THE DAILY BREAD

The Creed of the Apostles



The Holy Spirit

Person, Gifts, Power

A FORMATION BOOK BY

Kendall Peterson

The Everyday Apostle

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INTRODUCTION

The God You Pray To Without Knowing

A man can pray to the Holy Spirit every day of his life and never once stop to ask who he is praying to. He says the words at the start of a hard meeting, or on the drive to the hospital, or at the beginning of a decision he cannot see the end of: Come, Holy Spirit. The words are good and the instinct behind them is right. But if you pressed him, that same man might struggle to say anything precise about the One he is calling on. The Father he can picture. The Son he can name and love. The Spirit remains a kind of holy blur, a presence he senses but could not describe, a word at the end of the Sign of the Cross that he makes without thinking.

This is not entirely his fault. Of the three divine Persons, the Spirit is the one who does not draw attention to himself. The Father is the source; the Son took flesh and walked the earth with a face and a name; the Spirit works quietly, pointing always away from himself and toward the Son. He is, in a sense, the shy member of the Trinity, and he is easy to overlook precisely because overlooking himself is part of how he works. Acts of the Apostles invoked him at every turn, in every prayer and every sacrament, but it never stopped to teach him. And a man deserves to know the God he prays to.

He deserves to know who the Spirit is, what the Spirit has already placed within him, and what it would mean to stop ignoring that presence and start cooperating with it. This is not a luxury for the spiritually advanced. It is the difference between a Christianity lived on a man's own strength, which eventually runs out, and a Christianity lived on the strength of God himself, which does not.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. — John 16:13

That is the promise this book rests on. The Spirit is not content to be a blur. He wants to be known. We will look first at who he is, a divine Person and not a force. We will trace him through the whole story of salvation, from the first page of Genesis to the fire of Pentecost. We will see what he poured into you at your Baptism and sealed in you at your Confirmation, the seven gifts he gave you to work with and the fruit he wants to grow in you. We will learn what it means to be led by him day by day. And we will see, at the end, why all of this is the engine of the mission that is coming.

The aim is simple. The next time you say Come, Holy Spirit, you will know exactly who you are speaking to, and you will mean it with your whole weight.

CHAPTER ONE

Not a Force, but a Person

The Third Person of the Trinity

Begin where most men have quietly gone wrong without ever noticing. We tend to speak of the Holy Spirit the way we speak of electricity. He is the power that gets switched on, the energy that fills a room, the influence that moves through a crowd. We ask to be filled with him as though he were a substance poured into a container. And without deciding to, we end up treating the Spirit as a thing, an it, a force at our disposal.

The Temptation to Make Him an It

The language gives it away. A man will say he wants more of the Spirit, as if the Spirit came in quantities. He will talk about the Spirit as power for a task, fuel for a work, almost a resource to be drawn on. None of that is entirely wrong, because the Spirit does work in power. But it is dangerously incomplete, because it leaves out the one thing that matters most. The Holy Spirit is not an it. He is a He. He is not a force that God sends. He is God, a Person in his own right, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, equal to the Father and the Son.

Fully God

The Church confesses this every Sunday, though the words go by quickly. In the Creed we say that the Holy Spirit is the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified. Every phrase is deliberate. He is called Lord, the name reserved for God alone. He is the giver of life, doing what only God can do. He is adored and glorified together with the Father and the Son, which the Church would never say of a creature or a force, because worship belongs to God alone. The Spirit is not a lesser member of the Trinity, not an afterthought, not the junior partner. He is fully and completely God.

The Church did not arrive at this language carelessly, and the precision was bought at a cost. In the fourth century a group arose who were willing to grant that the Son was divine but denied it of the Spirit, treating him as a kind of exalted creature, the greatest of the angels perhaps, but not God. The Church recognized the stakes at once. A creature cannot give the life of God, cannot make a soul holy, cannot be worshipped. If the Spirit who sanctifies us is not God, then we are not actually being joined to God at all. So the Council of Constantinople, in the year 381, expanded the Creed to say exactly what it now says, that the Spirit is Lord and giver of life, adored and glorified with the Father and the

Son. The words you pray at Mass are a line held against an ancient error. They are worth praying as what they are.

Truly Personal

And he is a Person, which means he does the things only a person can do. He teaches. He speaks. He guides. He bears witness. He can be grieved, which a force cannot be, because you cannot wound an electric current but you can wound a heart. Scripture says he distributes his gifts to each one individually as he wills, and a will is the mark of a person, not a thing. He is called the Paraclete, the Advocate, the Comforter, every one of those words naming someone who stands beside you, not something you use. When you deal with the Holy Spirit, you are not operating a power. You are in the presence of Someone who knows you, loves you, and acts toward you with intention.

Paul goes further still, and says something almost startling: that in our weakness, when we do not know how to pray as we ought, the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. The Spirit prays within you. He is not a tool you take up to reach God; he is God, already within you, carrying your halting prayers to the Father from the inside. A force does not intercede. A Person does.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things. — John 14:26

Why This Changes How You Pray

This is not a technicality for theologians. It changes everything about how a man prays. If the Spirit is a force, then prayer is a matter of technique, of saying the right words to switch on the power. But if the Spirit is a Person, then prayer is a relationship, and what he wants from you is not the correct formula but your attention, your trust, your willingness to be led. When you say Come, Holy Spirit, you are not reaching for a lever. You are turning toward Someone who is already there, closer to you than you are to yourself, waiting to be acknowledged. The whole of this book flows from that one correction. He is not an it. He is a Person, and he wants to be known as one.

CHAPTER TWO

The Spirit Across the Whole Story

From the First Breath to the Rushing Wind

The Holy Spirit did not arrive at Pentecost. He has been present and at work from the very first verse of the Bible, moving through the whole story of salvation, and seeing his work across that story is the surest way to grasp who he is. The same Spirit who hovered over the waters at creation is the Spirit who was given to you at your Baptism. He has one unbroken history, and you are part of it.

Hovering Over the Waters

Open to the first page of Genesis. Before there is light, before there is land, the earth is formless and void, and the Spirit of God is moving over the face of the waters. The Hebrew word is ruah, which means breath, or wind, or spirit, all at once. It is the breath of God brooding over the raw material of creation, ready to bring order out of chaos and life out of emptiness. From the very beginning, the Spirit is the one through whom God brings life into being. Hold that image, because it never stops being true. Wherever there is formlessness and void, in the world or in a man's own soul, the Spirit is the one who broods over it and makes it live.

The same breath appears again when God forms the first man from the dust and breathes into him the breath of life. Man does not become a living soul until the breath of God enters him. This is worth a moment's weight, because it is the pattern of your own life in grace. By nature you are dust given breath; by grace you are dust in whom the Spirit of God has come to dwell. What the Spirit did for the first man, forming lifeless clay into a living soul, he does again for every man he fills, forming a soul dead in sin into one alive to God.

The Breath in the Prophets

The story continues. The same Creed that calls the Spirit the giver of life says that he has spoken through the prophets. Across the Old Testament, the Spirit comes upon chosen men and women and makes them capable of what they could never do on their own. He rushes upon judges and kings. He fills the craftsmen who build the tabernacle. He speaks through Isaiah and Ezekiel and Joel, who foretold that one day God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh. For most of that history the Spirit came upon a few, for a time, for a task. The prophets themselves looked forward to a day when he would be given to everyone, and poured out without measure.

And the prophets made the promise personal in a way that reaches all the way to you. Through Ezekiel, God said: I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you; I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. Through Joel, he promised to pour out his Spirit on all flesh, on sons and daughters, old men and young. These were not predictions of a distant curiosity. They were the announcement,

centuries in advance, of exactly what happened to you at the font. The new heart, the Spirit placed within, the ability to walk in God's ways that no man has by nature, all of it was promised to the prophets and given to you.

The Overshadowing

That day begins in a small room in Nazareth. When the angel tells Mary she will bear a son, she asks how this can be, and the answer names the Spirit directly: the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. The same Spirit who hovered over the waters of creation now overshadows the Virgin, and the Word takes flesh in her womb. The Spirit who brought the first creation into being now begins the new creation in the body of Mary. Everything the Spirit had been doing across the centuries was moving toward this, and from here it moves toward you.

And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and there appeared to them tongues as of fire. — Acts 2:2-3

Wind and Fire

Then comes Pentecost. The disciples are gathered in one room, still frightened, still the same men who had run and hidden and denied. The Spirit descends on them in wind and fire, and they are not the same again. The men who had locked the doors throw them open and go out to proclaim Christ to a hostile city, and three thousand are baptized in a day. This is the moment the prophets had foreseen, the Spirit poured out not on a few but on all, the birth of the Church. And the point for you is this: the Spirit given that morning is the same Spirit given to you. The story that runs from the waters of creation to the fire of Pentecost runs straight into your own Baptism. You are not reading ancient history. You are reading your own lineage.

CHAPTER THREE

Already Given

What Baptism and Confirmation Placed in You

Here is the truth that most changes a man's life once he grasps it: if you are baptized and confirmed, the Holy Spirit is not someone you are waiting to receive. He has already been given to you. He dwells in you now, at this moment, as you read. The Christian life is not a matter of summoning an absent God but of waking up to a present one.

Poured Out in Baptism

At your Baptism, you were born again of water and the Spirit, in the words Jesus himself used. You did not merely join a religion or get your sins washed away, though your sins were washed away. You received the very life of God into your soul, and the One who brought that life is the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul says that God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Poured into, not sprinkled on. From the day of your Baptism, the Spirit has made his home in you, and the love of God has a channel directly into your heart.

It is worth being precise about what this indwelling means, because it is the center of the whole Christian life. The life of God in the soul has a name: sanctifying grace. It is not a feeling or a reward for good behavior; it is a real sharing in the life of God himself, and it is the Holy Spirit who brings it and the Holy Spirit who is its author. And he does not come alone. Where the Spirit is, the Father and the Son are also, for the three Persons are never divided. Jesus promised exactly this: if a man loves me, my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. The whole Trinity takes up residence in the soul in grace. The man in a state of grace carries God within him as truly as the Temple in Jerusalem once carried the divine presence, and more intimately still.

Sealed in Confirmation

What Baptism began, Confirmation completed. In Confirmation you were sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, strengthened and equipped for the work of an adult Christian. If Baptism gave you the Spirit's life, Confirmation gave you the Spirit's power for mission, the same strengthening that turned the frightened disciples into bold witnesses at Pentecost. The sacrament left a permanent seal on your soul, a mark that cannot be undone, claiming you for Christ. Many men treat their Confirmation as a childhood graduation they have long outgrown. In fact it was the day the Spirit armed you for exactly the life you are now trying to live.

The older language called the confirmed man a soldier of Christ, and the image, though unfashionable, is exact. A soldier is not given his commission for his own benefit but for a battle and a cause beyond himself. Confirmation was never meant to be the end of a boy's religious schooling. It was meant to be the arming of a man for the field. If you have carried your Confirmation as a memory of something that happened to you at thirteen, it is worth recovering as something that equipped you for what you are forty, or fifty, trying to do now: to stand, to witness, to lead a household and hold a line in a culture that will not help you.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? — 1 Corinthians 6:19

The Temple of the Holy Spirit

Paul draws the obvious conclusion, and it is worth sitting with. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Not a symbol of one, not a place he visits, but a temple where God actually dwells. This is why what you do with your body and your soul is never a private matter between you and yourself. The God of the universe has taken up residence in you. It dignifies everything, your work, your suffering, your ordinary day, because all of it is lived in the presence of the One who lives within. And it sobers everything, because the sins a man is tempted to treat as nobody's business are committed in the temple of God.

You Need Not Beg for What You Have

All of this means that the prayer Come, Holy Spirit is not a request for a distant God to travel to you. He is already here. The prayer is better understood as an awakening, a turning of your attention to the Guest who has been dwelling in you all along, often unnoticed. Saint Paul told Timothy to stir into flame the gift of God that was in him. He did not tell him to go and get a gift he lacked. He told him to fan into fire a gift already given that had been allowed to burn low. That is the real work. Not acquiring the Spirit, but stirring up the Spirit you already have.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Seven Gifts

What He Placed in You to Work With

When the Spirit came to dwell in you, he did not come empty-handed. He brought with him seven gifts, named by the prophet Isaiah and handed down by the Church, and they are given to make a man capable of being led by God. They are not rewards for the holy few. They are the standard equipment of every soul in a state of grace, dispositions planted in you that make you responsive to the Spirit's quiet lead.

Dispositions, Not Techniques

Understand first what these gifts are. They are not skills you develop or feelings you work up. They are permanent dispositions that make a man docile to the Holy Spirit, ready to be moved by him the way sails are ready to be moved by the wind. A man can row his own boat by his own strength, and the Christian life can be lived that way for a while, grimly, by willpower. The gifts are what let a man raise the sail instead, so that the Spirit himself carries him where his own effort never could. They are already in you. The question is whether you will put up the sail.

This is why two men can receive the same sacraments and live such different lives. The gifts are given to both, but one leaves the sail furled and tries to row, and the other raises it and is carried. The difference is not that one man has more of the Spirit than the other. It is that one has learned to yield to the Spirit he has. Everything that follows about the seven gifts is really an account of what becomes possible in a man who stops rowing and lets himself be moved.

Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge

Three of the gifts work in the mind. Wisdom gives a man a taste for the things of God, the ability to see his life and his choices from God's vantage point rather than the world's, and to find in God a sweetness that the world cannot counterfeit. Understanding gives him insight into the truths of the faith, so that the things he professes stop being words and start being seen, grasped from the inside. Knowledge lets him judge created things rightly, to see money and success and pleasure for what they actually are, good in their place and ruinous when they take God's place. Together these three gifts slowly give a man the mind of Christ, so that he thinks less like the world and more like the One who dwells in him.

Counsel and Fortitude

Two of the gifts are made for the moment of action. Counsel is the gift of knowing the right thing to do in the concrete situation, the prompting of the Spirit in a decision where the rulebook runs out and you must simply act. It is the quiet clarity that tells a man, in the actual meeting, in the actual argument, what faithfulness requires right now. And fortitude is the gift of doing it. Fortitude is the Spirit's own strength given to a man to carry through what counsel shows him, to endure what must be endured, to stand when standing is costly and to keep going when his own courage is spent. A man armed with counsel and fortitude has exactly what he needs when the hard moment comes and there is no time to deliberate.

Piety and Fear of the Lord

The last two gifts shape the heart's whole stance toward God. Piety is the gift of approaching God not as a distant judge but as a Father, with the affection and trust of a son, so that prayer becomes relationship rather than duty. And fear of the Lord, the gift most often misunderstood, is not the cringing dread of a slave. It is the reverence of a son who loves his father so much that the thought of wounding him is unbearable, a holy horror of sin born not of terror but of love. Taken together, the seven gifts are the Spirit's

own toolkit, placed in you so that you can be led by God in the mind, in the moment, and in the heart.

The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. — Isaiah 11:2

CHAPTER FIVE

The Fruit of a Yielded Life

How to Tell the Spirit Is at Work

If the gifts are what the Spirit gives a man to work with, the fruit is what the Spirit grows in a man over time. And the fruit is how you tell, honestly, whether a soul is actually yielded to the Spirit or only talks about him. Jesus gave the test himself: by their fruits you will know them. Not by their feelings, not by their words, not by the intensity of their religious experiences, but by what their lives actually produce.

By Their Fruits

This is a mercy for ordinary men, because it moves the evidence of the Spirit's work off the unreliable ground of emotion and onto the solid ground of character. A man may have a dramatic experience in prayer and be no holier for it. Another man may feel nothing and be quietly becoming a saint. The question is never how a man feels but what he is becoming. Is he more patient than he was a year ago, or less? More honest, or more evasive? Kinder under pressure, or sharper? The Spirit's presence is proven not in goosebumps but in the slow, unmistakable remaking of a man's character.

This is also where a man should go when he doubts whether the Spirit is in him at all, as most men do in dry seasons. Do not look for a feeling; look for fruit. Ask the men who live with you and work with you whether you are easier or harder to be around than you were. The honest answer to that question tells you more about the state of your soul than any amount of spiritual emotion. And it points to the remedy, which is never to manufacture a feeling but to return to the source from which the fruit grows.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. — Galatians 5:22-23

Love, Joy, and Peace

Paul names the fruit, and the order is not accidental. Love comes first because it is the root of all the rest, the very life of God poured into the heart, charity that wills the good of others at a cost to oneself. From love comes joy, which is not the same as cheerfulness and does not depend on things going well, a deep gladness that can coexist with real suffering because it is anchored in God and not in circumstances. And from joy comes peace, the settled interior stillness that the world cannot give and cannot take, the calm of a man whose life is ordered toward God even when his life is hard. These first three are the fruit turned toward God. A man growing in them is a man in whom the Spirit is at work.

Patience, Kindness, and the Rest

The remaining fruit turns toward other people, and it is here that most men are tested daily. Patience, the long fuse with difficult people and slow progress. Kindness and goodness, the active willing of others' good in small and unglamorous ways. Faithfulness, the reliability of a man whose word holds. Gentleness, strength under control, power that does not need to dominate. Self-control, the mastery of appetite and anger that keeps a man free. The tradition, following the older Latin reckoning, counts twelve fruits in all, adding generosity, modesty, and chastity to Paul's list. The exact number matters less than the pattern: wherever the Spirit is genuinely at work, a man becomes, over time, more like this.

Fruit Grows, It Is Not Forced

And notice that Paul calls it fruit, not achievement. This is the crucial thing. You cannot manufacture patience by gritting your teeth, or produce real gentleness by force of will, any more than you can force an apple to appear on a branch by sheer effort. Fruit grows, quietly and from within, when the branch stays joined to the vine. Jesus used exactly that image: abide in me, he said, for apart from me you can do nothing. Your part is not to strain for the fruit directly but to stay connected to the Spirit, to abide, to keep the channels of grace open through prayer and the sacraments.

And your part is also to stop choking it. Paul warns, in the same letters where he describes the fruit, that the Spirit can be grieved, and that a man can quench the Spirit as surely as water quenches fire. Sin clung to, comfort chosen over obedience, a prompting refused often enough that it stops coming, all of this smothers what the Spirit is trying to grow. The remedy is not complicated, though it is not easy: keep the connection to the vine, refuse what strangles the fruit, and then be patient. The fruit comes on its own, in its season. It always does.

CHAPTER SIX

Led by the Spirit

Walking in Him Day by Day

All of this comes down, finally, to a single practice: learning to be led. The Christian life, lived well, is a life conducted under the quiet direction of the Spirit who dwells within, and Paul makes being led the very mark of belonging to God. The gifts make a man capable of it and the fruit is its evidence, but the thing itself is daily and practical. It is the difference between a man who runs his own life and occasionally consults God, and a man who has handed the direction of his life over to the Spirit and learned to follow.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. — Romans 8:14

Sons Are Led

Paul's words are worth weighing. The mark of a son of God, he says, is not that he is powerful or impressive or even that he never fails. It is that he is led by the Spirit. A slave is driven by fear and a hired man by wages, but a son is led by love and trust, close enough to his father to follow his lead without being forced. To be led by the Spirit is therefore not a loss of your manhood but the fullest expression of your sonship. The strongest men in the Church's history were not the self-directed ones. They were the ones most completely surrendered to the lead of the Spirit.

The Interior Teacher

How does the Spirit lead? Most often quietly, from within. He is the interior teacher who brings the words of Christ to mind at the moment you need them, who convicts you of a sin you had grown comfortable with, who consoles you in a grief no one else can reach, who nudges you toward the phone call or the apology or the act of courage you would rather avoid. He is the Paraclete, the Advocate who pleads your cause and the Comforter who steadies you. His voice is rarely loud. It comes in the prompting you almost talked yourself out of, the peace that settles over a right decision, the unease that will not leave you alone about a wrong one.

Cooperating Rather Than Ignoring

The tragedy is that most men ignore him. Not out of rebellion, usually, but out of noise and hurry and never making the space to listen. The Spirit does not shout over the clamor of a distracted life. A man who wants to be led must build in the silence where leading can be heard, a few honest minutes of prayer, a nightly look back over the day to notice

where the Spirit was moving and whether he followed or refused. This is simple cooperation: showing up, getting quiet, and saying in effect, lead and I will follow. The Spirit will not force a man who will not listen. But to the man who makes even a little room, he proves himself a faithful guide.

Discerning His Voice

A man learns, over time, to tell the Spirit's voice from the many others, and the Church has centuries of wisdom to help him. The first test is never in doubt: the Spirit never contradicts the Scriptures or the teaching of the Church, because he is their author, and a prompting that pulls a man away from what God has revealed is not from God, however spiritual it feels. Within that boundary, there is a second test the saints have taught. The Spirit's lead tends to carry a deep and quiet peace even when it calls a man to something hard, drawing him outward toward God and his neighbor. The pull in the other direction, even when it is dressed up as good, tends to leave agitation, a subtle anxiety, a turning in on the self.

So a man asks, of a strong inner prompting: does this square with the faith, or quietly bend it? Does it leave me peaceful and turned toward God, or restless and turned toward myself? Does it make me more loving, or only more impressive? Peace that draws you toward God and neighbor, aligned with the faith and bearing the fruit we have already named, is the signature of the Holy Spirit. A man who learns to read it is a man who has learned to walk with God, and he will not be easily deceived.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Spirit and the Mission

Why These Are Missionary Gifts

Everything in this book has been building toward a sending. The Spirit was not given to you only for your own comfort or your private sanctification, real as those are. He was given to make you a witness, and the gifts and fruit and leading we have traced are, at bottom, missionary equipment. The program that comes next, Mission of the Apostles, will put all of it to work. But the engine of that mission is the Spirit, and it is worth seeing now why that is so.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses. — Acts 1:8

You Will Receive Power

These were among the last words of Jesus before the Ascension, and they are a promise and a pattern. The disciples were not yet ready to be witnesses; they were frightened and would scatter. Jesus did not tell them to try harder. He told them to wait for power from on high, the coming of the Spirit, and then they would be his witnesses. And it happened exactly so. The same men, filled with the same Spirit you have received, turned the world over. The pattern has not changed. A man witnesses to Christ not out of his own natural courage or cleverness but out of the power of the Spirit who dwells in him.

Counsel, Fortitude, and Knowledge for the Work

Look again at the gifts and see how perfectly they fit the mission. When a man faces the resistant colleague, the questioning son, the friend who has drifted from the faith, what does he need? He needs counsel, to know what to say and when to stay silent. He needs fortitude, the courage to speak at all when it would be easier to let it pass. He needs knowledge and understanding, to give a reason for his hope without arrogance and without retreat. These are not natural talents that some men have and others lack. They are gifts of the Spirit, already given, waiting to be stirred into flame in exactly the moments the mission will demand them.

Not Your Eloquence, but His Power

This takes an enormous weight off a man's shoulders. Jesus told his disciples not to worry beforehand about what they would say, for the Holy Spirit would teach them in that very hour. The pressure a man feels about evangelizing, that he must be eloquent, that he must win every argument, that he must have every answer polished and ready, is a pressure the Spirit never asked him to carry. His job is to be faithful, to be present, to live a life that raises the question and to open his mouth when the moment comes. Paul put it plainly: one man plants, another waters, but God gives the growth. You plant and you water. The opening of the other heart, the actual conversion, is the Spirit's work, and never was yours to accomplish.

The Bridge to Mission

So the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is not the end of anything. It is the bridge. A man who knows the Spirit as a Person, who has stirred up the gifts and let the fruit grow and learned to be led, is a man ready to be sent. Creed of the Apostles has been building the hearth. The Spirit is the fire that will be carried out of it into the world. The knowledge you have gained here becomes, in the next program, the power to give it away.

CONCLUSION

The One You Pray To

Return, now, to the man in the pew, the man on the drive to the hospital, the man at the start of the hard decision, saying the words almost without thinking: Come, Holy Spirit. He is not praying into a blur anymore.

He knows now that he is speaking to a Person, the Third Person of the Trinity, fully God, who knows him and loves him and acts toward him with intention. He knows that this Person has been at work since the first breath over the waters of creation, that he overshadowed the Virgin and fell in fire at Pentecost, and that the very same Spirit was poured into his own soul at Baptism and sealed there at Confirmation. He knows that his own body is a temple where God dwells. He knows that he carries seven gifts given to make him capable of being led, and that the Spirit is patiently growing a fruit in him that no amount of willpower could force. He knows what it means to be led, and how to tell the Spirit's voice from the noise. And he knows that all of it is meant, in the end, to make him a witness.

So when he says Come, Holy Spirit, he is no longer begging a distant God to travel to him. He is turning, with his whole weight, to the Guest who has been dwelling in him all along, and saying: I know who you are now. Stir the gift into flame. Lead, and I will follow.

That is the prayer of a man ready to be sent. The hearth is built and the fire is lit. Now comes the sending.

Do not leave this book and return to treating the Spirit as a blur, or a force, or a word at the end of the Sign of the Cross. You have a Guest. He is a Person, he is God, and he is nearer to you than your own breath. Speak to him. Ask him, each morning, to lead you through the day, and each night, look back and ask where he did. Stop rowing against the wind and raise the sail. The gifts are already in you; stir them into flame. The fruit is already growing; refuse what would choke it. This is not advanced spirituality reserved for monks and mystics. It is the ordinary birthright of every baptized man, and most men go their whole lives without claiming it. Claim it.

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