

## **Apparitions**

Apparitions have always been part and parcel of the way God communicated with his people. Instances of visions have been reported throughout the Bible in one form or another. Some visionaries come readily to mind: Abraham (at Mamre), Moses (in the desert), Solomon (at Gibeon), Zechariah (John the Baptist's father, in the temple), Peter, James and John (at the Transfiguration), and Paul (on the road to Damascus). Each of these seers did what was requested of him, and thereby caused great graces to descend on his fellow human beings.

The following are three apparitions described in the Bible. All occurred at a moment in time when civilization clearly needed the intervention of the loving hand of God.

### **The Angel Gabriel**

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." (Lk 1:26–28, NAB)

Mary was subsequently asked to be the mother of Jesus. Her acceptance of God's word from the angel gave to the world its Saviour, Christ Our Lord.

### **Jesus (after his death)**

As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them. But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself." (Lk 24:36–39, RSV)

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." (Jn 20:24–29, RSV)

Through the disciples' faith in the resurrected Lord, the sacred and imperishable message of the gospel has been brought to every corner of the globe.

### **The Holy Spirit**

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of

them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1–4, NIV)

Then Peter went outside and addressed the crowd. He cooperated with the Holy Spirit; and through his cooperation, many were converted to the Lord.

As part of his speech, Peter quoted the prophet Joel.

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” (Acts 2:17–18, RSV)

“He spoke to them for a long time using many other arguments, and he urged them, ‘Save yourselves from this perverse generation.’ They accepted what he said and were baptised. That very day about three thousand were added to their number.” (Acts 2:40–41, NJB)

And thousands upon thousands more would follow as the centuries went by.

### **Mother Mary**

Apparitions may include an invitation to participate in God’s plan of salvation. It may seem too good to be true. Cooperation with God can help save thousands of souls. If Mary is appearing in some parts of the world, and if she is relating the Lord’s call to this sinful generation to turn back to him and live the gospel, think of the immense good that will come upon the world if we do what God in his mercy is urging us to do through his loving mother.