

WEEK TWO:

Visions and Wonders

We look at biblical stories of visions and divine intervention as we consider the belief that the Virgin Mary has made miraculous appearances in various places and reflect on our own experiences of sacred places and miracles. Margarita Romo describes how this impacts her work.

SCRIPTURE READING: GENESIS 28:10-13A, 15-19

¹⁰Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. ¹²And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac..." ¹⁵Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." ¹⁶Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!" ¹⁷And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." ¹⁸So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹He called that place Bethel; but the name of the city was Luz at the first



SCRIPTURE READING: JUDGES 13:2-3,5B, 15-16, 19-20



²There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren, having borne no children. ³And the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, “Although you are barren, having borne no children, you shall conceive and bear a son...It is he who shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.” ¹⁵Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, “Allow us to detain you, and prepare a kid for you.” ¹⁶The angel of the Lord said to Manoah, “If you detain me, I will not eat your food; but if you want to prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the Lord.” ¹⁹So Manoah took the kid with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the Lord, to him who works wonders. ²⁰When the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar while Manoah and his wife looked on; and they fell on their faces to the ground.

SCRIPTURE READING: REVELATION 1:10-19

¹⁰I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ¹¹saying, “Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.” ¹²Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. ¹⁴His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force. ¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, ¹⁸and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades. ¹⁹Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this.”



WEEK TWO: REFLECTION

The Bible contains many stories of people seeing visions of heavenly beings or of being visited by them. In the book of Genesis, Jacob names and sets up markers to identify each of the places where he has a miraculous encounter with God. The author of Revelation has a very symbolic vision of Jesus in heavenly glory.

Since the third century, the Roman Catholic Church has recorded miraculous appearances of Mary that have occurred in specific places. Some are only witnessed by a single person; others have been witnessed by a group of people. The church has criteria for establishing the authenticity of such events. Appearances judged “worthy of belief” have occurred in India, Mexico, Ireland, Portugal, and in a number of locations in France.

What is perhaps the most well-known of these events occurred in France in 1848, when a 14-year-old girl named Bernadette Soubirous reported seeing Mary as many as eighteen times. The Virgin showed her a spring, the water of which could provide healing, and said that a church to which pilgrims could come should be built. As many as six million pilgrims visit the shrine each year; the church has documented 69 miraculous healings taking place there.

Since 1981, the appearances of Mary to six children in the village of Medjugorje in what was at the time Yugoslavia, now Bosnia-Herzegovina, have received a lot of attention, both positive and negative. In 2019, Pope Francis authorized making pilgrimage visits to the town, without giving any official approval of the events that have occurred there.

Martin Luther expressed skepticism about miracles unless they supported and did not distract from faith in Jesus Christ. In 1524, he wrote:

“What can be said that is more marvelous than this, that the Son of God assumes the flesh of man and is born of a virgin? What is more astounding than this, that the Son of God, battling with death and the devil, allows Himself to be overcome, offers His life to His enemies, and overcomes while being overcome? And the miracle supreme is this, that the man Christ, who died on the cross, rises from death and from the sealed grave on the third day, ascends to heaven and sits at the right hand of God with His flesh. What can possibly be said, nay, even conceived, that is equal to these miracles?”



Recommended Hymns:

ELW 241: [O Lord, How Shall I Meet You](#)

ELW 245: [Creator of the Stars of Night](#)

ELW 254: [Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus](#)

ELW 258: [Unexpected and Mysterious](#)

ELW 256: [Comfort, Comfort Now My People](#)

ACS 901: [Now the Heavens Start to Whisper](#)

ACS 902: [Come Now, O God](#)

ACS 1084: [God Be the Love to Search & Keep Me](#)

Other Hymns and Songs:

[“Song of Bernadette”](#) by Leonard Cohen

[“Ave Maria”](#) by Franz Schubert

WEEK TWO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Have you ever experienced a miracle?
- If you experienced a vision of Jesus, of an angel, or of Mary, would you tell anyone?
- Do you have specific places that you identify as being especially holy? What is it about them that inspires that feeling?

INTERVIEW WITH MARGARITA ROMO



Margarita Romo is an activist for immigrant farmworkers in Florida. She was inducted into the Florida Civil Rights Hall of Fame in 2013. [Learn more here.](#)