

Come Holy Spirit come.  
With grateful hearts we wait upon you.  
Amen.



Reading from 'Is There A Cure for Egotism?'

Egotism is a vain self absorption and practice of making personal welfare and interests a primary or sole concern, sometimes at the ruthless expense of others. It hits us the hardest during times of change (good and bad), normal aging, crises of identity formation, sickness and health, vulnerability and strength, transitions, suffering, and loss. Whenever we are in our ego-centered mode we feel like our glass is less than half full. During these fearful times we become addicted to acquiring power, seeking status and recognition, being wonderful and without flaw, being right and smarter, winning, becoming famous, and getting rich in order to build up our ego--- that we might feel safe and secure. Egotism causes us to use rather than love others. Whatever the ego demands, the ego gets, no matter who gets hurt. Egotism diminishes our ability to be at one with, to give compassionate care, and to establish committed relationships with others. Probably the most problematic thing about egotism is that it views independence, self sufficiency, and self centeredness as normative for the human condition. The ethical doctrine of egoism holds that the correct basis for morality is self-interest. But like every "ISM" it is life diminishing rather than life giving.

(Rev. Ashton sermon)

Acts 1:1-11

Dear Theophilus, in the first volume of this book I wrote about everything that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he said goodbye to the apostles, the ones he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven. After his death, he presented himself alive to them in many different settings over a period of forty days. In face-to-face meetings, he talked to them about things concerning the kingdom of God. As they met and ate meals together, he told them that they were on no account to leave Jerusalem but 'must wait for what the Father promised, the promise you heard from me. John baptized in water: you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit. And soon.'" When they were together for the last time they asked, "Master, when are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel? Is this the time?" He told them, "You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business. What you'll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world." These were his last words. As they watched, he was taken up and disappeared in a cloud. They stood there, staring into the empty sky. Suddenly two men appeared—in white robes!" They said: "You Galileans! ---why do you just stand here, looking up at an empty sky? The very Jesus who was taken up from among you will come as certainly --and mysteriously---as he left!

### ***'Graduation Gratitude'***

True freedom means freeing oneself from the dictates of the ego and its accompanying emotions.

Matthier Ricard

It's graduation season. It's the time of year when everyone asks you a lot of questions about what you are doing next. Got a job? Going to college? If you're giving a speech, most expect to hear what you are thankful for. But the question you rarely hear asked is: 'What are you grateful for?' I didn't know why until I looked back at my graduations and discovered that I have a don't ask, don't tell kind of gratitude history. After all, what would people think of me if they knew that, as a high school grad, I was only grateful for getting to skip out of final exams? And for

my college graduation I was grateful just because I did not have to attend the ceremony? And for my graduation from The Samaritan Counseling Center it was just the opposite: I was grateful that I could attend, only because I wasn't the one who had to retrieve my too young to drive children (who had been joy riding around the neighborhood in their older sister's 'hoopty' car) from the police station! Then there was graduation from the Quaker seminary. Overwhelmed with life, I have no memories of that one, let alone my sense of gratitude. My second seminary graduation was the one that got me my doctoral degree. All I felt at this one was the anger of injustice. Not fair! I screamed inside when an honorary degree was awarded to a prestigious person who hadn't done blood, sweat and tear time. Not fair! that he should receive a Doctorate in Pastoral Psychotherapy without taking the classes, doing the reading or homework, completing years of clinical internship, writing a dissertation! Need I say more?

Well, perhaps I do. Not because I like making true confessions of this sort, but because this review of my experience shed some light on the dictating lie of my ego, the lie being that I had earned my degrees on my own steam. It helped me get in touch with the way in which the shallowness of my gratitude, my total lack of gratitude, and my ingratitude had offered no defense against experiencing myself a self sufficient, self-made woman. It also made me wonder about gratitude as a defensive strength. Some say that being strong with gratitude is what keeps us humble and what keeps our ego from telling us that we have to go it alone. Others say that gratitude is a conscious raising energy that awakens us to the forces, organizations, institutions, and people who have come before us and have paved the way for our academic success. And some parents, in an effort to nurture a sense of gratitude within their young, start up conversations like this one: "You know Henry, when daddy and I were kids, we didn't have tablets." To which an eight year old empathically replies: "I know, but you were O.K. because you had basic technology like cars and light bulbs."

In a short while we will pause to nurture our sense of gratitude by remembering a forebear in faith who created and funded a scholarship that helps to support young graduate today. But before we do, let's grow some God gratitude by hearing together, Rev. Tony Robinson's reflection, 'You Haven't Got What It Takes'. With its focus on Acts 1:8: "**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you**", it reminds us that we do not have to rely on our own steam.

\_\_\_\_\_ It's graduation season. Caps and gowns, pomp and circumstance. Smiles and degrees. A huge sense of expectation held at bay with alcohol. And the speeches. The commencement speakers tell the young, "You're amazing. You're awesome. You've got what it takes. You're the best and the brightest, the leaders for a new generation." Which would drive any sane person to drink. I wonder how graduation might go if the speaker said, "Listen, I'm not gonna lie to you, you actually don't have what it takes. Neither do I. Nor do all the professors here arrayed before you. If you're feeling a little anxious today, good. You should be. But listen, you and I aren't left to our own resources alone. There's an amazing holy power at work in the world. A power that God pours out on those who ask, those who trust. So despite what the college says, you ain't all that, but God is." Our gospel story for today is another sort of "graduation." Only it's Jesus who is flying up. In the forty days since the resurrection he has been teaching and preparing the apostles. Now, he's leaving and entrusting the new chapter to them. He doesn't say, "You've got what it takes." Sort of the opposite. He says, you haven't got what it takes . . . you need to wait, to wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon you. There are many times, and big moments, in our lives, when we wonder if we are up to the challenge, up to what is ahead. Do we have what it takes to do the things the world needs doing? The tendency is to suck it up and tell ourselves or for others to tell us, "Don't worry, you've got what it takes." It would be truer and wiser counsel to say, "Don't be ridiculous-you actually don't have what it takes and neither do I. But God does, God has the power you will need and she will not refuse to lend. Ask for the power you need, and wait for its coming. It will come, I promise.'