I was not involved with our pilgrimage group and had some time on my own, I was able to reach one or the other of several key witnesses of the apparitions and spend some time tape recording a conversa-

tion with them. I have recorded a number of people over the years, particularly Conchita and her mother, also Father Jose Ramon Garcia de la Riva, and Margarita Huerta from Madrid. But never did I get so many people in the course of one summer's visit to the village. I had made up my mind to do more interviewing this summer, but never in my wildest dreams did I imagine I would do so much. My praise and thanks to the Lord and to Mary who made this possible.

CLEMENTINA DIEZ

An indication that the Lord would be with me in a very special way in my interviews came the very first time I went with my tape recorder looking for someone to question about the apparitions. I was with my good friend, Father Francis Turner, who translated *GOD SPEAKS AT GARABANDAL* into French. We arrived at the square in front of Loli's house and there I saw a woman I thought was Clementina Diez. Father Turner assured me that it was indeed she. I had been told in France by someone who knows her that she would be an important person to interview. Father Turner and I went over to her and asked her if we could speak with her about the apparitions. She agreed and a short while later we were seated, interviewing her in the very comfortable home that her husband, Pepe, the village mason, had spent two or three years building. She was very open and cooperative and I came



1974
PHOTOS

*Pilar, mother of
the visionary
Mari Cruz.*



*The visionary
Jacinta.*

away with 40 minutes of taped conversation.

Clementina described the first time she saw the girls in ecstasy. Conchita mentions the event in her DIARY. She was quite candid about how excited she had been on that occasion.

PEPE DIEZ

Pepe Diez I have known for some time to be a very important witness of the apparitions. Before coming to the village, I had decided that I would make a very serious attempt to speak with him. As I took leave of Clementina, I told her of my desire to question her husband. She agreed that she would speak to him when he returned from work about my coming back to the home that evening. I was eventually able to see him that night and spent an hour-and-a-quarter interviewing him. When we started talking, he said that he was very tired because of a hard day at work. At about 10 o'clock, after speaking with him for 45 minutes, I suggested we end the interview because of his fatigue and the late hour. He said that he was quite willing to go on, because he thought what he was doing with me was very important! So, we talked for another half-hour. He believes in the apparitions and stated that it is his firm opinion that all of the people actually believe in the apparitions, although many of them will not openly admit it.

MAXIMINA GONZALEZ

I spent about a half-hour with Maximina, Conchita's maternal aunt. The things that stood out most in her mind were the two nights of screams, when the girls were given previews of the chastisement. Maximina was terrified by these events. She said that she really thought the world was going to end. Having had a disagreement with someone, she went from the scene of the screams and asked forgiveness of this person. Then, with her heart at peace, she returned to the people who were standing at a certain distance from the girls, who screamed and cried for several hours during the long apparitions.

JULIA MAZON

Loli's mother, Julia, was still heavily burdened with sorrow resulting from the death of her husband, Ceferino, two months earlier (June, 1974). With deep emotion, she told me what a good man he was. She mentioned

*Joey Lomangino
with the visionary
Conchita's
mother, Aniceta,
and Fr. Valentin
Marichalar, who
was pastor of
Garabandal at the
time of the
apparitions.*



especially his wonderful Christian charity, stating that he would never say a word against his neighbors. She left no doubt in my mind that she believes very firmly in the apparitions. She said that one could not see all the things that she had seen and not still believe, even today.

PILAR GONZALEZ

A person that I felt I might never be able to speak to was Pilar, mother of Mari Cruz. In the past, Pilar had refused even to be photographed. But, thanks to a wonderful French Brother, whom I had met previously in the village and who is friendly with Pilar, I was encouraged to try to see her. He even agreed to speak to her in my behalf. Only his unusual persuasiveness and determination were able to prevail over her strong reluctance to speak about this matter. She agreed to see me the next morning. His being around just at the right time was another of those encouraging signs which proved that the Lord was very much with me in the work that I was doing. In a way, my interview with Pilar was the most rewarding of all the nine that I had. I was deeply impressed with her own personal goodness, as I had been with Julia's, earlier. I felt greatly privileged to be able to speak so freely with her about the apparitions. Once the ice was broken, she was very relaxed and uninhibited in her conversation. Like Julia, Pilar is a staunch believer in the apparitions. As she put it: "I don't have to wait for the miracle, I have had all the proof I need." It must be remembered that many of the apparitions began for the visionaries inside their own homes. Mari Cruz was no exception to this, as Pilar pointed out to me. I left her with the impression that here was a misunderstood and falsely represented woman. My heart really went out to her.

DON VALENTIN MARICHALAR

Another person that I had not planned to attempt to speak to, was Don Valentin Marichalar, the priest who had been in charge of Garabandal at the time of the apparitions. He lives in Cosio, at the foot of the mountain and is known to be close-lipped in regard to the apparitions. But, lo and behold, as I was walking through the streets of Garabandal, whom should I see but him. I got my courage up and asked him if he would come to Conchita's house and speak

to me about the apparitions. He agreed, and we set a time. Eventually, we spent about a half-hour talking together. He also cordially accepted to pose for a number of photos.

ANICETA AND SERAFIN GONZALEZ AND JAIME LLORANTE

I had taped Conchita's mother, Aniceta, before in New York and her older brother, Serafin, last year in the village. But, I taped both of them again during this trip.

Jaime Llorante is the man from Sevilla who has built the elaborate house near the apple tree of the first apparition. He is not a witness to the apparitions, but as he spends about six months each year in the village, he is a good source of information on current trends and attitudes, and I had a long chat with him. He mentioned that if he had not built his house near the tree of the apparition and had not erected the high wall that protects it, there would probably be nothing left of the tree today. This is quite true. The tree of the apparitions at Fatima was completely taken away, piece by piece.

One of the problems of Garabandal that will never be completely solved is that of dating the events with precision. With some 2,000 apparitions having taken place, it is absolutely impossible for people to remember exactly on what day many of the things occurred. Dating the apparitions has its importance. But the main thing is to have the facts that took place. I was able to collect a considerable number of these facts this summer. Some of these facts would otherwise have been completely lost to posterity. I hope to pass on the really significant ones in my new work on Garabandal.

I think it must be quite apparent to the reader that the kind of work I am now attempting to do is a slow and tedious project. However, I do hope to have the first volume out maybe by the late fall of 1975. I can use all your prayers, and do ask you for them. I think what I am doing is important, and I would like to do the best job possible. To do the kind of book that I feel is needed requires support. Much of that support and help is the kind that only comes through prayer. May I thank those who are already praying for me and my apostolate, and the others who, as a result of this article, will begin to pray for me and my writing. God love you all. ●

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