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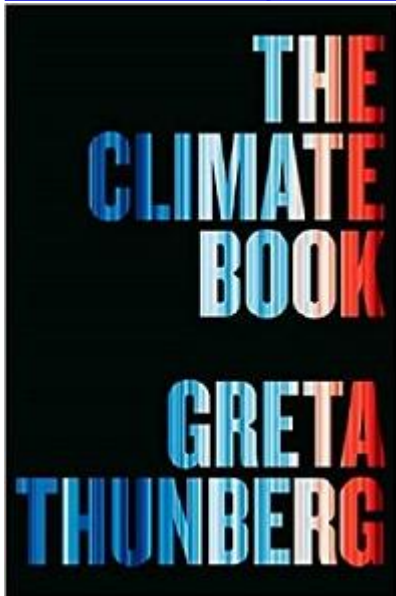
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“We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit” (Acts 19:2).

Acts 19:1-8; [Jn 16:29-33](#)

In his missionary journey, Paul encounters a group of believers who received the baptism of John but have not yet heard about the gift of the Spirit of Jesus. He

instructs them and lays hands on them, and they receive the Spirit and begin speaking in tongues.

Acts gives us a window into the expanding church and the progressive stages believers went through to engage the full mystery of Jesus, who is no longer physically present in history but in his disciples through the Holy Spirit. In John's Gospel, Jesus uses plain speech to tell his disciples about the critical transfer of power and purpose taking place.

We are Jesus' disciples today. We are the body of Christ in the world for our time. Our Christian formation is a process of coming to maturity as we gain experience and confidence that God indwells us. This is a communal experience we share with other baptized believers. The Eucharist is the center of that community. It brings us together again and again to hear the Word and break the bread, the sign of Jesus' death, from which we receive new life.

Yet, surprisingly, how many Christians have never really heard about the Holy Spirit? Or if they have heard the words, how many can say they have experienced the Spirit at work in their lives? All of us must continue to grow in our understanding of our faith in order to deepen our relationship with God through Jesus and the Spirit.

We are invited to begin an important retreat in the interval between Ascension and Pentecost. The church is told to prepare for the coming of the Spirit. Our preparation is simple - to open our minds and hearts, to say yes to God's will in our lives. That is all we can do, but if we do it, God will take us to the next level.

The world waits to witness even a single mature Christian, one who is living each day in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. This is the engine of history, the wellspring of liberation, healing and reconciliation that Jesus initiated and then entrusted to his followers. We are now at a critical time in our world and church, and the Spirit is calling us to action to apply our faith to real issues before us.

If you want "plain speech" and a real challenge, I recommend a new book that is changing my perceptions of everything. Greta Thunberg, the young Swedish climate activist, has convened 100 global scientists to explain in ordinary language and simple graphics the climate crisis bearing down on our planet. She presents their findings in sequence with short, readable scientific analysis, and then descriptions of the efforts by powerful interests churning out disinformation and delay. She then offers examples of hope that the path to real change is still possible if we act now.

This may be one of the most important books you will ever read, a single resource that informs and inspires us to be part of the solution instead of passive contributors to the biggest, most immediate problem facing the world. This is a profound spiritual crisis as well as a social and existential threat. The book is called simply *The Climate Book* (Penguin, 2023). If you want a different world for yourself, your children and grandchildren, start here.