

COMPENDIUM  
*of the*  
MIRACULOUS

DEACON ALBERT E. GRAHAM

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# Foreword

Michael O'Neill, *the Miracle Hunter*

Miracles happen every day. Even in our modern world—even in the United States—claims of the supernatural abound. A recent study showed that 61 percent of Americans believe that they have witnessed something that could be considered miraculous. Everyone has something to say about miracles. For believers, they stand as proof positive that God is a loving Father actively interacting with His creation. For skeptics and atheists, miracles—while particularly distasteful—need to be countered with some explanation. After all, if miracles do imply some sort of divine intervention, then that is a problem for those that do not believe in God. Both sides are well beyond the point of being able to accept British philosopher David Hume's famous but circular out-of-hand dismissal: Miracles are impossible because miracles can't happen.

That which the average person today considers miraculous most likely will not be the fodder for a serious Vatican-level investigation. A miracle (from Latin *mirari*, "to wonder") is something that is rare, without natural explanation, and is worked for the good, implying divine intervention. (Things that are simply unknown or inexplicable are considered mysteries or marvels.) People find inspiration in their favorite sports team making a great comeback, finding their lost cell phone, or uncharacteristically light traffic on a day when they are already running late. Even those cases of a person's hardened heart being opened to faith, the healing of family wounds, or landing a job in desperate

times, while seemingly clearly showing the hand of God, will never get classified as a true miracle by Church authorities.

The cases that people from all faiths seem to get excited about are those healing miracles in which a dire medical condition has been unexpectedly reversed. It is a common misconception that the leaders of the Catholic Church are very eager to learn of new medical miracle stories so that they might quickly rubber stamp an approval and publicize them to get new members into the pews on Sunday. But it turns out that the Church, while celebrating some very famous examples of the miraculous with specific feast days in the General Roman Calendar—I am thinking here particularly of the miracles associated with Fatima, Lourdes, Guadalupe, Mt. Carmel, and Divine Mercy—is not all that eager to hear of new miracle claims and probably is more likely to wish these distractions would go away and that the faithful might return to a normal practice of the faith.

In fact, other than when attention must be paid to the crowds that begin to form around a very public event, the Catholic Church only investigates medical miracles in the case of those related to Our Lady of Lourdes and those that arise when the Consulta Romana at the Vatican is investigating the potential medical miracles considered as proofs of intercession in sainthood causes.

And, too, the criteria that the Church uses is almost impossibly strict, relying on the very old Lambertini criteria, so named for an Italian cardinal Prospero Lambertini (later Pope Benedict XIV) born in the

1600s. For a cure to be considered truly miraculous, it must be a healing of a severe medical condition not liable to go away on its own, instantaneous, complete, and lasting. And perhaps most difficult of all in our modern era when most everyone sees their doctor is that there can be no medical treatment that relates to the cure. The cases considered are those that occur before a treatment or surgery has begun or afterwards when the medical professionals have recognized that their treatment was ineffective.

Other types of investigated phenomena—strange to the outside world, but beautiful to the Catholic—are incorruptible bodies of some saints, weeping statues and icons, the stigmata (bearing the wounds of Christ), Eucharistic miracles, and Marian apparitions. Each case involves a unique process of investigation and validation and may result in some official declaration either way. When it comes to private revelation where divine messages are allegedly transmitted through a seer, the Church will render three possible judgments: *non constat de supernaturalitate* (maybe), *constat de supernaturalitate* (positive), or *constat de non supernaturalitate* (negative). All three give a comment on the supernatural character of the event. Even in those very famous examples of Church-approved apparitions with messages for the world like Lourdes, Fatima, and Guadalupe, there is no requirement for the faithful to believe in them or incorporate the devotions into their lives of faith. Unlike the miracles of Christ in the Gospels, the faithful can safely ignore them if they find them distracting, not credible, or not meaningful.

For all the healthy skepticism and proper grounding that is advisable when approaching claims of the miraculous, one cannot but marvel at the variety and preponderance of such phenomena. Even if only the tiniest fraction of these reports

can be taken seriously, there still exists a very large number of cases that cannot be easily ignored. The Church has, albeit rarely, declared events to be “worthy of belief” through official statements and encouragement of devotions stemming from the occurrences in question. Even more rarely, the Vatican, without need to publicly validate the findings of a local bishop, will give signs of recognition such as the visit of a pope or papal legate with a golden rose, the composing of an official prayer, the building of a basilica, the establishment of a feast day, or the canonization of an associated saint.

The impact of miracles on the Church is noteworthy. The two major bookend miracles of Christ’s life—the Incarnation and the Resurrection—are the very reasons for the existence of Christianity in the first place and, as such, are embraced universally by the faithful. One need only remember that Catholics embrace Christ’s great miracle of the Eucharist in churches around the world at every hour of every day when they receive the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ under the auspices of bread and wine. The stories of saints—especially according to pious tradition and early hagiographies—abound with accounts of amazing healing powers and other miraculous phenomena in both incredible variety and persistent repetition.

Some of the most famous Catholic sacramentals—the rosary, the scapular (in various colors) and the Miraculous Medal—all have resulted from a miracle. Five of the largest twelve churches by square footage in Christendom likewise have a supernatural backstory. Some of the largest faith movements and religious orders, including the Franciscans, Servites, and Mercedarians amongst others, trace their origins to a miracle experienced by their founders. Millions upon millions of faithful travel to the famed sites of miracles every year, with some reports



indicating Lourdes receiving four million, Fatima five million, and Guadalupe nine million visitors annually. The alleged apparition site of Medjugorje has received between thirty and forty million pilgrims since the apparition claims began in 1981. Similarly, millions of Filipinos gather each year in a procession celebrating the purportedly miraculous image of Christ, the Black Nazarene. It is clear to see that miracles continue to impact the faithful even today and are indicative of a great longing for the supernatural among all peoples.

With the many famous cases of miracles and the strong interest of the faithful, one might wonder if the Vatican maintained a website cataloguing them or had a publicly accessible library collection of the books and manuscripts reporting on such phenomena. The Secret Vatican Archives, inaccessible to most, contain such information, but not for the average Catholic who wants to bolster his or her faith with

the great accounts of divine intervention in our world. And this is where a comprehensive, encyclopedic book is needed and, thus happily, the *Compendium of the Miraculous* comes forth to fill that void.

Deacon Albert E. Graham, in this well-researched and meticulously sourced volume, presents the incredible variety of supernatural phenomena that the Catholic Church has witnessed, investigated, validated, and celebrated over the centuries. (And even this tome is not exhaustive.) His unique and thorough approach and the magnificent artistic treatment that TAN Books has given it make this book an invaluable asset and a treasure to anyone interested in the breadth and the depth of supernatural experience to which the Catholic Church has borne witness in the two millennia since Christ. It will remain a centerpiece in my library, and I hope in yours as well.

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# Introduction

## Can You Hear Me Now?

Whoever believes in God also admits that God can communicate with the beings He created. Since the beginning of time, God, in fact, has been speaking to our minds and hearts. He walked and talked with our first parents. Throughout the history of salvation, He has spoken to His saints and prophets by way of visions, apparitions, dreams (see Nm 12:6), and inner voices. The Old Testament specifically mentions some of His cameo appearances to men, such as when He led the Israelites in the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night as well as when He descended in a cloud to talk to Moses. Of course, His greatest gift to mankind was when “for us men and our salvation, He sent His Son down from heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit to become incarnate of the Virgin Mary and be made man.” While among us, the Son, the second person of the Blessed trinity, was in constant communication with the Father in prayer. And, on two occasions, the Father appeared in a cloud and spoke to humankind identifying Jesus as His beloved Son. These events took place at Jesus’s baptism in the Jordan and His transfiguration on a high mountain.

Moreover, before the Fall of mankind, our first parents lived in a state of personal intimacy with God. This was revealed to us in Genesis where it was said that God walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the

Garden “in the cool of the day” (Gn 3:8). Man’s first experience with a supernatural voice thus comes at the very beginning of his creation. Whereas man heard the first supernatural voice from God Himself, it was Eve who heard the first voice from the preternatural: that of Satan disguised as a snake or a serpent (see Gn 3:1, 4–5). It is also interesting to note that God spoke out directly to Adam after he had sinned and asked, “Where are you?” (Gn 3:9). The conversation between God and our first parents takes up the next nine of the twenty-four total passages in chapter 3 of Genesis.

After the first man and woman sinned, there was a radical disruption of their harmonic relationship with the Creator. They immediately lost the grace of original holiness. Their expulsion from the Garden symbolizes the separation between God and the human race. Man’s sin had placed a veil between God and mankind. However, God never stopped seeking us. He continued to pursue us and reveal Himself to us. He communicated to us gradually, in stages, through words and deeds.

Throughout the Old Testament, God, in various ways and according to His sovereign will, reveals Himself, His truth, and His program to His people. He made these things known sometimes through a prophet, sometimes through events, and sometimes through great wonders.

In the period before Abraham, revelation was frequently given to individuals. God speaks at various times to Adam and Eve, to

Cain (see Gn 4:6), Hagar, Job, Joshua, and probably many others of whom there is no written record. The primary idea is that of direct (private) revelation rather than the impartation of a message to be delivered subsequently to others. The knowledge of Job and his companions about God and His ways is proof that prior to written Scripture God had revealed Himself. While the written Word had its primary purpose in preserving Revelation in infallible accuracy for future generations, direct (private) revelation had to do largely with contemporary problems and need for truth and guidance which would later be afforded by the complete written Word.

## God Spoke Through the Prophets

A prophet may be defined as one who with inward eyes open to the eternal realities “sees the vision of the Almighty” (Nm 24:4) and, inspired by this vision, speaks in burning words of that which was seen. To adapt Emerson’s phrase, he is a seer who becomes a sayer. God communicates to the prophets by word or by visions. The Lord puts His words into the mouths of these individuals (see 1 Kgs 22:14; Jer 1:9; 15:19b; Ez 2:7; 3:1; 3:10). In most cases, God gave direct revelation to those who were publicly known as prophets. However, He did not exclusively limit revelation to them. To receive a revelation or a vision does not make one a prophet unless it is accompanied by the command to proclaim the Word of God.

There was a succession of true prophets called by God to make known His will to successive generations. As the spokesmen and messengers for the Deity, the prophets were commissioned by Him to speak in His name. They conveyed His words to His people at a given moment in time,

regardless of whether or not the people wished to hear them (see Ez 3:11; Jer 2 ff). The message of the prophets primarily dealt with the past, reminding the people of God’s dealing with them. Their message was frequently that of specific guidance in the midst of a crisis. Many times their message was one of warning of judgment to come for sin. They spoke of future events. They did not specify when the events would occur. These events could even change or be modified depending on the repentance of the audience (see Is 38:1–2; Jer 1:1; 3:1–10). Exhortation was given to worship God and obey Him. They conveyed God’s message to the audience by words, miracles, signs, and in non-verbal ways.

The Old Testament begins with the development of the interaction between God and humanity; then, the interaction between God and Israel, his holy, chosen people (see Ex 19:3–6; 1 Pt 2:9–10). The interaction occurs first within the context of the covenants between God and Noah (see Gn 9:8–17). Before Abraham there were a few individuals who had the distinctive character of prophets. As already noted, revelation during this period was more frequently given to those who had no part in the prophetic office. The prophetic ministry of Noah is then noteworthy in this regard. God speaks to this righteous man about the wickedness of humanity. Most of Genesis 6 and 7 concerns God’s conversation with Noah. His prophetic ministry was probably far richer than that which appears on the pages of Genesis.

The earliest religious leaders of Israel, such as Abraham (see Gn 20:7) and Moses (see Dt 34:10), were sometimes called prophets. God called Abraham (see Gn 17:1–22) to be the ancestor of the faithful, and, from that covenant, this interaction moves forward to the covenant between God and Israel through Moses at Sinai (see Ex 19ff). Abraham’s life affords an advance in the history

of prophecy. He is distinctly known as a prophet to whom God speaks and who is blessed by God. To him is given abundant revelation of his peculiar place in history and of God's great purpose to be realized through him. Notably absent, however, is the command to deliver a message. He received a revelation but had no message to be communicated to others except in so far as it is recorded in the Scriptures. Following Abraham, and in the same period, God spoke to Isaac and Jacob confirming the revelation given to Abraham and adding to it.

Moses was considered the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. He was the first prophet through whom the new faith was mediated. He had a large prophetic ministry as well as a more extended revelation. Moses enjoyed the distinctive call of a prophet when God appeared to him in the burning bush. To him God spoke, not in vague visions, but face to face (see Nm 12:7–8). The Creator communicated to him His plan for His chosen people. The Lord commanded Moses to tell the Israelites, "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine" (Ex 19:5). Moses' office was recognized by all the people. The prophets that followed continued to reveal God's unfolding plan for His people. In this sense, God's revelation was public; that is, it was meant for a whole people, not for individuals. The prophets of the Old Testament generally exercised a public function and a permanent ministry as God's spokesmen for the public revelation.

During the period of the early kings, beginning with Samuel and ending with the so-called writing prophets, a definite advance is made in prophetic history. The prophet comes into his own. He is regarded not only as a seer, one to whom visions and revelations are given, but also

as a divinely chosen representative of God set apart, in many cases, to an entire lifetime of prophetic ministry. Prophets such as Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha were prominent in this period. Their prophetic utterances, however, dealt largely with contemporary problems.

The prophetic warnings of the coming exile with the accompanying revelation of the glory of the future kingdom are exemplified in the great prophets of this era, namely Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. It is interesting to note that the primary source for the title "Son of Man" originates with the Old Testament prophet Daniel, who describes this mysterious figure in his night visions (see Dn 7:13). Revelation after the exile is found in the likes of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

All the covenants of the Old Testament ended in Jesus Christ. His purpose was to complete what the covenants set out to do: to restore sinful humanity to the fullness of its proper relationship with God in creative love.

## Methods God Used to Convey His Messages

At least four methods of special revelation were used by God in making known His mind to His prophets. The character of the revelation is supernatural in nature and consists primarily of:

The spoken word (locutions): historical appearances of God in created symbols are witnessed by the Scriptures. As the epistle to the Hebrews says, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (1:1–2). This speaking, then, of the personal transcendent God took place according to Scripture in the

most diverse manners. The prophet who is to become the mouthpiece of God for man hears a voice (see Ez 1:28). It is evident from such New Testament instances such as the baptism of Christ in the Jordan (see Mt 3:17), the transfiguration on Mt. Tabor (see Mk 9:7), and the appearance of Christ to St. Paul that God sometimes speaks vocally in the presence of others and did so on several occasions. In the Old Testament, God spoke in a similar way. At Mount Sinai, for instance, God spoke in such a way to Moses that the people could also hear with the express purpose of validating Moses as a prophet of God (see Ex 19:9). In the case of the call of Samuel (see 1 Sm 3:1–14), the voice of the Lord was so real, so similar to a human voice, that it was mistaken for that of Eli's in the first three instances. In some instances, God used a communication similar to a human voice, and in other instances, He may have spoken directly to the heart of man with such reality that the effect is produced without the use of actual words.

A secondary means of revelation is that of dreams. Divine messages in dreams appear throughout the Bible, sometimes standing as the center of the story (see Mt 1:20; 2:19).<sup>1</sup> In biblical times, prophets and apocalyptic visionaries were moved by the Holy Spirit to dream dreams and see visions disclosing possibilities that would otherwise have been hidden from human eyes. This method of revelation was commonly accepted as a normal way for God to speak. Scripture is replete with such examples. In most instances, the one to whom God speaks is not a prophet, as illustrated in the case of Abimelech (see Gn 20:3, 6), Laban (see Gn 31:24), the butler and baker of Pharaoh, and in the dream of Pharaoh himself. In the rebuke delivered to Miriam

and Aaron for murmuring against Moses, God said, "If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream" (Nm 12:6). In some cases, the revelation was given during a sleep supernaturally imposed, as in the case of Abraham (see Gn 15:12) and Daniel (see Dn 10:9). It is prophesized in Joel 3:1 that the future period would involve many instances of this kind of revelation. God uses dreams in Scripture to warn of coming events or judgments (Pharaoh or Nebuchandazzer) or to give specific guidance or direction. St. Joseph is warned in a dream to flee to Egypt (see Mt 2:13) and to return from Egypt (see Mt 2:19–20). The Magi are warned in a dream to avoid Herod after they visit the child Jesus (see Mt 2:12). Pilate's wife is warned in a dream to abandon the case against Jesus (see Mt 27:19).

Thirdly and closely associated with dreams as a means of revelation were visions and apparitions. The very term seer as applied to prophets had reference to seeing visions. Visions and apparitions related in the Sacred Scriptures are numerous both in the Old and New Testaments. Hence they are confirmed in their supernatural authenticity by divine inspiration and by the Magisterium of the Church. From the Church's patristic origins to our days there have been numerous visions and apparitions which have turned the history of the Church. The person involved was fully conscious at the time. This probably was the case of Isaiah in the two incidents noted (Is 1:1; 6:1). Ezekiel had a similar experience (see Ez 1:1). Micaiah's vision of heaven belongs in the same category (see 1 Kgs 22:19).

That God may enter into communication with man through visions and dreams is asserted in Numbers 12:6 and still more explicitly in Job 33:14–16: "For God speaks in one way. . . . In a dream, in a vision of the night, / when deep sleep falls upon

<sup>1</sup> New Catholic Encyclopedia (NCE). prepared by the editorial staff of Catholic University of America. 1st ed. 18 v., NY, McGraw Hill Book Company, (1967) v.4, pp.1056–1057.





Moses and the Burning Bush, Domenichino (1581–1641)

men, / while they slumber on their beds, / then he opens the ears of men.” Dreams and visions are always mentioned as two distinct phenomena in the Bible. Job complained of being frightened of dreams and terrified by visions (see Jb 33:15–16; 7:14), and Daniel, like some other prophets, was described as having understanding of both dreams and visions (see Dn 1:17). The saints of the Old Testament, like Jacob and many of the prophets, were in communication with God and His messengers in their dreams.

The prophet has a vision (see Is 2:1). He sees God’s revelation in pictures and in symbols (see Jer 1:13; 24:1); angels appear delivering a heavenly message (see Lk 1:11, 26 ff.). One comes across no fewer than a dozen incidents in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, the first patriarchs of Judaism, in which God was

allegedly encountered in a dream, a vision, or in something even more concrete. Most of Genesis and the first half of Exodus are accounts of these encounters. Five separate encounters are attributed to Abraham, including one in which the Lord “appeared,” accompanied by two other beings (see Gn 18). One also encounters the apparition of God in His appearance to Moses in the Burning Bush.

In the case of the earlier prophets, the visions came spontaneously and were comparatively simple in form and contents (cf. Am 7–9; Is 6). Amos saw coming disasters for Israel in a vision (see Am 7:1). He is called the prophet of justice because of his visions of impending justice. The more sensitive Hosea felt the touch of God’s love in the tragedy of his home and became the prophet of love. But, with the later prophets, the visions became more and more

elaborate. The kingly Isaiah saw the Holy One on His throne high and lifted up, and became the prophet of holiness. Ezekiel saw the vision of the glory of Lord God and became the prophet of regeneration. The seers, of whom Samuel is the most important example, received revelations from God (see 1 Sm 9:15) in visions and dreams (see Nm 24: 3; 1 Sm 3:10–14).

A fourth element, often present in supernatural revelation, was that of trances or ecstasies. Ecstasies are regarded in Sacred Scripture as such means of divine communication (see Acts 10:10; 11:5; 22:17;<sup>2</sup> Cor 12:2–5; Rv 4:2).<sup>2</sup> They are incidental to the impartation of the message of God and often accompanied visions, as in the case of Ezekiel (see Ez 8:3). It is difficult to distinguish ecstasies and dreams in some cases since the supernaturally imposed sleep is similar to a trance (see Gn 15:12; Dn 10:9). It is clear that ecstasies in themselves are not very important in the transmission of revelation.

Throughout the Old Testament, we see a personal God who deliberately makes Himself known and heard to various people over the course of human history.<sup>3</sup> God communicated His revelations to them not only by word (locutions) but by dreams, visions, and ecstasies. The prophets were interpreters of the mind and purpose of God, in the fullest sense of the term. They had seen the vision of the Almighty, and their purpose was to make the vision real to their followers.

The tendency of these multifarious sorts of divine communications varies widely according to the phase of the history of salvation in which the visionary lives and which he is intended to influence.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 1056.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Freze. S.F.O. *Voices, visions and apparitions* (VVA). Huntington, Ind., Our Sunday Visitor, 1993, p.108.

## New Testament Revelation: God Speaks to Us Through His Son

Revelation in the New Testament is basically the same as in the Old. After God had spoken many times and in various ways through the prophets, He spoke to us through His Son, the incarnate Word of God (see Heb 1:1–2). The incarnation of Jesus Christ in human history was a specific revelation of God which exceeded anything which the Old Testament prophets could offer. Jesus, the Eternal Word, was sent to dwell among men and make known to them the innermost things of God. He was sent as a man to men to speak the words of God, and He brings to perfection the saving works that the Father gave Him to do. By His whole presence and self-revelation, by words and actions, by signs and miracles, especially by His death and glorious resurrection from the dead, and finally by sending the Spirit of truth, He completes Revelation and brings it to perfection, sealing by divine testimony its message that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death and to raise us up to eternal life. Jesus and His Church were seen as the fulfillment of the salvific plan of God of which the prophets spoke. The Father's self-communication, made through the Word in the Holy Spirit, remains present and active in the Church today and for all time to come.

The New Testament includes numerous accounts of post-Resurrection appearances and visions of Jesus. He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to the disciples without St. Thomas, to the disciples including St. Thomas, to the two disciples at Emmaus, to seven fishermen on the shore, to St. James, St. Paul, and to more than five hundred brethren at once.

In the New Testament, the first heavenly



apparitions and messages came from God's mighty angels. In Matthew's Gospel, one finds the first supernatural sign through the voice and appearance of the heavenly archangel Gabriel to St. Joseph. In this discourse, Gabriel encourages Joseph to marry Mary explaining that her pregnancy was of a miraculous nature (see Mt 1:18–23). An angel, probably Gabriel, warned Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt and announced when it was safe to return (see Mt 2:13). The angelic apparitions came first in Luke's Gospel as well when Gabriel appeared to the priest Zechariah and informed him that his elderly wife would bear a child (see Lk 1:11). Angels instructed Deacon Philip to go to Gaza to meet the eunuch (Acts 8:26–40) and told the centurion Cornelius to invite St. Peter to his home (see Acts 10:1–4, 30). St. Paul had a vision of his guardian angel that appeared and prophesized that the ship on which he was sailing as a prisoner would be wrecked in a terrible storm but all passengers on board would be saved (see Acts 27:22–24). When the Sadducees arrested and imprisoned the twelve apostles (see Acts 5:17–21) an angel appeared to them and opened the prison doors. Later on, during St. Peter's imprisonment at the hands of King Herod (see Acts 12:6–11), an angel appeared and freed him from his chains. The whole book of Revelation was given to John as a supernatural revelation when he was "in the Spirit." It is a revelation from the Lord who spoke to him in "a loud voice like a trumpet" (Rv 1:9–11) as well as a record of visions of heaven and paradise given in the Spirit and through the ministry of angels from whom things were made known to him.

Throughout the New Testament, a normal channel of supernatural communication is through the voice of an angel of God. As mentioned above, the book of Revelation, for example, records many instances of angelic appearances and voices. The

Almighty uses these creatures to deliver supernatural messages, to warn people of danger, or to help those in trouble. God's voice is thus often expressed through the voice of the angels who assist Him in His plan for salvation.

## God Continues to Make Himself Known Through His Creatures

Since the death of the last apostle and the public revelation of His Son, the communication of God with man has not ceased. The lack of any divine communication would contradict the history of the Church as well as God's Word in Scripture.

We know from Scripture that visible signs and wonders will accompany the followers of Jesus generation after generation: "And these signs will accompany those who believe" (Mk 16:17). Moreover, God continues to be close to His people. Jesus assured us of this when He said: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20). Scripture makes it clear that the faithful have and will experience supernatural wonders. It proclaims that dreams, visions, and apparitions will occur throughout the history of the Church: "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; . . . And I will show wonders in the heaven above / and signs on the earth beneath" (Acts 2:17, 19; see also Jl 3:1).

Whatever God has communicated to these privileged souls can add nothing to the deposit of Christian faith. Private revelations of this nature may be granted for the personal good of individuals and also to stir up among Christians a more faithful



Shrine of Our Lady of Banneux. Photo by Anuja Mary Tilj / Shutterstock

adherence to the gospel. Though they are not meant to present new doctrines, private revelations do play a positive role in the life of the Church. They draw attention to what in the faith is likely to meet the particular needs of the times.

Private revelation can never end as long as God continues to deal personally with man and be present in human history. God still intervenes directly in human affairs through voices, visions, apparitions, locutions, miracles, signs, and wonders. He uses others as catalysts for these signs to come about: the Blessed Virgin Mary, angels, saints, beati, venerables, et al. Authentic messages from the Lord have been passed on from these dead holy ones to the living recipient (visionary) who might be fully awake and going about normal activity, or else be in various states of altered consciousness, from those semi-conscious states which immediately precede and follow sleep to the deep relaxation

of profound prayer and on into ecstasy and rapture as well as to those who are fully asleep.<sup>4</sup>

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries alone, more Marian apparitions and messages for the world have occurred than at any other time in Church history. In fact, it is claimed that some 378 reports of Marian apparitions in thirty-two countries have come forth in the few years between 1923 and 1975. Out of all these claims, at least 95 percent of them involve Marian messages for the seers, their parish, the Church, and the world. Since 1973, the supernatural messages in particular have become even more common—perhaps double the total number recorded in the previous fifty years.<sup>5</sup>

Twenty-two Marian Apparitions were seriously studied between 1931 and 1950, and only two were approved (Beauraing and Banneux in Belgium). Six remained undecided in 1952, and the remaining fourteen were rejected.<sup>6</sup> Since then, the Akita Marian phenomena experienced by Sister Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa were approved as genuinely supernatural in origin by Bishop John Ito on April 22, 1984, after consulting with the Holy See. The Marian apparitions which took place in Le Laus, France, in 1664 to the visionary Benoite Rencurel were approved in 2008. In 2010, the apparitions of Our Lady to Adele Joseph Brise in Champion, Wisconsin, in 1859 became the first Marian apparition approved by the Catholic Church in the United States. Over the last several decades, apparitions of Mary have proliferated throughout the United States and the world. Her apparitions, visions, and locutions have produced a networked spiritual family that emerges like precious

<sup>4</sup> Patricia Treece. *Apparitions of Modern Saints. Appearances of Therese of Lisieux, Padre Pio, Don Bosco, and Others, Messages From God to His People on Earth*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Charis, 2001, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Freze, VVA, op cit., 103.

<sup>6</sup> NCE, 1967, op. cit., v.12, p.446.

flowers in the early dawn of springtime.<sup>7</sup>

As we will see in this study, many of the saints, blessed, venerables, and other holy people mentioned herein, during and since apostolic times, have claimed to have seen the Lord and talked with Him just as we talk to one another. Many of them have experienced extraordinary mystical phenomena. These include such supernatural phenomena as hearing heavenly voices, dreaming otherworldly dreams, seeing supernatural visions and apparitions of Mary, angels, saints, patriarchs, prophets, demons, and the suffering souls in purgatory, experiencing ecstasies, and receiving private revelations.<sup>8</sup>

Such phenomena continue to be experienced by people living today among laity and clergy, Catholics and Protestants, devout and casual believers alike. A poll taken in 1995 found that about 40 percent of the population say God speaks to them personally.<sup>9</sup> If you take a poll in a typical Christian congregation, you will probably discover that a cross-section of parishioners has had very deep supernatural encounters with God. Most have had at least a few occasions of dramatic answer to prayer, some have seen physical healings of various kinds, still others have heard the voice of God speaking to them or may have had a vision or apparition of Jesus, Mary, a saint, or an angel. Speaking more generally, one would be safe to say that millions of God's people have had some sort of religious experience at one time or another. There is compelling evidence that we are serving a living Savior: a God who still directly intervenes in human affairs through voices, visions, apparitions, locutions, miracles, signs, and wonders—a

God who promised to remain close to His people because of His overflowing generosity and love for them. Again, Jesus assured us of this when He said, "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20). God's voice is something one has to listen for—"the still, small voice" that spoke to the prophet Elijah.

It is the purpose of this work to relate any private revelation that may have been revealed to some of God's people and to try and assess its credibility and authenticity. Another intention of the author is to explore a vast array of supernatural and concomitant phenomena experienced by saints, blessed, and other of the faithful. In the process, mystical phenomena such as apparitions, visions, dreams, and locutions that have been approved by the Church will be examined. Another section of this work will examine those special favors and promises made by Jesus and Mary to various saints. Lastly, short biographies of specific saints, blessed, venerables, and other holy people who have experienced a private revelation or some type of concomitant mystical phenomena such as levitation, bilocation, discernment of spirits, the stigmata, etcetera will be explored. It is through mystical experiences such as visions, powerful dreams, and locutions that God touches our lives. He is a God of love, and love longs to communicate. If you are like most people, you need a word of encouragement from the Lord. Say, with Samuel, "Speak, for your servant hears" (1 Sm 3:10).

"Today when you hear his voice, / do not harden your hearts" (Heb 4:7; see also Ps 95:7-8).

<sup>7</sup> Connell, T. *Meeting with Mary; Visions of the Blessed Mother*. N.Y. Ballantine Books, 1995, p.347; see also *Washington Post*, Oct. 14, 1994, p.A1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>9</sup> *Washington Times*, Dec. 5, 1995, p.A15.





Saint John the Evangelist on Patmos by Hieronymus Bosch