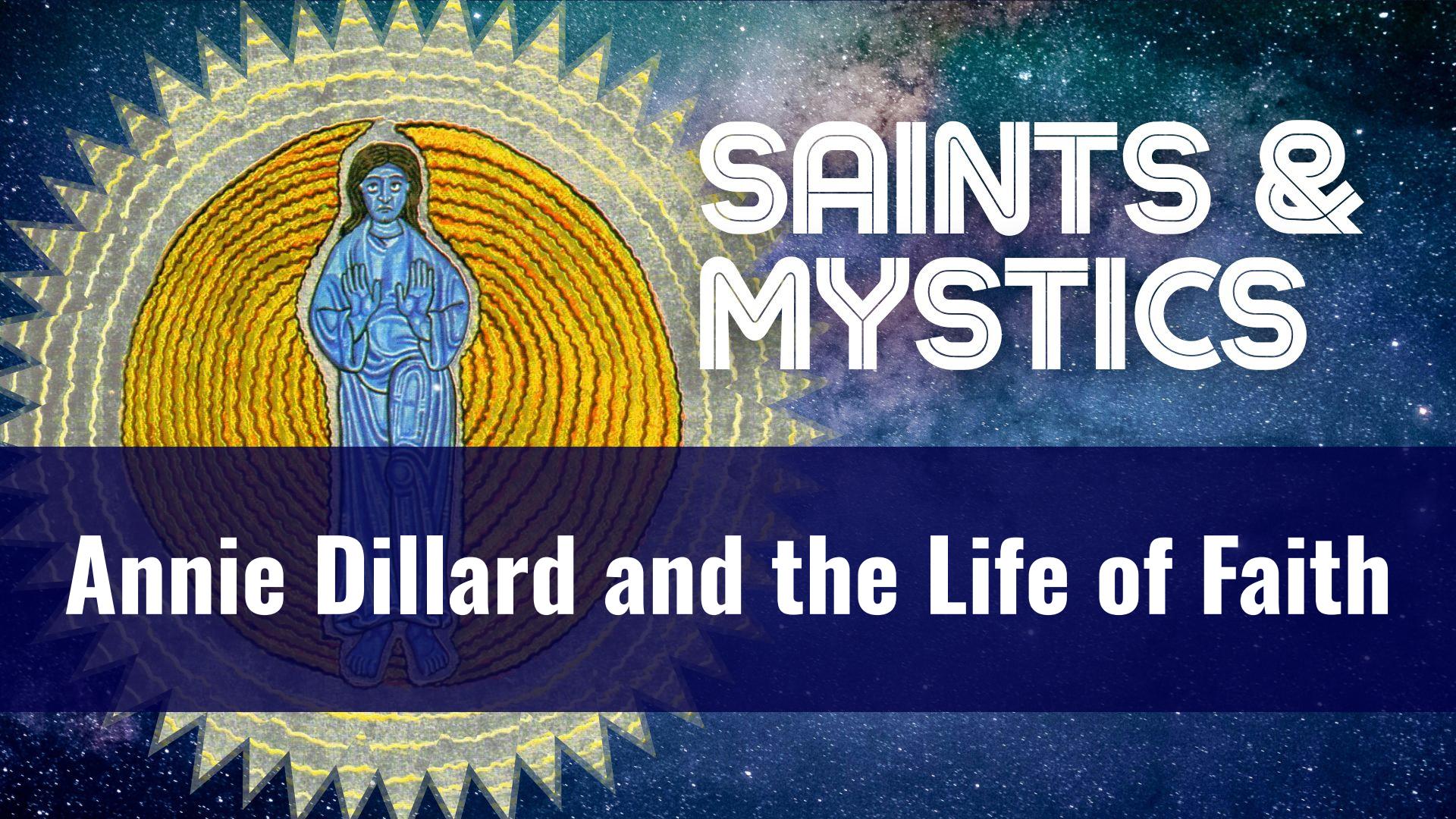


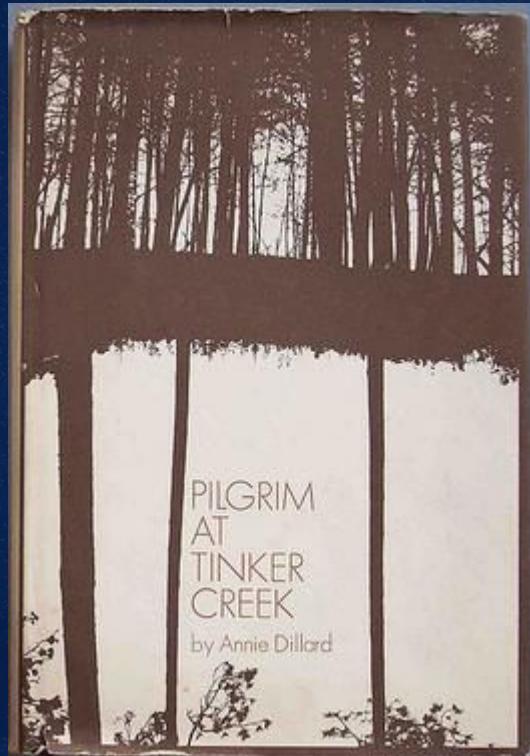


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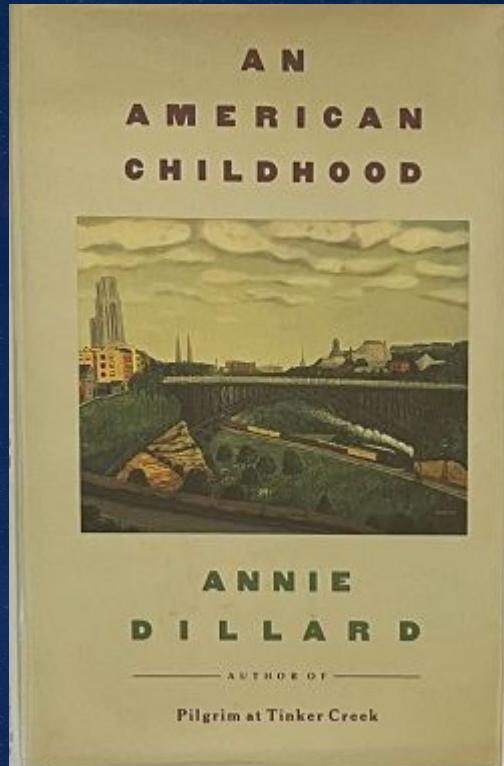


SAINTS & MYSTICS

Annie Dillard and the Life of Faith



Annie Dillard



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mysticism noun

mysticism

'mi-stə-, si-zəm



- 1 : the experience of **mystical** union or direct communion with ultimate reality reported by **mystics**
- 2 : the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience (such as intuition or insight)
- 3 **a** : vague speculation : a belief without sound basis
b : a theory postulating the possibility of direct and intuitive acquisition of ineffable knowledge or power

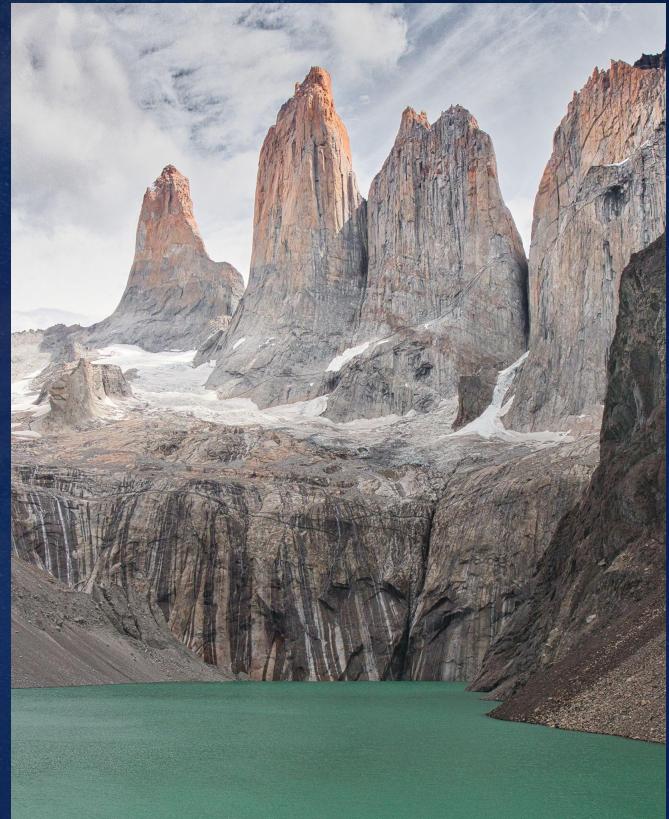


1. How to read the “first Bible,” AKA



“Nature can only be respected, enjoyed, and looked at with admiration and awe. Don’t dare put the second Bible in the hands of people who have not sat lovingly at the feet of the first Bible. They will invariably manipulate, mangle, and murder the written text.”

–Fr. Richard Rohr



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“We can live any way we want. People take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience—even of silence—by choice. The thing is to stalk your calling in a certain skilled and supple way, to locate the most tender and live spot and plug into that pulse. This is yielding, not fighting. A weasel doesn't 'attack' anything; a weasel lives as he's meant to, yielding at every moment to the perfect freedom of single necessity.”



—Teaching a Stone to Talk

“It has always been a happy thought to me that the creek runs on all night, new every minute, whether I wish it or know it or care... So many things have been shown to me on these banks, so much light has illumined me by reflection here where the water comes down, that I can hardly believe that this grace never flags, that the pouring from ever-renewable sources is endless, impartial, and free... I never merited this grace, water careening towards me, inevitably, freely, down a graded series of terraces like the balanced winged platforms on an infinite, inexhaustible font.”

—Pilgrim at Tinker Creek



2. Living Out of Wonder and Astonishment



“Why do you never find anything written about that idiosyncratic thought you advert to, about your fascination with something no one else understands? Because it is up to you. There is something you find interesting, for a reason hard to explain. It is hard to explain because you have never read it on any page; there you begin. You were made and set here to give voice to this, your own astonishment.”

– *The Writing Life*

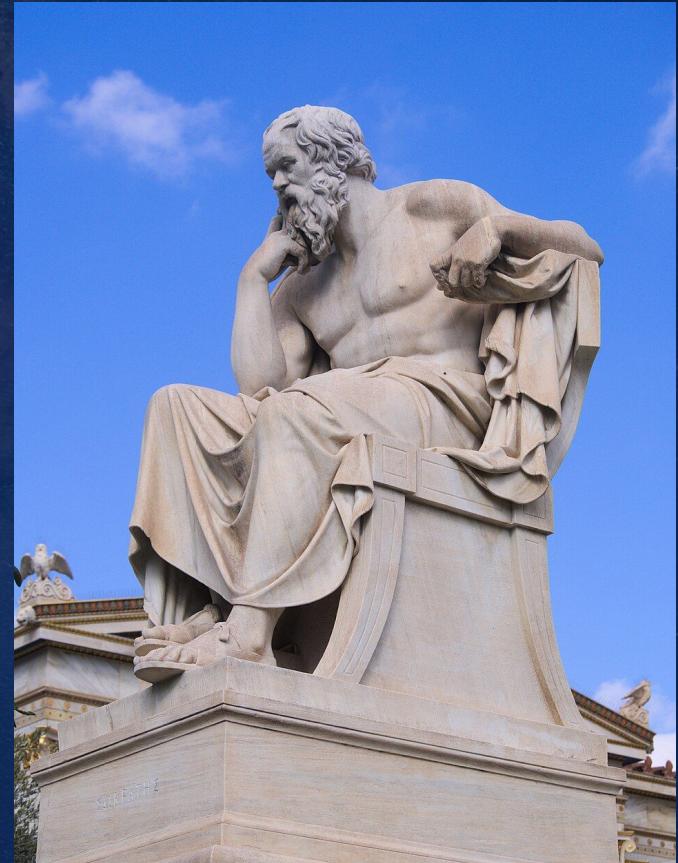


“Wisdom begins in wonder.”

or, put another way...

“Wonder is the beginning of wisdom.”

Attributed to Socrates



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“(O)ne day I was walking along Tinker Creek thinking of nothing at all and I saw the tree with the lights in it. I saw the backyard cedar where the mourning doves roost charged and transfigured, each cell buzzing with flame. I stood on the grass with the lights in it, grass that was wholly fire, utterly focused and utterly dreamed. It was less like seeing than like being for the first time seen, knocked breathless by a powerful glance. The lights of the fire abated, but I’m still spending the power...”

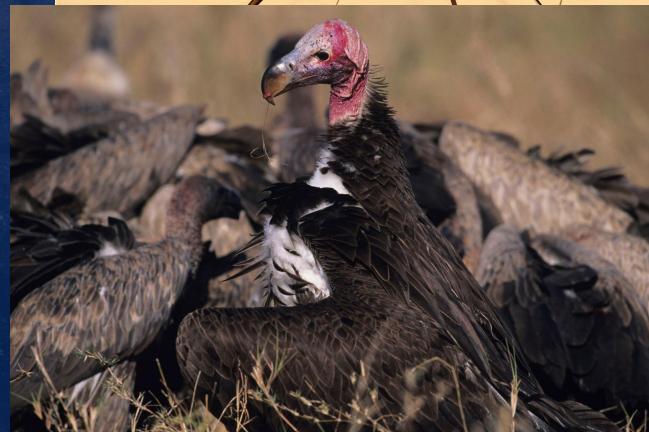


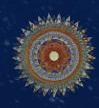
“...Gradually the lights went out in the cedar, the colors died, the cells unflamed and disappeared. I was still ringing. I had my whole life been a bell, and never knew it until at that moment I was lifted and struck. I have since only rarely seen the tree with the lights in it. The vision comes and goes, mostly goes, but I live for it, for the moment when the mountains open and a new light roars in spate through the crack, and the mountains slam.”

—Pilgrim at Tinker Creek



3. Embracing Reality Without



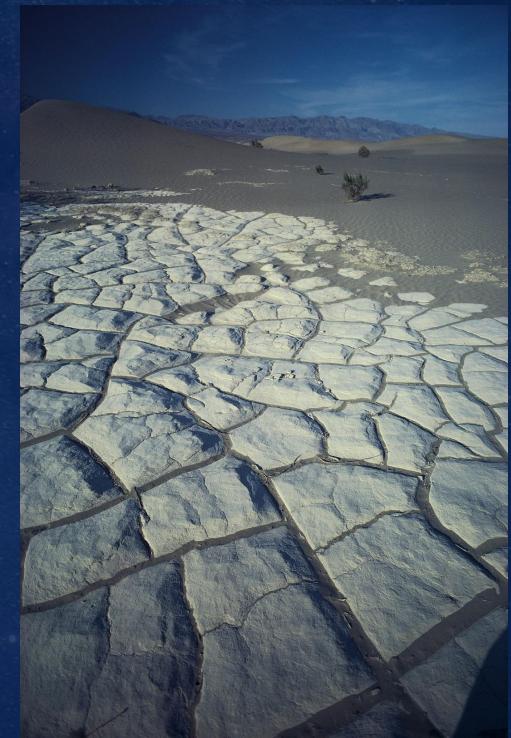
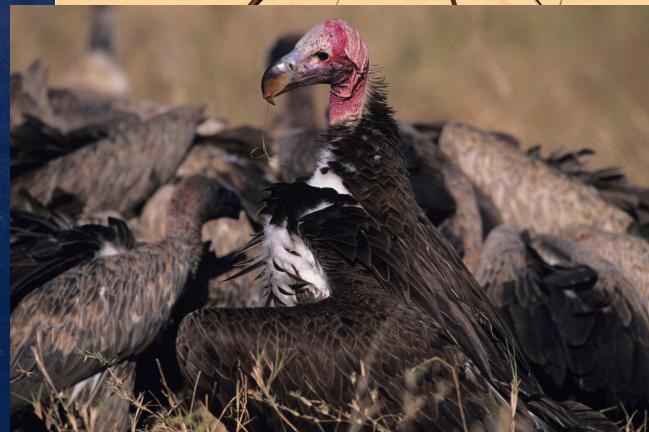


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3. Embracing Reality Without



“And then this moth essence, this spectacular skeleton, began to act as a wick. She kept burning. The wax rose in the moth’s body from her soaking abdomen to her thorax to the jagged hole where her head should be, and widened into flame, a saffron-yellow flame that robed her to the ground like any immolating monk. That candle had two wicks, two flames of identical height, side by side. The moth’s head was fire. She burned for two hours, until I blew her out...”



“... She burned for two hours without changing, without bending or leaning—only glowing within, like a building fire glimpsed through silhouetted walls, like a hollow saint, like a flame-faced virgin gone to God, while I read by her light, kindled, while Rimbaud in Paris burned out his brains in a thousand poems, while night pooled wetly at my feet.”

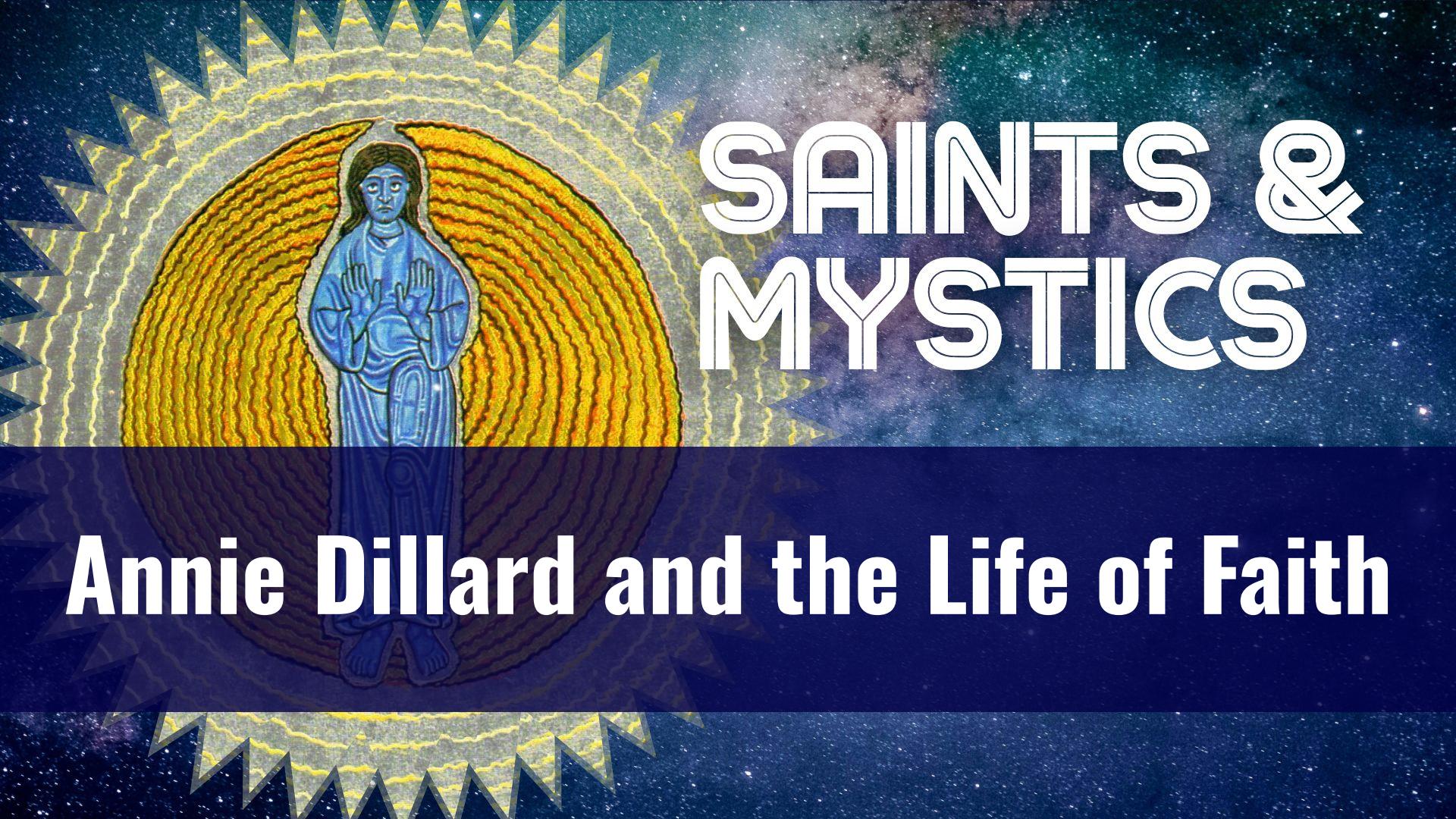
– *Holy the Firm*



“In the deeps are the violence and terror of which psychology has warned us. But if you ride these monsters down, if you drop with them farther over the world’s rim, you find what our sciences cannot locate or name, the substrate, the ocean or matrix or ether which buoys the rest, which gives goodness its power for good, and evil its power of evil, the unified field: our complex and inexplicable caring for each other, and for our life together here. This is given. It is not learned.”

– *Teaching a Stone to Talk*





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