

SALLY READ

ANNUNCIATION



A CALL TO FAITH
IN A
BROKEN WORLD

IGNATIUS

Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction: Why?

1. And he came to her (Luke 1:28)

How God comes to us; knowing Mary; the veil and the merciful gift of prayer; the Eucharist as our Annunciation: a new way of being with God; how you are longing for him and he for you; don't mistake a man for God; the importance of knowing God's eyes on you; Mary's experience, and my experience, are yours.

2. Do not be afraid (Luke 1:30)

How anxiety shackles us; how faith keeps us whole; we are God's family—but don't be overfamiliar; the importance of intimacy and awe; how God transforms our suffering: he is the ultimate artist, and he completes everything we have the courage to begin; becoming the double-hearted Christian; how you need to give up your misery and how the Mass helps you to do it.

3. Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord (Luke 1:38)

Who am I? Being known and being named; the mortification of the stranger; knowing that our identity is in God; knowing who Mary is helps you know who you are; how God chooses to need you—the importance of touch.

4. Let it be to me according to your word (Luke 1:38)

The fiat of motherhood and every vocation; the importance of nourishing the city of God within us; the necessity of silence; learning his word; how his language forms us; suffering with Christ; how the sacraments shape and support our lives.

5. And the angel departed from her (Luke 1:38)

Being (happily) wounded by God and by man; when prayers seem to go unanswered; when prayer seems impossible; choosing the path of life; another reason for the Mass—how God wants you.

Works Mentioned

NOTES

More from Ignatius Press

And he came to her (Luke 1:28)

The summer that you were six, you woke in your grandparents' house in Sardinia, whispering:

“Guess who I dreamed about!”

Your face was joyful, transformed. You bounded out of bed and downstairs. Your place was set at the head of a long table, and your grandparents sat beside you as you regaled them with the details of your vision—how the Virgin Mary had been asleep beside you in the empty bed in your room and you saw her rise, with her long brown hair loose down her back, and walk downstairs. It was a fragment—but it was vivid, and you told it with all the rapture of a seer. An aunt from next door arrived with cake and sat listening too. In the sunny, dead silence of the olive grove, beneath the stillness of the red mountains, the dream had the space to be the event that it was. Your audience lapped up every detail as though they, too, could touch something sacred. It was, perhaps, your first experience of *feeling* near to God—near to the one who is nearest.

God has many ways of coming to us. Maybe your dream was just a dream. But in your face I saw what it was that you tasted. As a young child you couldn't get enough of hearing about Mary, who came and went at Lourdes, Fatima, and Guadalupe; you couldn't get enough of hearing about angels and their visitations. You loved hearing about that afternoon meeting of the Annunciation (for I imagine it happened during the quietness of a siesta). But all those stories made you wonder, “Why does nothing happen when I pray?” and “Why does God have to be so *invisible*?”

And he came to her.

Those words are enchanting. They sound like the end of a story or the answer to a prayer. They contain the swooping relief of when God reaches out to us. There is nothing better: it is an intimation of heaven.

God does come to people, and in all kinds of ways (and the dream that lit you for so many days was, I would say, no mere accident). The Bible is full of these stories—Moses seeing the burning bush, Jacob wrestling an angel. Centuries later, Julian of Norwich was gifted with many “showings”; Saint Faustina had her visions of Christ. The list of mystical experiences is surprisingly long and inevitably varied. Of course, the “he” of the Annunciation is a messenger, the Archangel Gabriel, not God himself. But the archangels' names end with “el”, which means “God”, and he is etched into their nature as well¹—so they are almost like echoes of him, one way he reaches us in extraordinary circumstances.

Through history, God has sent angels (and he still does), but there was no other encounter like the Annunciation—for this particular meeting between an angel and a woman has a direct impact on your own encounter with God. It doesn't stop at the fact that Mary brought Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ into the world. I want to show you how she solves our sometime frustration in prayer now—when we may not feel his presence, when we are stumped by the mystery, when we do not feel that he comes to us at all.

To begin with, let's think about Mary that afternoon.

When Gabriel came, she was not much older than you as I write this now. In the Fra Angelico *Annunciation* we have on the wall, she is stooped, and simple as a cutout paper doll, but the angel bows to her (she is the only nondivine person to whom an angel could bow). El Greco painted a nonchalant Mary in the face of a menacing angel with black wings. Botticelli has a fearful Mary almost pushing the angel away. There is a modern painting by the American artist John Collier where Mary is a dreamy suburban teenager wearing saddle shoes and holding a book. She could be you. But she is not Mary. Art tends not to *get* Mary. It's as if we dare not understand her too well. But if only we could try to see her as she really is, we would surely better understand how to pray.

When the angel came, it is more than probable that Mary was already praying. Long before Saint Paul's exhortation (1 Thess 5:17), she would have been praying without ceasing. Mary is immaculate, which is another way of saying that she is exceedingly close to God,

which is another way of saying that she constantly prays. Prayer is and always was a part of her nature, and her prayer that afternoon was the deepest and most receptive *listening*.² Only she, with the Holy Spirit, could make him flesh. It was an act of absolute, loving attention. Although Gabriel's greeting disturbed her (we will talk more about that later), there was a kind of seamlessness with Mary's prayer and the angel's coming. She was waiting. She was longing. She was listening. The gravity of the angel's visit matched the gravity of her love for God.

This kind of ceaseless prayer makes me think of Adam and Eve before the Fall—although we can hardly imagine how life was for our first parents. They lived in God's gaze in a way we can't grasp. We know that God walked in the garden (Gen 3:8) and that they spoke with him (Gen 2:16). Digging the earth, eating the licit fruit, talking with one another and their Creator, they lived in the warmth and the clarity of his nearness. They were followed and they were loved—and they knew it. There was no pain, no confusion—they didn't have to wonder who they were, or why they were doing what they were doing, or if it was good enough. The lines of a blade of grass would have shivered in their minds with a profundity that we can hardly fathom.

When they were ousted from paradise, a wall went up between God and man—at least, that is how it would have felt to them: cold, concrete. Actually, people since have called it a “veil”, and this is a better word—because veils can be transparent in some lights; they can move in a breeze. They don't block out communication: through them you can listen and talk. The gift of prayer is God's first work of mercy after the Fall. Millennia later, Mary, on her side, was pressed as close to the veil as she possibly could be. And in faith, she waited.

But our faith is not as perfect as hers. This veil separating you and God is still a separation. It is the cause of your sense of abandonment and your doubt (and you're far from alone in this). It was the root of your temptation to want the party (right in front of you with its visible lights and gifts) more than First Communion. It is the veil we need to try to understand.

I can imagine how empty prayer might have seemed to you as a little girl. We close our eyes, we speak some words, we get no

audible answer. Perhaps we pray for something, and it doesn't seem to come to pass. You're not wrong in your sense that God is distant: we are eons away from him, across territory so dark it seems to muffle ears, eyes, and mouth. That darkness is our own consciousness of the distance we have to travel to reach him. I don't mean the physical endlessness of a long road; I mean how much we have to be purified to be with him in heaven. But through Mary, through her listening, he has given us particular ways of being close, even now.

When you were small and we went to Bungay, England, in the summer, you would hold my hand to walk the wall that borders the Saxon-towered Holy Trinity Church. We would cross the street to the grounds of Saint Mary's Church and play hide-and-seek in the ruins of the twelfth-century Benedictine priory, among the remnants of its grey stone walls and knocked-out Gothic windows. Then I would take you to wave at the gargoyles of Saint Mary's Church itself.

Saint Mary's is vast and intact. It is majestically redundant—because there are not enough Anglican believers now to keep this huge church alive as a place of worship. Like Holy Trinity and the old priory, Saint Mary's was stolen by King Henry's men during the Reformation and given to the Church of England. Henry dissolved the priory, and the fire of 1688 destroyed much of what was left of it. As we paused in the church porch, we would read the list of its prioresses dating from 1228, beginning with *Alicia*.

Inside the church, the walls are whitewashed; it is cold. Henry's men let be the devilish gargoyles outside and the griffins that stand above an emptied niche inside, but they surgically removed images of Our Lord, Our Lady, and the saints. Despite everything, the altar is mighty; above it the Ten Commandments were inscribed on the wall in the eighteenth century.

We would kneel at the long wooden altar rail close to where nuns five hundred years before would have knelt each morning, and we would pray for them. But there is no tabernacle. I would feel as if I were praying on the tundra. There is a terrible, chilly absence, an eternal Holy Saturday. I would sit you down and explain the history of all of this to you, or try to. Then we would walk to the Catholic church next door, which was built, as soon as it was legal to do so,

in the early eighteenth century. As we entered I would ask you to listen to the richness of the silence. We would light a candle at Mary's statue. We would genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament. Christ, in grey stone, blessed us before a crowd of angels, and we sank to our knees in his presence.

Do you feel his presence? It is a reasonable question.

One winter evening, shortly after my own First Communion, I left you at home with Dad and drove into town, alone. The black sea was visible only where it broke white, and the black sky was empty aside from a bright full moon. The town was deserted, but at the Church of San Giuseppe, Adoration was taking place. As I knelt in a pew near the front, my eyes fixed on the white Host and the words died in my head. Every prayer that I had planned vanished. I could not shift my gaze, nor could I blink. I was unable to move—that is, if I had had to move I could have done so, but it would have required an unusual effort. Yet the effort of staying absolutely still for ten minutes, twenty, was no effort at all. I had no idea of time; I seemed to be suspended.

Occasionally, I heard my own breath catch. Everything seemed to rise up in me—as though I was on the verge of laughter or shouting out for joy—but I made no sound. If it's possible, I could feel love grow as something physical within me. I felt as though I were small and had been lifted up in someone's arms: weightless.

Remember that sometimes (often) true prayer has no words; that is, always remember that words help *us*, not him. No thought, no demand, no petition is necessary. In reality, all demands and anxieties vanish in God. Time vanishes in God. There is no time in deepest prayer because we are pressed towards him, and sense, if we can be still enough, eternity. And whatever we may feel, he is lifting us and holding us still so that we can look into his eyes.

Behold, you are beautiful, my love,
behold, you are beautiful!
Your eyes are doves
behind your veil. (Song 4:1)

That winter evening in the church, before the Blessed Sacrament, God was thinning the veil. I want to say tearing away the veil,

because that is how it felt. I almost cannot imagine being nearer to God in this life. The experience gave me the certainty of the completeness of heaven, its ecstasy and peace; it assured me that God will call us by our true name, and we will know perfectly that we are perfectly known, that we have always been known, always been loved, and always been seen. In Scripture it is written that angels have many eyes (Rev 4:8). The eyes of God and of his principalities are everywhere; they dwarf the cameras and screens that we focus on ourselves today in a futile attempt to feel valuable and real.

This utter motionlessness and wordlessness before the Blessed Sacrament is one kind of gift in prayer. The fact that I experienced it illustrates well that such things are unexpected (though not random) and are not necessarily given to the most holy or deserving. What these experiences do show in abundance is God's pressing back to us through the veil—or rather our *sensing him doing so*.

That night, I moved to a pew farther forward for Vespers, and I became aware of those around me: the nuns in white at the front, a young man kneeling with a rosary, an old man in a raincoat trying to stow his umbrella silently under the pew in front. No one seemed struck; no one seemed shaken.

We can never know what other people experience before the Blessed Sacrament. Some people will say they feel “nothing”, and this is not wrong. In Adoration, Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta once wrote on a piece of paper, “Father, please pray for me—where is Jesus?”, and passed it to the priest at the front.³ She, who had had direct inspirations from God in prayer, spent decades in a dark night where she could not feel his presence. Remember: he owns the veil.

But on Holy Thursday in Santa Marinella, when the Blessed Sacrament is moved to the altar of reserve through a packed church, I often witness something else again. For that late hour, there are often very young children, dressed up in frocks or waistcoats. There are the scouts and nuns, of course, but there are also young men and women in jeans whom you may not see regularly in Sunday Mass. The church is always packed. And when

the silver box containing the Blessed Sacrament is borne high by the priest, you can feel a silent urgency as people struggle to reach it—they surge, between people, around pews. There, among the white chrysanthemums and purple and yellow freesias at the side altar, people go down on their knees on the stone floor for a long time.

A teenager in a denim jacket might stand for several minutes in stricken prayer before the box. As the night goes on, a grandfather might carry in his pajamaed granddaughter and hold her on his knee before the Blessed Sacrament. It is as though we are all visiting a sickbed, a deathbed. No one seems to know how to leave. You know that these are not people who are religiously demonstrative, or demonstrative in any way, and this seems far beyond mere custom. There is heavy sobriety in the air; love and grief.

These people I see every year would probably not be described as mystics. Yet they all seem to know the reality of Jesus Christ made flesh within that box. Only four hours east of here, in Lanciano, a doubting priest experienced a Eucharistic miracle. At the words of Consecration, the bread and the wine changed into flesh and blood. These people do not seem to need the graphic nature of that miracle. They seem to understand the quiet fact of Christ's presence—at least on that particular night.

This miracle, the flesh and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, is God's way of rupturing the veil—of touching our flesh as we touch his; it is another great sign of his mercy. The week before your First Communion, I told you that receiving him would be like letting him embrace you. I can't ever ask you if you experienced any such thing. I pray you sensed something in the darkness of your body and your prayer—but *how* we perceive something doesn't change what is *there*.

When Jesus returned to Bethany after Lazarus' death, Martha rushed out into the street to beseech and reproach him, but her sister Mary stayed in the house, let down and wounded by his absence during the illness and passing of her brother. She did not understand why he had not come sooner, so she preferred to stay with her own misery in the house. Jesus called her (Jn 11:28). He called her out of her darkness, and then she went out to meet him and sank at his feet.

God does call us. He makes this gift of showing himself, of speaking, of making us understand his presence. He has done it countless times over the millennia—he did it to me. But it is an inexplicable gift. None of us can earn it. For many, and for most of us, there will be long periods when we do not feel his presence and we have to content ourselves with *knowing* that he does not leave us desolate (Jn 14:18). This is why he left us his Body to nourish us physically (Jn 6:51–58). This is not empty metaphor—anyone who tells you that it is misunderstands how intimately God wants to communicate with you. When we are sitting in a dark room like Mary of Bethany, not comprehending the action of God in our lives, Christ's call comes to us through the ringing of the bell for Mass.

Think of Our Lady, that afternoon when the angel came to her. It is because of that girl's steady faith and listening at the other side of the veil that you, too, can bring him physically into yourself. Every Communion is its own Annunciation: the angels are present; you give your attention and trust and consent to do his will; his physical presence comes to abide in you.

The world didn't break open when Mary said yes—but that doesn't mean she didn't conceive the Son of God. I doubt that the birds left their places on the trees. If someone spoke to her, I doubt in that moment that she would have heard him.

Give God a piece of that stillness. Give him your listening. And *know* what is happening even if you don't feel it, even if the world isn't set on fire. Mary is handing him to you. She, through God, has broken the veil in a new way, one that doesn't require any kind of clever prayer or florid mysticism. She has given you his simple presence. It is in the quiet form of a circle of bread.



My love, you are not the only one who suffers when you feel distant from God—he suffers too. He wants you with him. This is not a long-distance relationship gone tepid. This is two people constantly searching for each other and longing for union. And just as I have talked of God's action and the ways he comes to us, you, too, are

searching. And the more you search, the closer to him you will ultimately be.

Yes, Mary is immaculate, but with her you share something vital that all the saints possess: an enormous and intensely desiring heart. I first realized this through looking back to your early Christmases, and mine.

Your English grandparents were not religious at all, but your grandmother loved Christmastime, and not a single room in our cottage went undecorated. She would make yards of paper chains, licking and sticking, and pin them to our old wooden beams. The tree was always so tall that it bent where it touched the ceiling, and the coming of Santa Claus was so real to me that I vomited in excitement one Christmas morning. But nothing dwarfed the pile of presents that filled the pillowcases we left by the fireplace. It was the sheer copiousness of packages that thrilled me. My third Christmas I carried all my new toys to a corner of the playroom and sat guarding them with your uncle's toy gun. It wasn't the contents that interested me; it was the incredible fact of their existence.

So when you came along, I made your Christmases as near to my own as I possibly could: twinkling lights, miraculous icing-sugar footprints across the floor on Christmas morning, and a mountain of presents that caused you, as a two-year-old, to fall to your chubby knees in awe.

Then, at five or six, you began to speak of a sadness on Christmas night—it was all over for another year, and you were extremely tired after all the excitement. But it became evident, too, that the longing you felt wasn't for toys; that your list to Santa (which came to include “a four-poster bed” and “a cloud”) was about the furthest reaches of your heart, and presents simply failed to fill it.

You see, your heart is a vast and quite frightening thing. It was designed for God, and so, like a vertiginous and beautifully carved stone cathedral, it cries out to be filled with a voice, with love; it aches to be animated by a Spirit large enough. When you were a baby, my presence often contented you wholly (though, even then, there were nights of unexplained grief when I could not console you). But as you grew, the cathedral of your heart needed more. At first the desire was for toys, acres of bright plastic; but you soon

realized that they sat in a heap in a corner of this structure and made no impact at all.

Remember the woman who met Jesus at the well, the one who had had five husbands? She was thirsty—not just for water but for peace and love, for something that would not make her say when she sank into a chair at the end of the long day, “Is there nothing else?”

Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. (Jn 4:14)

God quenches our thirst. God fills the cathedral of our hearts. We no longer need company for the sake of company; we don't need an endless supply of toys, bags, shoes, or alcohol.

That insatiability that you felt as a child on Christmas Day is evidence of a heart made for God. It is that insatiability that can, if misdirected, lead to alcoholism or obsessive love in any of us. When you were little and became overtired and discontent you would say, “I want to go home.”

“We are home!” we would all cry. But I knew the yearning behind the words—you were longing for the happiness only God can give, of completion and peace.

It's not just you and the woman at the well who are longing. Mary at the Annunciation was longing too. We're used to seeing images of Mary as replete, even vapid. I dispute them. I say she was on fire with longing. Some of the earliest accounts of the Annunciation say that Mary went out with a jug to fetch water⁴—just like the Samaritan woman. And Mary, too, was longing for her God, because the physical Christ had not yet entered her life. God could embed himself in Mary precisely because she was yearning so intensely for him. Her genius of sanctity was in knowing the vastness of her own heart and knowing that only God could fill it.

This knowledge is the goal of every alcoholic in Alcoholics Anonymous; it should be the objective of every person who thinks a relationship will fulfill him entirely; it is the antidote to believing that money or power will complete us. If the world had this knowledge, it would mean the cessation of violence and war.

Like the Samaritan woman, you will very likely fall in love (my heart quakes at the thought). You will sleep, but your heart will be awake (Song 5:2). You will rise from your bed and seek him. You will think of him day and night. He will be the first thought of the morning, and the last thought before you sleep; you will dream of him all night. Some of us fall far, long before we meet the person we are supposed to spend the rest of our life with, and any kind of love—like money or alcohol—can try to lay claim, falsely, to the vast expanse of our hearts.

I first fell in love when I was fifteen—or thought I did. He was nineteen. He introduced me to Stanislavsky and J.D. Salinger and gave me another life separate from my schoolgirl existence. When, after three months, he ended the relationship, I was broken. Even then I knew what my devastation consisted of: when he disappeared he took his idealized perception of me with him. More than that, he trashed it. He had been mistaken. Even then, at fifteen, I recognized it was not *him* I missed—his big brown eyes and endless jokes. I felt as though he had destroyed my *self*. He had held up a mirror and created an image of me that I believed in. It was the first time I had consciously seen myself reflected in someone else's eyes. He had thought me beautiful—no more. He had thought me fascinating—no more. “The mirror crack'd from side to side.” Like the Lady of Shalott imprisoned in her tower,⁵ I was forced to look at reality, which for me meant a world without my lover's capricious gaze, and also without God. I thought it would destroy me.

This is why it is important to remember: any earthly love is only ever the barest intimation of your love for God and his for you. Remember that no man will know you as God does—and therefore no man will define you, save you, or break you. When you feel the intense pain of something or someone on this earth enslaving you, remember, *that* is your searching for God. *That* is your immense heart looking to be filled. But the immensity of your heart is made for and can be filled entirely only by the breadth and length and height and depth of God (Eph 3:18). Once you recognize this, you will feel him come to you: it is the sudden knowledge of knowing someone you cannot see is there in the darkness.

When it seems that God is distant, it is vital to remember his gaze. When Mary of Bethany hid in the darkness of her house, she knew that Christ was outside. She may have doubted in those moments, she may not have understood what he was doing, but she knew that his gaze was on her—and *he came to her*. He knew her longing and her distress. Ultimately, he did not disappoint her.

Prayer is practicing the knowledge of God's eyes upon you. He is the only one who should act as your mirror. Prayer should be God's gaze drenching you, as the rain drenches the grasses in the garden, vivifying their greens and making them stand taller. God's gaze awakens you to everything you were created to be. It enables you to leave the darkness and to walk to him.

It seems to me that as people pray less, the need to be gazed at becomes more. People photograph every frame of their life: the fact of it happening and resounding in their own heart is not enough. As soon as something happens—an engagement, a holiday—we tell it to the audience of social media. We package it. It is like being given a flower and pressing it instantly into immortality so the juice and scent are gone. Perhaps people don't know that this is also about searching for God, about being *seen* in a world that denies his eyes. The messages we post are often blanket, indiscriminate. Social media has removed the niceties of how we frame a message for different people: if we're announcing a pregnancy it should be done gently to the woman who wants children but has none, more enthusiastically to grandparents.

But how would it feel to have an experience and not to post it, not to share it? How would it feel to fall in love, accept a proposal of marriage, and not tell anyone—at least at first? I think people are afraid. They think that experiences are not real unless they have an audience. They are scared of the overwhelming silence in the cathedral of their hearts.

But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. (Lk 2:19)

What happens to us needs to mature in silence. It needs to take root in us and therefore become unshakable. It needs to find its place in the Reality of God. Because only then, in the illuminating context of

the Creator's gaze, can we understand what something *is* and how it relates to everything else. We need to understand that we have worth without an audience; that we should not measure ourselves by the world's criteria: money, numbers, and what plays well to the crowd.

When you are waiting for God to come to you (life is waiting for God, though more accurately he is waiting for you), always know that his gaze is your spiritual oxygen, your context, and truth.

O LORD, you have searched me and known me!
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.
You beset me behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me. (Ps 139:1–5)



The evening before your First Communion when you wondered why and felt God's distance so acutely, my answers may have made little impression on you. But you did go forward and open the door to Christ, and I will never forget the expression on your face as you walked back across the lawn after receiving him, to take your seat. The May day was sunny, the same date as the First Communion of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, and the priest read aloud from Thérèse's own recollections.

I remember hearing her certainty and, with a smile, comparing it with your hesitation. But while you may have wobbled the night before your big day, it seems to me that this was mainly because you understood the gravity of what would take place.

Notwithstanding the commonality of religious experience, we all sense God in different ways, at different points in our lives. He speaks to us all in particular ways, like a father with many children, all of whom need a slightly different style of parenting. He is the

opposite of social media, with its sledgehammer proclamations. He will come to you when and in the way that is best for you. He will give you knowledge of him to the extent that you are capable of bearing it. (Who among us, now, could stand before the perfect face of God? We would burn up in his beauty. The faults in us would blacken and burn like tissue paper against a flame.) He even withholds his consolations for certain people in ways that bring out their most heroic best (think of the extraordinary mission of Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta through her dark night; think of her now, so close to God). And remember, too, that credible private revelation (or "mystical experience") is never just for the person who receives it. Julian of Norwich stressed this,⁶ and we take comfort from her visions and feel closer to God because of them. He chose to speak through *her* to reach *us*.

I think one of our greatest errors is in thinking that we are quite alone in our relationship with God. Of course, in one sense, we are just that: intensely alone with our Creator. But in another sense, we are more connected to each other—to family, to friends, to previous generations and generations to come, to the whole of humanity—than we can ever realize here on this earth. Mary's experiences are also yours, and she prays for you. My conversion belongs to you too. Every valid experience in prayer, every message received is meant for every Christian. Your grandfather's Godless life is yours, and so is his skepticism and his cynicism. He never knew you. But your prayers in a house that he never imagined can touch the days of his life twenty-five, forty, sixty years ago, as an opening of grace that we cannot quantify or understand. Mary's prayers that quiet afternoon reach like a river to millennia ahead: they bring you to her Son.

In the meantime, when you feel spiritually cold, wait like Mary of Bethany for his call. Know that you exist in his gaze. He will come to you, because you were made for that. It's true that he is very far away. But the beauty is this: Christ is with us on our journey. He came to us to lead us back to the Father. He is walking with you in your blindness and your feeling of not being heard. Like Mary our Mother, accept him physically into the depths of yourself in Communion—for this is no metaphor. A priest once told me that every Communion is a mystical experience. It is true: our Mother said yes to her own extraordinary encounter so that you can encounter him too.