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DOI: 10.15290/rtk.2024.23.15

The Holy Spirit Will Overshadow You: Conversation as the Transformative Openness to the Unknown

The paper reflects on the Incarnation of Christ as a transformative event that redefines human understanding and history. The central thesis explores how the Incarnation reveals a divine conversation – an eternal dialogue of love and understanding between the Father, the Son, and humanity. This divine conversation invites us into a dialogical openness, challenging our comprehension and deepening our participation in God's mystery.

The Incarnation is the ultimate hermeneutic event, where divine self-disclosure meets human receptivity. Christ's embodiment of God's reigning (βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ) reveals that heaven is not a distant realm but a mode of being characterized by communion, love, and trust. This theological depth is particularly embodied in the Annunciation, where Mary's dialogue with the Archangel Gabriel exemplifies transformative openness. Mary's fiat symbolizes human consent to divine action, a model for walking together (σύν-ὁδός) in faith, discernment, and participation in God's unfolding plan.

A hermeneutic reading of Luke 1:35 highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation. The Spirit's overshadowing (ἐπισκιάσει) mirrors divine creativity, as seen in Genesis, and serves as a paradigm for understanding synodality – a continuous process of renewal and shared journey within the Church. This protective and transformative overshadowing creates a sacred space for life and love to emerge, revealing God's gentle yet powerful intervention in human history. It emphasizes that divine action respects human freedom while enabling participation in God's salvific plan.

The paper also draws upon artistic representations to deepen its theological insights. Henry Ossawa Tanner's *The Annunciation* (1898) and Jacek Malczewski's *Annunciation* (1928) are examined for their disclosure of the Holy Spirit's presence. Tanner's use of light symbolizes divine grace as an illuminating

and non-coercive force, while Malczewski's intimate setting emphasizes the ordinary as a site for divine encounter. Both artworks invite viewers into a contemplative space where the sacred transforms the mundane, reinforcing the centrality of openness and dialogue in divine-human interaction.

The hermeneutic notion of conversation as a transformative event extends to synodality in the Church. Synodality, informed by the Incarnation, is a way of being that embraces dialogue, listening, and communal discernment. It reflects the Church's call to openness, solidarity, and participation in God's mission, especially in responding to suffering and division in the world.

The closing reflections turn toward the existential implications of divine faithfulness and human belief. The Incarnation is framed as a perpetual call to trust, participate, and live in the fullness of divine love and renewal. By entering this divine conversation, humanity finds its ultimate purpose in communion with God and the world.

This paper provides a reflective theological exploration of the Incarnation as a dialogical and transformative event, enriched by scriptural interpretation, artistic analysis, and reflections on the Church's mission. It concludes with a heartfelt call for compassion, solidarity, and openness to God's grace during times of suffering and hope for peace in the world.

Key words: Annunciation, Incarnation, Synodality, divine self-disclosure, Os-sawa Tanner, Jacek Malczewski.

The Incarnation of Christ is a transformative event that transcends time, reshaping human history and the entire horizon of human understanding. This momentous occurrence (*Augenblick*), rooted in divine revelation, invites us to deeply connect with God's self-manifestation and self-disclosure. Such engagement unfolds as a conversation – a dialogical openness to the unknown, where the boundaries of comprehension are pushed, revealing new depths of divine mystery. The Father and the Son speak to one another about their love for humanity. They *are* a conversation (*Gespräch*) – a profound, eternal dialogue of love and understanding. The Son of God enters the world, taking on flesh, embodying the very essence of creation so that he will be God-with-us (υἱοῦ θεοῦ, Ἐμμανουήλ). He comes to dwell among us, to engage in a living conversation with us, sharing the mystery of God's reigning, which is nothing less than heaven itself. Through His presence among us, the Son reveals that He *is* the reigning of God (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ): not a distant realm but a way of being, a communion of love and trust that transforms our very existence. In the sacred dialogue, we are invited to listen, respond, and join in the divine conversation that has no

beginning and no end – a conversation in which heaven is within and among us (ἐντὸς ὑμῶν ἐστίν). In a dynamic walking together, a shared journey (σύν-ὁδός), we enter a living dialogue, internally and externally, with God and our lifeworld. This horizon is marked by listening, serving, and bearing witness, mirroring God's invitation to be with us.

Conversation as transformative openness to the unknown finds its richest expression in the Gospel narrative of the Annunciation (Lk 1: 26-38), where Mary, in dialogue (διά-λογος) with the archangel Gabriel, lets herself be open (*Öffnenlassen*) to the mystery of God's plan. This conversation, underscored by the power of the Holy Spirit, reveals the nature of waking together as a process that requires discernment, listening, and an openness to the new, to the mystery that transcends human expectation and control.

The hermeneutic reading of the Incarnation captures this transformative openness by revealing the theological depth of the Holy Spirit's overshadowing of Mary (Lk 1:35) and connecting it to God's creative breath. The Spirit's role in creation and new creation is a paradigm for understanding synodality as a continuous unfolding of life, renewal, and participation in the divine plan.

The Incarnation *in-forms* the pathway of the Church's synodal mission. Just as Mary's "yes" to God opened the way for the Word to become flesh (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, J 1:14), so does the Church say "yes" to walking together, listening, and discerning the Spirit's guidance in our lifeworld. This is a journey of continual openness, a willingness to be metamorphosed (μετα-μορφώνω) by encountering the unknown in God, others, and the Church. This transformative openness mirrors the Incarnation's profound mystery, calling us to embody the permanent movement of God's love and truth in a fragmented world.

The connection between the Incarnation and synodality emphasizes how the celebration of the Incarnation is not just a remembrance of a past event but an ongoing participation in God's life-giving presence in the world by walking together toward communion with him. Discerning the timing for moving in haste is required for the communion to happen. Mary recognizes the call to exit in haste (μετὰ σπουδῆς, Lk 1:39). This is the opportune moment, the right time (καιρός) to take action initiated by excitement (ἔξοδος). Leaving the known to follow the unknown to be with and for the others. Abandoning everything that captivates us. Entering the realm of unimagined possibilities. The unknown discloses itself through shared discernment, humility, and an openness to the Spirit's guidance. The narrative's movement from Nazareth to the hill country represents a geographical translocation

but also spiritual and relational dynamics. Mary moves from the private sphere of the Annunciation into a communal expression of discipleship grounded in readiness and urgency to serve.

Lk 1: 35 in Greek reads:

Καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἄγγελος εἶπεν αὐτῇ· Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ δύναμις Ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι διὸ καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον κληθήσεται, Υἱὸς Θεοῦ. In the King James' translation, it is rendered: "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also that holy thing (the unborn) which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God".

The verse opens with the Archangel Gabriel responding to Mary's question, revealing the mystery of the Incarnation. He announces that the Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον (Holy Spirit) will come upon her, and δύναμις Ὑψίστου (the power of the Most High) will overshadow her (ἐπισκιάσει). This overshadowing is a profoundly significant expression, filled with biblical resonances and theological depth. The hermeneutic reading of this verse discloses something essential about the divine atmosphere. The Holy Spirit is the creative breath of God and represents the divine creative power, seen in Genesis 1: 2, where the Spirit hovers over the waters. Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον is always in motion and brings forth life: Descending on Mary recalls that same divine creativity, this time focused on the new creation in Christ.

The power of the Most High refers to God's sovereignty and majesty. This evokes an image of God's immense, transcendent authority, yet this power manifests not in domination but is life-giving. The δύναμις of God is gentle enough to respect human freedom (Mary's consent, *fiat*) yet sufficiently powerful to bring about the (im)possible. God's power is not coercive or violent but a form of love that respects human autonomy while enabling divine participation in history.

The birth of the Holy One (τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον) speaks to the profound mystery of the Incarnation, where the divine and human are united in Christ. The eternal God enters the temporality and vulnerability of human life without losing divine majesty. This gives rise to *incarnational hermeneutics*, where the divine and human union shapes understanding. The Incarnation is the ultimate hermeneutic event, where the Word becomes flesh, disclosing God's love within the confines of human life.

The overshadowing (ἐπισκιάσει) is a divine protective presence. The verb ἐπισκιάσει means to overshadow or cover, and it recalls the cloud of God's presence that overshadowed the Tabernacle in the desert (Ex 40:35), as well as the transfiguration of Jesus when the voice from the cloud revealed him as God's Son (Lk 9:34-35). This shadow indicates divine presence, protection, and glory, revealing that God's action is enveloping, tender, and creative. The shadow conceals and reveals the sacred, marking God's nearness. God creates a sacred space where life can emerge. The shadow is not something dark or threatening but rather a place of refuge and renewal, such as in Psalm 91:1, where those who dwell "in the shadow of the Almighty" find protection and peace. God covers, nourishes, and protects. His love is gentle, embracing, and life-giving, akin to how a shadow shields from the sun's harshness, offering refreshment and shelter.

The image of God overshadowing Mary reminds us of the mystery of divine presence in our lives. This presence summons us to dwell in the openness of God's mystery, where we are called to trust and respond with the same openness Mary displays. She represents the archetype of human openness to divine action. Her *fiat* models how humanity is invited to answer (*Ant-wort*) to God's grace. Understanding the urgency of replying to God is not merely intellectual but involves a deep receptivity to what is beyond our control or comprehension.

The imagery of the Holy Spirit overshadowing someone has inspired artists for centuries. This overshadowing is depicted using powerful visual metaphors in various artistic representations.

Henry Ossawa Tanner's *The Annunciation* (1898) is a famous and powerful interpretation of the Annunciation, notable for its realistic and humble setting. The room is plain and sparse, with a simple bed, an earthen floor, and a woven rug. Mary is seated on the edge of the bed, wrapped in a cloak, her hands resting in her lap. Her posture and facial expression convey a sense of awe and hesitation. Her body language suggests that she is still absorbing the weight of the divine message being conveyed to her. This humanizes Mary and highlights her vulnerability and ordinary nature, emphasizing that the divine overshadowing happened to a real person in a real moment. Tanner's choice of a humble, earthly setting reflects the theological truth of the Incarnation: God chose to enter the world through the life of a simple, young woman. The overshadowing of the Holy Spirit takes place in the most ordinary of circumstances, transforming the mundane into something sacred.



One of the most striking features of Tanner's painting is the absence of an angel. Instead, the divine presence is represented by an intense, radiant column of light. This light spills across the room, illuminating Mary and creating a sharp contrast between the warmth of the divine presence and the subdued tones of the rest of the room. Using light instead of a physical angel suggests a more open, spiritual understanding of the divine messenger. The light symbolizes God's presence and the Holy Spirit's overshadowing, evoking the image of the Spirit as a luminous, transformative force. The light is a physical reality and a metaphor for divine grace and revelation, emphasizing the mysterious, transcendent nature of the event. The light is soft, not overwhelming, reflecting the gentle, non-coercive nature of the Holy Spirit's presence. The interplay between light and shadow mirrors the theological tension between revelation and mystery in the Annunciation. The Holy Spirit's overshadowing is an act of divine revelation – God's plan for salvation – but it remains shrouded in mystery. The shadows in the painting suggest that while Mary receives the promise, the full unfolding of that promise lies ahead. She is encountering the divine light and stepping into a future filled with uncertainties

and challenges. The light guarantees transformation, but the shadow suggests that this transformation will involve integrating unknown aspects of her journey. Tanner's painting invites us into a contemplative space, where the emphasis is not on external details but on the profound internal shift that is taking place within Mary.

The absence of a visible Holy Spirit is a mode of presence that can be disclosed through its hiddenness. Absence is not mere non-existence, but a form of being that reveals something more profound about how we encounter truth, mystery, and reality. As such, it draws attention to what is concealed or deferred, opening a space for interpretation, reflection, and participation in the disclosure of meaning. It transforms how something is experienced. The Holy Spirit is not absent in the sense of being "missing"; rather, the Spirit is a presence that is there but not fully disclosed in a literal sense.

Just as Mary contemplates the mystery of the divine, we are invited to engage with the mystery of the Holy Spirit's presence through its absence. The divine is present in a way that resists easy interpretation. By dwelling in the realm of divine disclosure, we let the presence of the Holy Spirit unfold in a concealed and revealed way.

Jacek Malczewski's *Annunciation* (1928) offers a similarly unique interpretation, moving away from highly dramatic depictions to quiet, intimate, and deeply human. Malczewski shows Mary and the archangel in a simple, rustic interior. The setting is a modest wooden table, an open window with gentle light filtering through, and a few household objects. This invites us to see the divine intervention not as distant or abstract but as something that enters life's ordinary moments. God's presence comes to us in our most unassuming, everyday experiences. The Holy Spirit's overshadowing gently envelops the human world, silently transforming what is ordinary into something sacred. The simplicity of the setting speaks to the universality of divine encounter, where the ordinary becomes the threshold for the extraordinary. The figures' gestures – hands held in thoughtful, intimate positions – suggest a conversation beyond verbal exchange. It is a moment of shared contemplation, where something deeper is being communicated beyond the reach of the said. The Holy Spirit's overshadowing is a dialogical process where the relationship between the two figures shapes understanding. This represents a more internalized form of overshadowing – the divine presence works quietly through shared human experience, transforming understanding from within.



The expressions and gestures of the two figures in the painting suggest an intimate conversation filled with curiosity and awe. Their speaking combines wonder, concentration, and deep inner awareness. This encounter between the two figures reflects the theme of openness to the divine mystery. There is no dramatic display of power but a subtle exchange, a dialogue representing Mary's deep contemplation and willingness to accept her role in this transformative event. The Holy Spirit's overshadowing enters through conversation, attentiveness, and a humble readiness to participate in God's unfolding plan. The intimate dialogue mirrors the internal conversation between the human spirit and the divine call.

Natural light entering through the window is essential to the painting. It subtly illuminates the scene, highlighting the faces and gestures of the archangel and Mary while the rest of the room remains in a gentle shadow. Though not overpowering, the light suffuses the scene with warmth and clarity. This soft light reflects the symbolic presence of the Holy Spirit, Who overshadows Mary with a protective presence. The light invites reflection on how the Holy Spirit's work occurs in the background, subtly illuminating the path ahead. Like light, the Spirit is visible and invisible, touching the human world without explicitly revealing the divine mystery.

The lack of prominent divine symbols (like the dove or halos) invites us to meditate on the sacredness of the human encounter itself. Malczewski invites us to reflect on how divine overshadowing does not remove us from our human context but enters it. The encounter between the archangel and Mary represents the Annunciation's historical moment and the Spirit's continual presence in the everyday. It shows how the divine mystery involves the human – our hands, conversations, and lives. There is no rush, no overwhelming emotion, only quiet, reflective anticipation. This suggests that the Holy Spirit's overshadowing is an act that is deeply intimate and profoundly cosmic. This quietness speaks to the mystery of how God often works – through subtle, almost unnoticed moments that change the course of history.

Upon closer reflection, it's clear that the painting plays with ambiguity regarding the identity of the two figures. In many traditional depictions of the Annunciation, the Archangel Gabriel is portrayed with youthful and androgynous features, blending masculine and feminine traits. In Malczewski's painting, the Angel has short hair and a soft and somewhat ambiguous face, which could be interpreted as either a young man or a woman. This ambiguity allows for a broader range of interpretations, and it is possible that Malczewski intentionally blurred the lines between genders to highlight the universality of the divine encounter. This ambiguity indicates that divine encounters, such as the Annunciation, transcend human categories. Gabriel's role as a messenger is less about his personal identity (לֵאֵלֶיךָ, God is my strength) and more about his function – delivering God's message to Mary. Therefore, depicting the angel this way suggests that the divine messenger could appear in many forms, reflecting the mystery of divine intervention. Blending masculine and feminine traits in the painting is an artistic way of expressing the inclusivity and transcendence of the divine. It enriches the reading of the painting and invites us to explore the layered, mysterious aspects of divine encounters.

Re-nawal
of Theology

Diving further into the painting, we reflect on the objects present, particularly the simple wooden table and the fingerhut (thimble) and scissors lying on it. These seemingly mundane objects carry significant symbolic weight. The sturdy yet plain wooden table evokes associations with Joseph, who is traditionally presented as a carpenter. The table anchors Mary's everyday reality, emphasizing her surroundings' simplicity and humble status. This table is a metaphor for the foundation of Mary's life, representing the practical, mundane world into which the divine mystery is about to unfold. It also evokes the coming reality that Jesus will be born into the laboring world of a carpenter's

family. It grounds the scene in the human condition – a tangible, earthly object that anchors the divine message in the reality of human labor, craftsmanship, and provision.

The thimble and scissors on the table are tools for sewing or mending, associated with Mary's traditional role as a woman of the household. A thimble protects the finger while sewing, a task associated with care, repair, and creation. As the mother of Jesus, Mary is a guard and a vessel through which God's plan will be stitched into the fabric of history. Mary will need care and protection as she embarks on bringing the Savior into the world and nurturing Him.

Scissors are a tool for cutting, symbolizing the act of separation or preparation. They signal that Mary's life is about to be irrevocably changed – cut from the path it was on and redirected toward a new, divine purpose. Scissors also represent her ability to make decisions (κρίνω), signifying her role in actively consenting to God's plan rather than being a passive participant.

The thimble and the scissors connect Mary's domestic life to the grand narrative of salvation. The divine works through the most minor details of human life – through acts of care. Just as a carpenter shapes wood and a seamstress mends fabric, God's work through the Holy Spirit in the Annunciation is a creative act that brings forth (ποίησις) new life. The Holy Spirit's overshadowing is a moment when the divine meets the human in the most practical, tangible ways – through tools, work, and everyday life. This meeting of the divine and human through the promise of the Holy Spirit transforms Mary's life and the world itself.

The promise (ἀπαγγελία) of the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary, as expressed in Lk 1:35, carries a profound and deeply poetic significance. It is not just about physical proximity or shelter; it suggests a protective, enveloping presence. This is no ordinary promise. It is a divine promise that holds within it the miraculous and the impossible. God acts in the space of the seemingly impossible. Understanding the promise is also the task of understanding the nature of God's word and work in the world. The promise to Mary is, in a sense, a microcosm of God's promise to all of creation. Through the Holy Spirit, God continues to bring forth life, light, and redemption, overshadowing the chaos and brokenness of the world with love and creativity.

The promise of overshadowing concerns divine protection and guidance. Mary will not be alone on this journey. The Holy Spirit will be with her, guiding, comforting, and empowering her. The overshadowing is not just a theological abstraction but a deeply personal, almost

maternal act of God drawing Mary into the mystery of new life. It allows reflecting on the broader feminine aspects of God's creative and nurturing power.

For Mary, the overshadowing is a moment of grace, and she trusts in the divine presence despite her uncertainty. Her encounter with the angel requires a leap into the unknown, with the potential for profound transformation. The overshadowing of the Holy Spirit is a moment of divine integration. The unknown is not something to be feared but embraced, as it holds the potential for transformation, creativity, and new life.

The work of art as understanding

The paintings invite us to participate in understanding through an aesthetic experience. The light becomes a metaphor for revelation and understanding, mirroring how understanding dawns gradually, like light entering a dark room. The Holy Spirit presented as the light symbolizes the sudden, overwhelming presence of understanding from outside us, illuminating human thinking and bringing divine mystery into the world. This moment represents understanding as an event that is mysterious, overwhelming, and profoundly transformative. Understanding is an event that happens to us. Mary's horizon of human understanding meets the divine horizon of God's will. This is an instance when the human and the divine mystery converge, and understanding begins to unfold within her.

Unlike Tanner's painting, where light dramatically signifies the Holy Spirit, Malczewski suggests that divine presence can be found in ordinary and human interactions. The Holy Spirit's work is quieter here, almost hidden, but no less profound. Two figures in close, conversational proximity indicate the dynamic, human aspect of divine encounter – the moment of understanding that emerges through dialogue and presence. The artwork itself becomes an event where understanding unfolds through conversation. The painting reflects the hermeneutic idea that truth happens in conversation – understanding arises through the back-and-forth of encounters. In Malczewski's painting, understanding is a subtle unfolding that occurs through human interaction and reflection. In both works of art, the Holy Spirit is at work, guiding the process of understanding. Whether through a dramatic revelation of light or a quiet conversation, the Spirit's work brings divine truth into human awareness, transforming us and our lifeworld through understanding.

When we view the work of art, we participate in the process of contemplation and revelation, like the figures in the paintings. The artworks are sites of understanding where the divine presence and human response meet, and the Holy Spirit continues to overshadow us, opening us to deeper truths and insights. The paintings are not just representations of the Holy Spirit's work; they are active participants in understanding, inviting us into the mystery of divine encounter and the unfolding of meaning.

Understanding conversation as overshadowing the people led by it reflects a profound insight into the nature of dialogue and communication. Hans-Georg Gadamer famously stated, "The conversation leads us (*das Gespräch führt uns*)."

In genuine dialogue, the participants do not control the conversation, but the conversation guides them. Conversation is not just an exchange of pre-formed ideas but a dynamic, living process that brings the participants into a shared horizon of meaning. It overshadows them by transcending their individual intentions, leading them to insights and understandings they could not have anticipated beforehand.

The Holy Spirit, often described as the *Paraclete* (Παράκλητος, comforter, advocate, One Who comes to assist), is also considered the Spirit of Truth (Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, J 16:13). In this role, the Holy Spirit guides and leads us into all truth, not by imposing external knowledge but by unveiling deeper understanding. The overshadowing of the Holy Spirit in the Annunciation reflects this guiding presence – an invitation to be drawn into the divine mystery, just as conversation draws us into new insights we could not predict. Conversation is not about controlling or forcing our views but about openness to others. Being overshadowed by conversation points to its transformative power. Just as the Holy Spirit's overshadowing transforms Mary's life and role in history, so does the conversation have the power to transform us. Through conversation we are changed – our perspectives broaden, our challenged assumptions, and new meanings emerge. Our willingness to be led by a conversation reflects a radical openness to the unknown, an acceptance of being addressed by something beyond our comprehension.

The Holy Spirit in the paintings symbolizes the dialogical space between the divine and the human, where meaning and understanding are created through collaboration. Understanding happens in the space of encounter, where we are drawn beyond our perspectives and opened to something greater.

Incarnation and synodality: a call to transformative openness

The Incarnation of Christ marks a pivotal moment in human history, where God's eternal Word enters time and space, reshaping the entire narrative of salvation. The Incarnation is an ongoing reality that calls the Church to live in constant transformation, openness, and dialogue with God and the world. This is the essence of walking together, where we embrace the call to discern, listen, and act guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit's overshadowing of Mary becomes a theological model for understanding how the Church is invited to participate in God's creative and redemptive work. Just as the Holy Spirit brought forth life in Mary, so does the Spirit continue to animate the Church, guiding Her toward new horizons of understanding and communion. Synodality, as a mode of being and acting, requires us to be open to the unknown – to the unexpected ways God's grace unfolds in history. It is a call to walk together in a shared journey where listening, dialogue, and discernment are central to our lives. The synodal Church, therefore, is not a static formal institution but a dynamic community continually transformed by Her encounter with God and the world.

Every engagement with God is a new beginning, a moment of transformation that calls for a renewed openness to the divine mystery. This openness is mirrored in the process of synodality, where we are called to listen to all voices, especially those on the margins, and discern the path forward. Celebrating the Incarnation is an invitation to live in a perpetual openness to the new and the unknown. We are invited to continuously converse with God, one another, and the world. This conversation concerns remaining open to the Spirit's movement and trusting that God will guide us toward deeper understanding and communion. The horizon of synodality as ongoing transformation reflects the very nature of the Incarnation. Just as the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, so too does the Church, through synodality, embody the Word in the world, becoming a living witness to God's love and truth.

In many parts of the world, full-scale war persists. In a movement of the heart, *motus cordis*, we turn toward all who suffer due to various conflicts – military, political, ideological, religious, social, personal, and even the inner battles we fight within ourselves. In the spirit of the movement of the heart as a response to the call of grace, we allow our hearts to be moved toward others in compassion and solidarity. This movement is guided by love that knows no boundaries. Our heart never

comes to rest (*cor inquietum*) but continually reaches toward others, transforming through closeness and care. Like for Simone Weil, our heart's movement might be one of descent in humility toward the most wounded places, where love can flow like water to the lowest points.

The more faith we lose in people, the more God confirms His faith in us and sends us his Son so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (J 3:16). To perish (ἀπόλλυμι, total annihilation, *Verfallenheit*, can be seen also as the disintegration, *Zerfallenheit*) is to fall out of the horizon of possibility into closure where no *disclosure* (ἀλήθεια) can occur not because of divine rejection but through our own choice to close ourselves off from love and truth. The threat of being lost underscores what might happen if we remain in isolation or reject divine love, framing perishing as a potential reality, not a predetermined fate. Perishing is not just mere loss or death but an existential state of being lost (*Verlorenheit*) to our meaning, destiny, and relational identity in the openness of Being.

We experience the paradox of divine faithfulness in the face of human disillusionment. As trust in people wanes, a more profound calling emerges to recognize God's unwavering trust in humanity. God's love is not abstract but revealed through action. God gives us not something we might actually wish for but his only Son (ὁ μονογενῆς Υἱός). Believing in the divine gift transcends human failures, opening the path to eternal life through divine grace and inviting a transformative response rooted in trust and confidence. Believing (ὁ πιστεύων) is not mere intellectual assent but an existential engagement – a being-open to the possibility of encountering life (ζωή) beyond the confines of temporal existence. Eternal life (ζωή αἰώνιος) emerges as a lived reality within the dynamic space where God's love and human belief intersect. By being brought (back) into the openness of life, we are offered not merely endless existence but life as a process and an unfolding gift characterized by fullness, participation in God, and existential wholeness. Ζωή αἰώνιος is the space of unending *disclosure*, where human beings live fully attuned to the divine. This openness is made possible through belief (πιστεύων), understood as radical trust and participation in God's ongoing work of renewal.

May our hearts move toward God, Who suffers with the suffering, distressed, and afflicted, responding to the divine call of shared humanity and the hope for peace. A very Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!