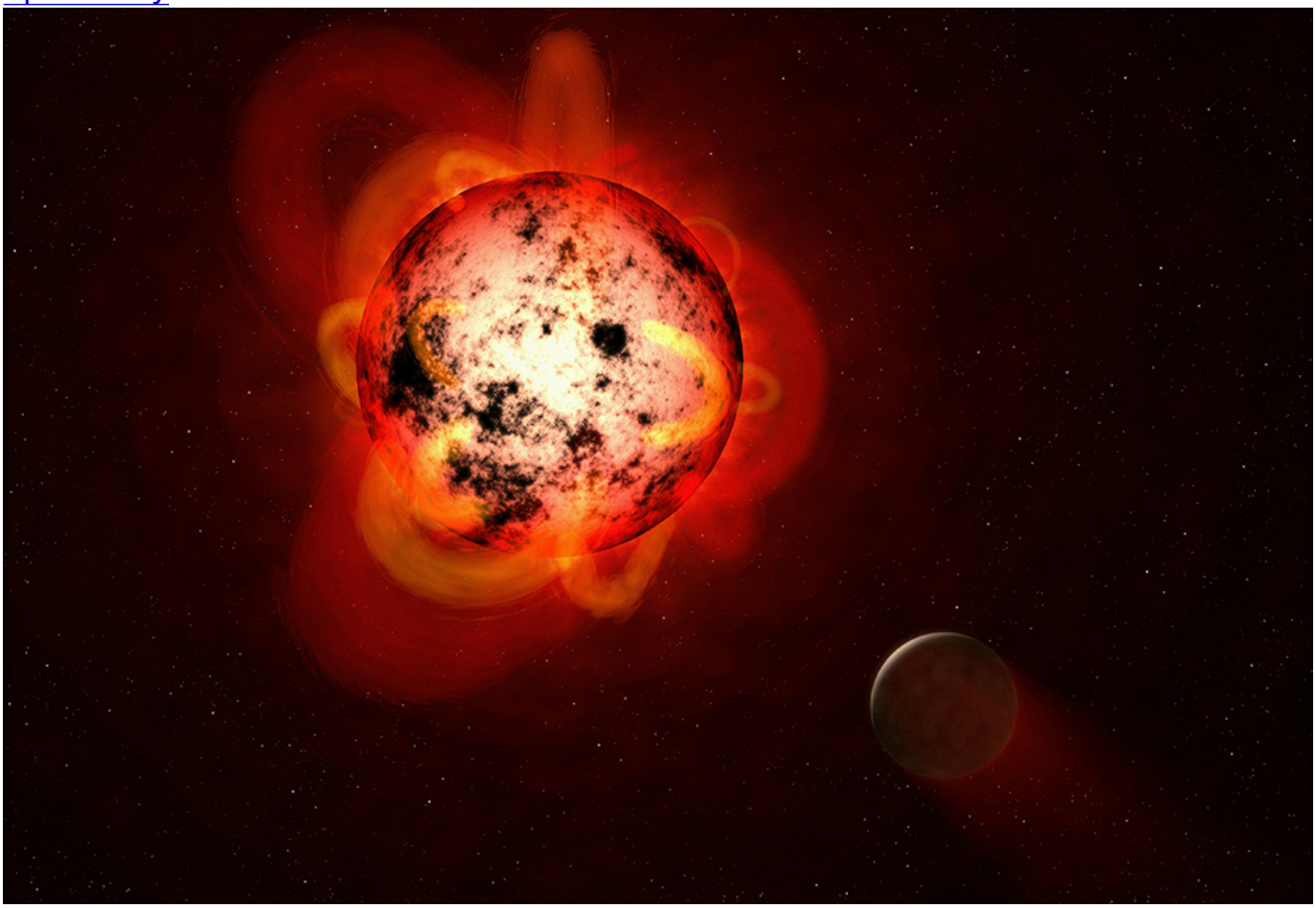
Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



This illustration shows a red dwarf star orbited by a hypothetical exoplanet. (Unsplash/NASA Hubble Space Telescope/ESA/G. Bacon)



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In March 1975, I was 19 years old and an enthusiastic philosophy student, filled with grand dreams of helping transform the world, awakening people to their rights, and working for justice. Along with a group of friends who shared the conviction that philosophy was not an office-bound discipline but an instrument for social change, we produced a modest magazine using the means available at the time. In it, I published the short story I now share.

Not long ago, I found it among the things my father had kept over the years. Reading it again, I felt as though I were hearing from afar the echoes of a search that had once been intense and, at times, anguishing.

> **The Red Star**
>
> *He set out in search of a red star, radiant and as immense as his longing to find it. He abandoned his comfortable life as a counter of stars — stars he never had time to admire. With all his soul, he desired to possess a great, brilliant red star, to gaze upon it day and night, to place it in a niche or hang it in his room and worship it as only a star can be worshipped.*
>
> *His first problem was deciding where to search for it.*
>
> *He began with the sea, that blue desert sown with blue dunes — dunes as fleeting as roses shedding their petals in the wind, like the romantic love of adolescence.*
>
> *He scrutinized every wave the sea offered him during the long hours he spent sitting on the shore, his hands tirelessly turning over the damp, soft, deceptive, hypocritical sand. But he did not find it.*
>
> *He plunged beneath the surface and descended to the depths of every sea in the world. He was embraced by the waters of all the oceans. He made a*

companion of every grain of salt and a friend of every drop of water. He walked for a long, long time, leaving upon the sandy seabed sad, mortal, futile footprints that the sea erased behind him because they would serve no one anymore.

But there were no stars there.

He wanted to go deeper still, to sink to the center of the earth, to the fiery core where red stars are born. But he was not permitted to do so because he had not been sufficiently purified.

Someone told him that he had not known how to search, that the sea was filled with stars of many colors, that they were like flowers in valleys untouched by human hands, like Neptune's smiles scattered by the sea nymphs.

But he was not looking for smiles or flowers. He wanted only a red star, one that burned hotter than the sun, one that would paint his afternoons, his days, and his nights red — a torrent of Red that would embrace him and claim him forever.

So, he began to travel the endless roads of the earth, roads that do not arrive but depart, roads that move inexorably toward nothingness, a circular path in which every moment is different.

Along his journey he heard the voices of children calling for his presence, the words of women inviting him or offering to accompany him, and the cries of men who envied his destiny or wished to help him.

But he kept going, his gaze fixed straight ahead and his ears attentive only to the footsteps of his Star. Yet by walking so long without listening, he became deaf.

And he did not hear his Star.

Then he wished to continue his search in the fishless seas, in the abyssal ocean of the universe, along infinite routes even more boundless than the earth's circular path, in a solitude lonelier than that of the sea whipped by the winds.

He thought to call out to his Star. But if she answered, he could not hear her; and if he heard her, he did not listen, because the language she spoke was not human, because her voice lay beyond all sound.

And he kept walking along ethereal paths that he himself was creating.

Many other stars crossed his way, small, white, everyday stars. But he could see nothing except his own, the one that perhaps did not even exist. The small stars of every night tried to show him the Way, but he could not see, and from walking so long without seeing, he became blind.

And he did not see his Star.

Some cold wandering nebulae, drifting along their eternal circular routes, touched him, enveloped him, embraced him, made him their own, and he never noticed. He awaited only the burning embrace of the red fire of his red Star.

And while waiting to find warmth, he could feel neither the cold nor even what was merely warm. By walking so long without feeling, he became numb.

And he did not feel his Star.

After centuries of wandering — after millennia — a being who could not see searched, alone, for a Great Red Star; a being who could not hear searched, alone, for a star whose footsteps sounded like rustling leaves; a being who could not feel searched, alone, for a warm Star.

And he did not find it.

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As I reread this story, I recognize myself in it.

I had great ambitions, and I did not want anything or anyone to stand in the way of my goals. I did not enjoy working with others; I felt that on my own I moved faster and did things better. Yet at the same time, I had an intuition that this was not the way, that I was in danger of losing the very capacity to find my Star.

Soon afterward, life began dismantling my certainties. I, who had been firmly determined never to date anyone in order to preserve my independence, fell in love with a fellow student, and we began a relationship that came with surprising ease.

And just as I turned 20, Jesus of Nazareth came into my life and called me to follow him in that infinite ideal that alone was capable of filling my heart.

I discovered that the Star was not something I could possess, nor a goal I could reach on my own. It was a call.

And it was a journey to be shared with others: with Him and with a community of brothers and sisters equally drawn by the Gospel.

For many years now, I have carried with me a verse by León Felipe:

> I keep the reins tight and hold back my flight, because what matters is not arriving alone or quickly, but arriving together and in time.

So here is the story.

And here is the question that remains for me: How often, in the search for our vocation, our dreams, or even God himself, do we become so intent on finding one great star that we fail to see the small lights that appear along our way, fail to hear the voices calling to us, or fail to feel the embraces already pointing us toward the path?

Or perhaps … had I not searched with such intensity, such passion, such determination, I would never have discovered how, with whom, and with Whom I was meant to walk the journey.