

From: Water For the Light

DECEMBER 6

To Be Virgin

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LOTS OF PEOPLE these days are seeking recollection, writing books about it, urging us to do it. It seems like a nice idea all right – until you try it. What a lot of the books don't tell you about is the terror. To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge may mean not knowing much of anything else.

With the peace and quiet of recollection may come the stark edge of fear that this doing nothing, this being, this offering of oneself for God to be the actor, cannot possibly be enough. It all seems so passive. Do something, produce, perform, earn your keep. Don't just sit there. It may be good and well for Mary to offer space in herself for God to dwell and

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be born into the world, but few of us possess the radical belief such recollection requires.

What matters in the deeper experience of contemplation is not the doing and accomplishing. What matters is relationship, the being with. We create holy ground and give birth to Christ in our time not by doing but by believing and by loving the mysterious Infinite One who stirs within. This requires trust that something of great and saving importance is growing and kicking its heels in you.

The angel summoned Mary, betrothed to Joseph, from the rather safe place of conventional wisdom to a realm where few of the old rules would make much sense. She entered that unknown called "virgin territory." She was on her own there. No one else could judge for her the validity of her experience.

She can measure her reality against Scripture, the teachings of her tradition, her reason and intellect, and the counsel of wise friends. But finally it is up to her. The redemption of the creation is resting on the consent – the choice of this mortal woman to believe fearlessly that what she is experiencing is true. And to claim and live out that truth by conceiving the fruit of salvation.