

# The Rosary Emphasis at Garabandal

By William F. Kuhn

*Tradition holds that in the year 1214, Our Lady explained to St. Dominic a new way to pray the Angelic Psalter, which became the rosary. He used it as a weapon against the Albigensian heresy and successfully curbed it. Some 350 years later, eastern Europe, overrun by the Moslems, was awaiting a new assault upon the Danube. Pius V had called for a crusade and in 1571, Spain and Italy responded by sending a fleet of 255 vessels and 65,000 men under Don Juan of Austria to seek out the Turkish forces. They found them on the morning of October 7, 1571, in the Bay of Lepanto (today's Bay of Patros) 290 ships and 88,000 men.*

In Rome, Pius V had been praying the rosary all through the night of October 6-7; in the morning the Christian forces prepared for battle by reciting the rosary for three hours. By evening on that Sunday, 240 Turkish vessels had been destroyed and 33,000 Moslem soldiers killed. Such is the power and effectiveness of the rosary!

Since then, 16 Popes have praised and honored this prayer, granting indulgences and encouraging the people and clergy to make constant use of this extraordinarily powerful and effective communication with Heaven. In fact, Leo XIII, within a ten year period, wrote seven encyclical letters promoting the rosary and urging the spread of its employment in the Church. Today, John Paul II is a most firm and vigorous advocate of this ancient prayer.

It is this prayer which Our Lady taught to four little peasant girls in the obscure and hidden village of Garabandal, on the approaches of the Cantabrian mountains. Why, after seven centuries of use, was it necessary to reinstruct us in this prayer? Why, when the original instruction

had been given to so illustrious a person as St. Dominic and had been praised so often by the Vicars of Christ; Why did the Blessed Virgin select four untutored little girls to receive this favor? Surely the Mother of God was aware of the coming Council. John XXIII had proposed an ecumenical council to a group of cardinals on January 24, 1959, in the Benedictine monastery close to St. Paul's Outside the Walls. This was two and a half years before the Garabandal events began. Why didn't Our Lady select some bishops, or archbishops, cardinals or the Pope himself, "Good Pope John"?

## For More Than a Hundred Years

Indeed for over a hundred years Our Lady had been giving a rosary message to the world through young, uneducated children. Lourdes and Bernadette, Fatima with Jacinta, Francisco and Lucia, and now here at Garabandal, with Mari Cruz, Jacinta, Mari Loli and Conchita. At Lourdes, Bernadette prayed the rosary before the apparition of Our Lady, and the Blessed Virgin let the beads pass through her fingers without voicing the prayers. Yet she indicated her participation in the prayers by joining

*Over the main entrance to the Basilica at Lourdes is this sculpture depicting St. Dominic receiving the rosary from Our Lady and her Infant Son.*



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in at the end of each decade, nodding her head when the Doxology ("Glory be to the Father...") was to be recited.

At Fatima, the Mother of God recommended and urged during each apparition the widespread recitation of the rosary, even adding on a short prayer, "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to Heaven, especially those most in need of Your mercy." Apparently the world did not receive that message well nor understand it clearly. Our Lady felt it necessary to try again.

Was one of her purposes at Garabandal to formulate a story in which upon sufficient reflection we might see a forecast of that marvelous Vatican Council that was on the horizon? Consider the confusion, the doubts, the crucifying denunciations and denials that clouded the Garabandal atmosphere, and compare this with

*Pope Pius V prayed the rosary throughout the night of October 6-7, 1571, before the Christian forces engaged the Turks in the decisive battle of Lepanto the following morning.*



the explosion of cross-currents and indiscreet theological speculation and ruminations during and after Vatican II, all of which led to the creation of an unofficial consistory of dissenters which has not yet disbanded, and which is leading many to adopt theories outside the doctrine of the Church. Was the experience of Mari Cruz in being excluded from the apparitions after September 12, 1962, a prediction of this disunity and contention?

Our Lady did not say the rosary with the girls all the time. The record is unclear, especially in the beginning of the events at Garabandal. The initial schematic was for the girls to say the rosary before an ecstasy began. On July 2, 1961, the girls were engaged in praying the rosary with the Blessed Mother, but no explanation of how this was being done was made. For the third of July, no report of the rosary seems to exist, and on the fourth, the girls were reciting the rosary in the church before an ecstasy. Then, until the twenty-ninth of July, we have no clear record of the rosary being prayed; but on the twenty-ninth, the Blessed Virgin asked the crowd to join in the rosary at the end of the third vision for that day. While the crowd was praying the rosary, in the middle of the third decade, the girls fell into ecstasy again; but we have no indication of Our Lady's participation. Mari Loli and Jacinta were leading a rosary in the church (the date is not certain, either the twenty-ninth or thirtieth of July) when at the end of the first decade, the two fell into ecstasy and continued to lead the prayers.

On July 31, Loli and Jacinta were in ecstasy reciting the rosary and the Virgin was participating. After this ecstasy, Loli remarked that the Virgin told them when it was time to say the Doxology and added, "Sometimes

Our Lady said the Hail Mary with us but only to teach us to say it right." This apparently is the first indication that some verbal instructions on the rosary itself were being received. But this information is quite restricted and is not full.

## Interruptions

At the Pines on August 3, one of the girls began the rosary before entering an ecstasy. In the middle of the first decade, Loli and Jacinta both fell into ecstasy. But the rosary was not completed there at the Pines since this was one of the times Our Lady brought with her the Infant Jesus, whom the girls begged to hold in their arms. After they had held the Child and made all the appropriate sounds which loving people do over infants, they descended to the church where they completed the rosary in ecstasy. On August 5, Conchita was leading a rosary in ecstasy and during the ecstasy asked why Mari Cruz was absent. Actually, that night Mari Cruz had been told to go to bed by her parents, and her absences from the ecstasies began to mount up and be noticed.

It seems rather strange to us that these prayers would be interrupted so often by what seem to be extraneous activities. The falling into ecstasy during the prayer, the immediate redirection of the girls' attention from formal prayer to delightful conversation with the Virgin on any number of subjects, the loving cuddling of the Infant Jesus, all seem to adult folks to be distractions. But to the young participants, the transfer from consciousness of this world to submergence in this special little world of their own was natural and easy, a simple expansion of their prayers. Considering the rapt attention the little girls gave the apparition, their participation in these rap-



tures was indeed prayer itself, a complete surrender to this spiritual experience, and a totally relaxed communication with their heavenly visitor.

An interesting point was noted on August 6, when during a night ecstasy the children were reciting the rosary, their voices were well modulated, the rhythm of their prayers was smooth, and their attention was firmly held. Right after they had completed these ecstatic prayers, they fell out of the ecstasy and went into the church to say a "Station."\* Then, their voices were not well modulated, they did not speak in a steady rhythm, much tone was missing, and the deep feeling previously generated by the intense attention was absent. This calls to mind the methodology with which the people of the village say the rosary each day, a rapid, sing-song rush through the prayers; and this continued long after the apparitions had ended, long after the request of Our Lady to say the prayers slowly and attentively had been made right in the village itself, to their own little girls. In spite of

this marvelous circumstance of receiving from the Mother of God clear and distinct instructions on how best to pray, so few took to heart these guidelines. It must be said that as the girls matured, however, they did accept and employ this teaching, and gradually came to follow out the instructions of the Blessed Virgin respecting prayer.

The ecstasy at the Pines on August 8, was one of the outstanding events. This is the one in which Father Luis Andreu entered and during which he witnessed the future great Miracle which is to occur at Garabandal. During this apparition, the four girls prayed the rosary. That night, after Jacinta, Loli and Conchita had been removed from the visitation, Mari Cruz remained in the ecstasy at the church. It was at this time that the Virgin taught Mari Cruz how to say the Creed and the Hail, Holy Queen. Of course, Mari Cruz did not let this opportunity escape; it had been some time since she last had seen Our Lady, and inquired of the Mother of God why she saw her less frequently than the others. Mary's answer to Mari Cruz has not been recorded, but this is indeed another facet of the events at Garabandal which needs explanation.

*From left, Mari Loli, Conchita and Jacinta in ecstasy are taught by Our Lady to say the rosary slowly, thinking about the words.*

#### **Thinking about the Words**

On the eighteenth of August, the Virgin taught the children how to say the whole rosary. Suffice it to say that Our Lady was emphasizing the need "to think" about the words and phrases that were being recited. She was not interested in the volume of prayerful phrases that we piously pronounce but in our understanding and meaning of them. By recollecting and developing these meanings as we say the rosary, our piety, knowledge and acceptance of God's concern and love glorify that God and please Our Lady whose mission is to carry these reflections happily before her Son and His Father. If, during those intimate bits of conversation our thoughts stray into avenues of worry or need, Our Lady has not forbidden that. If she could accept the brusqueness of these youngsters as they fell into ecstasy during the rosary and who immediately talked about other things that were on their minds (many less serious than mature concerns) surely she will understand small deviations from the chalk line

\*A Eucharistic devotion practiced widely in Spain. It consists of six Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glorias with the ejaculation "long live Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and may He be loved by all."



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of our formulated devotion.

On November 4, 1961, the Blessed Virgin instructed the girls to recite the rosary every day; but as they complied, the Virgin was not always there to take part in the prayer. Reports subsequent to the August 18, 1961, apparition are quite sporadic about mentioning the saying of the rosary in ecstasy. So many other new and strange actions were being witnessed that so familiar a theme as the rosary became unremarked.

## Participation of Our Lady

But the participation of the Virgin in the rosaries said during the ecstasies of which we have knowledge is clear evidence of her care and concern that we learn to say our prayers and speak to God with attention and thoughtfulness.

As we examine this participation of Our Lady in the recitation of the rosary, we mistakenly wonder how she can pray 'to herself' without becoming involved in a self-adulation which Marian theology and common Catholic belief thoroughly reject. At Garabandal, when she and the young-

sters said the rosary, the girls were praying through her to God, although their little hearts were praying to her as well. The words of the prayer seem to have us address her; but the first half of the Hail Mary is not our salutation but the reiterated Angelic Salutation and the loving salutation of Elizabeth, her cousin, found in the New Testament (Lk 1:28,42). In these verses some of the most delicate and caring evidences of God's love and mercy are contained, not only for Mary, the incomparable, but for us, too, since they relate directly to our salvation.

How completely within character is the participation of Mary in our recitations of the rosary! She remembers the first words of the prayer spoken to her by the angel of God. "Hail Mary, full of grace, the LORD is with you." Those words are stamped in her memory and seared upon her Immaculate Heart. She rejoiced in wonder then, and she rejoices in wonder still each time we address these holy words to her. Her heart leaps with joy and love in gratitude to God as our prayer reminds her again

and again of the mercy of God and the mystery of the Incarnation. Of course, Mary can participate in these prayers because they are not to her, but about what God has done for and through her.

How could Mary forget meeting with Elizabeth in the Judean hills, when she journeyed there to support her cousin in the pregnancy of John? Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit and energized by the child leaping in her womb at the approach of the unborn Christ, cries out in wonderment, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." What mother would not be happy at hearing such praise of her and her unborn child?

As Our Lady participated in the rosaries of the little girls at Garabandal, so also does she participate in our prayers, reflectively said. We could never have suspected this but for these four little innocent peasant girls in the Cantabrian mountains. Praise God!

Since the second part of the Hail Mary is indeed a prayer to her, Our Lady did not recite this portion, but merely waited for the children to complete it, when she then indicated the time for the Doxology. "Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen." So it is that Our Lady sums up her love in the Doxology along with us. Would that we take the time to think about the great favor she performs for us in joining our prayers and remembering with us the mysterious and marvelous favors of God. For if the Mother of God is with us in our prayers, who can be against us? □

*The rosary emphasis at Garabandal was obvious. The children prayed it during almost every apparition.*



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