

# Why Garabandal?

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Why Garabandal? People had asked that since June 18, 1961, when the events first began. What was the meaning of these unexpected happenings? What was their purpose? If indeed it was the Blessed Virgin as the four visionaries said, what was she doing in Garabandal? Some of the neighbors were saying that "God would never send His mother to that place and especially not to those children, because we know their parents. They're bad just like us."

In September 1961, Father Valentin, the pastor, also asked why, and Mari Loli, in ecstasy, answered from Our Lady: "*Ya se vera el 18 de Octubre.*" ("You'll see on the eighteenth of October").

Almost since the beginning of the apparitions the children mentioned a secret, a message from the Virgin which they would give to the world. With a revelation date announced, the excitement grew to a fevered pitch. Rumor changed message to prodigy, to great miracle.

So, on a terrible, rainy October 18, cars lined the road for a mile

from Puentenansa to Cosio and crowds struggled up the muddy path three miles to Garabandal. No one wanted to miss this special event so they shivered through the bitter cold day in the little hamlet high in the Cantabrian Mountains.

By late afternoon the incessant rain turned to hail and later icy water penetrated and drenched all who couldn't find shelter in the houses or underneath a balcony. Most had forgotten the children's admonitions not to expect a miracle, and sought to find for their effort and discomfort, miraculously improved health, consolation, faith, security or a solution to problems.

The hour approached. Around dusk word spread that the visionaries were headed for the Pines. The drenching rain ended; a wind from the sea blew away the dark clouds and the moon appeared. Some thought the Virgin herself would appear to all. From among the pressing multitude (some estimate the number at 3,000) on the bluff at the Pines, the four fragile figures of the little girls appeared protected by the mounted Guardia

Village scene, October 18, 1961.





Civil guards were on duty by the village church.

Civil. They handed a piece of paper to Don Valentin, who read it to himself and then handed it back to the children. The seers read the Message aloud (see page 4), hastily, in a schoolgirl tone.

Whispers broke the pre-announcement silence and grew louder as the Message was repeated from group to group. "So childish. From heaven? What is the meaning of it? Why, there is nothing new about it, just what our priests have been telling us all along." All had expected much more and they were told to do penance. This was hard to understand and to accept.

But there was nothing more. Disappointed and disillusioned they headed home. On the long, dreary walk back down the mountain to Cosio one expressed his resentment, "They should burn those girls, and their parents with them!" From this time on many stopped following Garabandal.

The scene might remind some of the reaction of the followers of an earlier miracle-worker to whom many looked to free them from bondage and who after witnessing wonders asked what they could do in order to partake in God's work. He told them, "You should not be working for perish-

able food but for food that remains unto life eternal, food which the Son of Man will give you" (Jn 6:27). "The reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives..." (Mk 1: 15). "Whosoever wishes to be My follower must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow in My steps" (Lk 9:23). But these statements were hard to understand and "from this time on, many of His disciples broke away and would not remain in His company any longer" (Jn 6:67).

Garabandal also "had to be pruned of all that savors of the human, even of enthusiasm, until only the mark of God remains."<sup>8</sup> With the announcement of this Message the purifying or pruning started, for it was too hard for many to understand or to fulfill.

Today in Garabandal and the surrounding area there is no one who denies that the strange happenings took place. It is only their cause and their importance (reason for occurring) that remain for many a mystery. The reason was given on October 18, 1961. "We must make many sacrifices, perform much penance, visit the Blessed Sacrament...we must lead good lives." □

<sup>8</sup>Garabandal Ten Years, Centro Difusor de Garabandal, Apart. 14,027, Barcelona, p. 1.

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