

GARABANDAL – VISIONS OR HOAX?

Garabandal is a village in Northern Spain in the diocese of Santander. Our Lady of Mount Carmel appeared there from 1961 to 1965 to Conchita Gonzalez, Jacinta Gonzalez, Mari Cruz Gonzalez and Mari-Loli Mazon. The Virgin wore a white dress and a blue mantle. A crown of twelve stars rested upon her head. The children said she bore a close resemblance to the face of the Turin Shroud. They said, "No other woman looks like her or sounds like her".

The first error is the crown of twelve stars. In Revelation a pregnant woman symbolising Israel who brings forth the saviour child wears such a crown but she is not Mary. The Virgin of Garabandal thinks she is the woman of Revelation, what an error!

The children reported a close resemblance between the lady's face and the face on the Turin Shroud which is interesting for it is a forgery. The real Virgin would not look like a picture of Jesus that was a fake. Yet the Lady of Garabandal sanctioned the Shroud by making herself look like it.

And if the children saw a Lady at all they must have realised that some woman would look and sound like her. They are lying about what they saw and heard. It is just one of the silly mystical lies that some people indulge in.

The Virgin sent Michael the Archangel to inform Conchita on 18th June 1965 that the cup was overflowing. This cup is the symbol for the Lord's retribution. In 1961, the Virgin had said that the cup is filling up. But the world did not get worse in 1965 so the vision was just the delusion of an evil or temporarily sick mind. We would have expected a world war worse than the last two at the very least.

The Virgin says that she is warning the world to amend through the intercession of St Michael. Extraordinary! She only gave the warning because she was asked! What kind of mother is she? And why would Michael intercede with her as if she were divine? Surely saints go directly to God? Heaven is the state of intimacy with God so they would be unable to do otherwise. An intercessor going to an intercessor to talk to God for them sounds crazy.

The Virgin told Conchita in 1962 that if they see an angel and a priest they should greet the priest first for he is higher than the angel for he can turn bread and wine into Jesus Christ. This message did not come from Heaven but from a priest because it is full of clerical snobbery. The priest gets the power to do the miracle from God so it is really God who does it and not the priest. God could do it through the angels if he so wishes. So it is stupid to say that the priest is more important than the angel for the angel is holier than the priest. It is holiness not privilege and power that ought to count.

The Lady said in 1961, "A time will come when all four of you will contradict yourselves one with the other, when your families will also contradict themselves about the apparitions; you will even deny that you have seen me or Saint Michael". The children asked how they could do that and the Virgin said it was because they would become as confused as the Church in religious matters. This actually happened and Bishop Fernandez and Bishop Eugenio Beitia declared that they were certain that there was nothing inexplicable about the visions.

The problem with the prediction is that there is no evidence that it was made before the event. Only Conchita made the claim. The others did not. Marie Cruz made a retraction and though able and having stayed in Spain stood by it all her life. A real prophecy would be easily proven to have been made before the event. God would be enabling cheats if he would let it be any other way.

Page 147 of Encountering Mary says, "Conchita has said in her Diary that at the beginning of the apparition she and the other girls were told by the Virgin that they would come to deny the appearances - Conchita did not note the day on which this prediction was made." But, "her mother and aunt recalled hearing of it for the first time on the day when Conchita returned from Santander". The return referred to was when she signed a retraction for Dr Pinal. The retraction claimed "that she was no longer seeing the Virgin but that she thought her three companions were". The retraction is bizarre - if it is lies it is pointless lies. Conchita was untrustworthy. Her claim that the retractions were predicted is thereby called into question.

It could be argued that the visionaries were being very clever. That they knew that one day they would admit the hoax. So they decided to make sure that even if they did, their admission would not be accepted by everybody. They made sure that even if their admission was gospel truth it would have less effect. For a long time, this could have stopped them admitting for they saw no point in it. It is impossible to believe the Virgin would give the witnesses a message that could prevent their being believed if they said they saw nothing or something different from the Virgin Mary. She needs the witnesses. She appeared to them so that they might testify for her and to her.

The four visionaries all denied they saw anything to their parents, of all people, and one of them still denies it despite the pressure to say they happened. If they had to deny the visions they knew they could tell their parents the truth. So, what they told their parents must be taken as true. It was strange that they denied the visions but said the voices they heard and the miracle of receiving communion were real (page 90, *The Book of Miracles*). If they could deny the Virgin and the angel why could they not deny all the wonders? The children were untruthful in religious matters. They could have said they saw some visions of Mary but they denied the lot. The Church investigated and unsurprisingly found no evidence of supernatural events. Some prophecies have proven to be false.

All the visionaries but Mari Cruz retracted their confession that the visions never happened. Mari Cruz could have told the truth even if she was under pressure at the time she retracted for her life has changed. Its different now. The pressures are no more and she should have been used to dealing with pressure anyway. So the retraction must be the truth.

Conchita admitted that she told the Bishop of Santander that she no longer believed in the apparitions (page 173, *Powers of Darkness, Powers of Light*). She had been given the third degree for hours. It is nonsense to say she gave in under pressure and pretended that the apparitions were faked for she had plenty of pressure before that and never denied them. Nothing would be solved by denying the visions and losing the thousands of friends they won her. She told Cornwell many years later that she was not sure about the great sign or the promised warning or of anything (page 173, *Powers of Darkness, Powers of Light*). Cornwell asked her if this was saying she never had the visions. He knew she could not say that the main messages of the visions were untrue unless the visions were untrue. She then said she saw a Lady. She is correcting the slip here – she was sorry she admitted the visions were not true. Then she said that Mary had given her signs and messages and abandoned her making her wonder how anything could be true. Yet there is another slip here because she says the Virgin abandoned her. The visions said that was impossible even if it looked like she was forsaken for she is saying they never said that at all.

The Sceptical Occultist says that the clergy and the people in the village and the parents of the children put them under great pressure to deny the visions (page 133). Why couldn't the Virgin protect her apparitions by guiding them to make friends of the believers so that with their support they would not retract? Conchita was refused absolution by a priest in a Carmelite Mission in which she had stayed if she did not deny the visions in public. But there were other priests. And why lie to get absolution for it is a mortal sin to deny the mother of God and so any absolution would be invalid anyway. That does not explain her retraction. Honesty does. The parents had to sign the official document of retraction as well but two mothers would not. One did said she would sign if her daughter Jacinta would into ecstasy and prove the document worthless. Jacinta told her she could not make the Virgin appear at will and so the woman would not sign. Jacinta pleaded with her to sign which shows that she wanted the visions refuted. Jacinta knew that her mother did not need to sign to refute the visions so we can take it as evidence that Jacinta's retraction was sincere. Jacinta may have meant that she could not make the Virgin appear to her at all. In 1967 Bishop Montis denied the visions and the messages happened.

The psychiatrist, Noriega, who denied any supernatural aspect to the events, came out with a declaration in 1983 that they really happened and were supernatural (page 134). He said that Mary made him change his mind. He probably thought he had some revelation from her or experienced some miracle that he thought was telling him something. It only means not that his first research and opinion was wrong or dishonest but that he did his best with what he observed and now something had happened to tell him he was understandably wrong. This shows the strength of his original research. Research cannot be refuted by some strange experience that contradicts it. If somebody is in a hypnotic trance and this is verified the verification is not disproved by the verifier having real visions later that testify that it wasn't hypnosis.

The real Virgin would not have chosen people who would deny that they spoke to her. She would pick reliable people who could be trusted to give the truth and relay the messages right.

The circular, *The Warning of Garabandal*, by Joseph A. Pelletier A.A. (published in Armagh), says that Conchita said that the sign or the warning will rouse the kind of fear of God in us that leads us to God. But then you will only be looking for God in order to rid yourself of the fear and that is not looking for God at all.

The circular has a reprint of a letter in it by Archbishop Lopez who wrote that Padre Pio recognised the apparitions and encouraged the witnesses to promote them. He wrote that the visions contained nothing that was contrary to Catholic faith or morals.

Joey Lomangino testified that Pio told him that the visions were holy and authentic (page 167, *Powers of Darkness, Powers of Light*).

The Virgin claimed that the day after the miracle that will convince the world that everybody would see the body of Fr Luis who died during the visions and find it to be incorrupt (*Garabandal, a Message for the World, Armagh*). But the priest had been exhumed and was found to have decayed. Devotees will say that the decaying will be reversed on that day and he will

look as fresh as the day he died. But what is the point of making a prophecy that will be fulfilled after there is no need for signs? Prophecies are meant to be signs and here we have a prophecy that cannot function as a sign until it is not needed! It is not a sign now.

Catholic opponents to the apparition suggest that it was not Mary for she showed too much interest in mundane things while the real Virgin would focus on the religious message almost entirely. Another problem is that the Lady asked the children to bring unblest items to her for she wanted to bless them herself rather than a priest doing it. The Church has authorised only priests to do that and Mary is not a priest.

The bishop banned apparitions at the Church. The visionaries just knelt at the Church door and had their vision. The believers in the apparitions see no disobedience in this. But it shows disrespect for the bishop's reasons for banning them from the Church. Having the apparitions in the Church is disrespectful as the vision might not be authentic. Also, the Church says that false diabolic apparitions like to attract people to the healing power of the mass so that they can get the credit for the blessings. Satan tries to thwart God's ways not by totally working against them but by introducing problems bit by bit. Its good strategy. Are we to think that it is not a sin to do a striptease in a Church but its okay to do it on the doorstep?

The children touched Jesus and Mary but could feel nothing which seems to be evidence of an illusion for Jesus and Mary have bodies and Catherine Laboure rested her head on Mary's lap.

They point out that the miracle the Lady promised that would be a warning to the whole world would disprove the scriptures when they say the return of Jesus would be unexpected for it would mean we can't rest assured he will not come back until after the miracle. Yet the scriptures forbid such complacent attitudes. The Virgin was proved wrong when Padre Pio and the pope, Paul VI, would see the miracle for they are both dead. Supporters will be tempted to say that they will rise again in time for the show. But if you start assuming miracles to account for seeming failures you will end up having no rational reason to believe one seer and not another and the result will be chaos.

Another objection to authenticity is the fruits of Garabandal. Conchita married a divorced man which was a terrible sin according to the Lady who appeared to her and it is a problem why she lives in America rather than Garabandal where the miracle is supposed to be destined to appear. She says she does not remember the visions anymore. The real Virgin would not let such a thing happen. Neither would the Devil so Conchita was a fake. At other times she says the Church alone is to decide if she saw Mary and most of the time she says she thinks the visions were not from God. Since Garabandal says John Paul II is the last pope it follows that when the next pope is appointed there ought to be a schism for the Garabandal supporters won't be able to recognise him as a real pope. That is schism even if they do not form a new visible Catholic Church. And the trouble is that trusted mystics of the Church say the next pope will be very very holy – meaning he will be outstanding among the popes for holiness. Catholics say that the Devil is happy to bring about conversions and cures over Garabandal with the goal of tearing the unity of the Church apart. And also a fake pope would only be allowed to exist if there was a real pope at the same time for if a fake pope could be made without a rival then we could query the authenticity of any pope. Because an apparition is optional for belief any apparition that makes such a serious claim can only be false for it is overstepping the mark.

The successor of Pope John Paul II, the former Cardinal Ratzinger who took the name of Benedict XVI, is regarded as a more orthodox Catholic than any of the previous Vatican II popes. The Garabandal prophecies were false. John Paul II has a bigger chance of being a fake pope than Ratzinger. But one thing for sure is, there is nothing about Benedict XVI's holiness that is that remarkable.

The Virgin's Second Formal Message given on 18th June 1965 went, "As the message I gave on October 18th has not been put into practice and made known to the whole world, be advised that this is the last one. Before the cup was filling up but now it is overflowing. Many of the cardinals, many of the bishops and many of the priests are on the road to damnation and are taking many souls with them. ... You are now receiving the last warnings." The believers who believe in other apparitions that took place after Garabandal say she is saying she is giving the last Garabandal warnings not that she will never warn us again in other apparitions. If they are wrong then all the apparitions taking place since such as those at Medjugorje are false apparitions if Garabandal was authentic.

There are four reasons why the message is speaking of the final warning meaning the final apparition.

The first reason is that the message speaks only of corruption in the Church and the world and that the chastisement is looming so it is vague. Yet she attaches supreme importance to this message. Could you imagine her appearing elsewhere with a more detailed message and not declaring it to be of greater importance and urgency? When the Virgin wants supreme and unique importance for her message in Garabandal that forbids any other apparition that does the same with a different or more detailed message.

The second reason is that she warns about the excessive corruption in the Church when she says that the cup of corruption has run over. It would only get worse as time goes on so that nobody could trust the Church decisions on whether apparitions are true or false so a reliable Church authentication of Garabandal would be imminent and essential. And apparitions that do not subject themselves to Church discipline are dangerous for it is not apparitions that the Church is run by but bishops and the pope who have been appointed by Christ. No true apparition will happen when it can't expect authentication by a legitimate and orthodox bishop so by implication she is saying Garabandal is the last true apparition. She is also indicating that Garabandal will be quickly accepted by the Church before it is too late. But this proved false.

The third reason, she expects the message to be promoted all over the world which is a call on the Church to believe the apparition and perform this promotion. The message will not have much effect unless the Church accepts it as an authentic revelation. It needs to put it first above all apparitions. It needs to reject apparitions such as Medjugorje which have other messages that the apparition wants promoted.

The fourth reason is that nothing in the text indicates that the Virgin ever intends starting up a new apparition site in future. Therefore she should be taken literally and we must ignore fancy interpretations put on it by people who want to forget that she said it was the last ever warning.

The apparition is the most condemned one there ever was. Conchita certainly lied about Pope Paul VI knowing the date of the great miracle she promised and said he would live to see it. Her lady made a very basic error for the great miracle was her main message and she failed to tell Conchita the right date though she tried. She was a false prophet.

Garabandal is not the great honour of Mary that it is said to be.