



Paulo Coelho

A, B, C, D...

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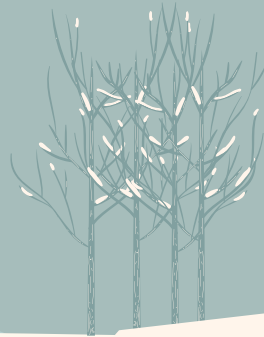
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“Ah, faith is still alive in the human heart,” said the priest to himself when he saw his church packed with workers from one of Rio de Janeiro’s poorest districts, all gathered that Sunday with but one aim: to celebrate Easter service.

He felt very pleased and, with great solemnity, he walked over to the altar. Then he heard a voice saying:

“A, B, C, D...”



It sounded like a child's voice, and it was spoiling the solemnity of the moment. Those present also looked about them, feeling rather annoyed. But the voice continued:

“A, B, C, D...”

“Stop that at once,” said the priest.



The child seemed to emerge as if from a trance. He glanced fearfully around at the other people and blushed scarlet with embarrassment.

“What are you doing? Can't you see you're disturbing our prayers?”

The child bowed his head, and tears rolled down his cheeks.

“Where's your mother?” said the priest. “Didn't she teach you how to follow Mass?”



Still with his head bowed, the child answered:

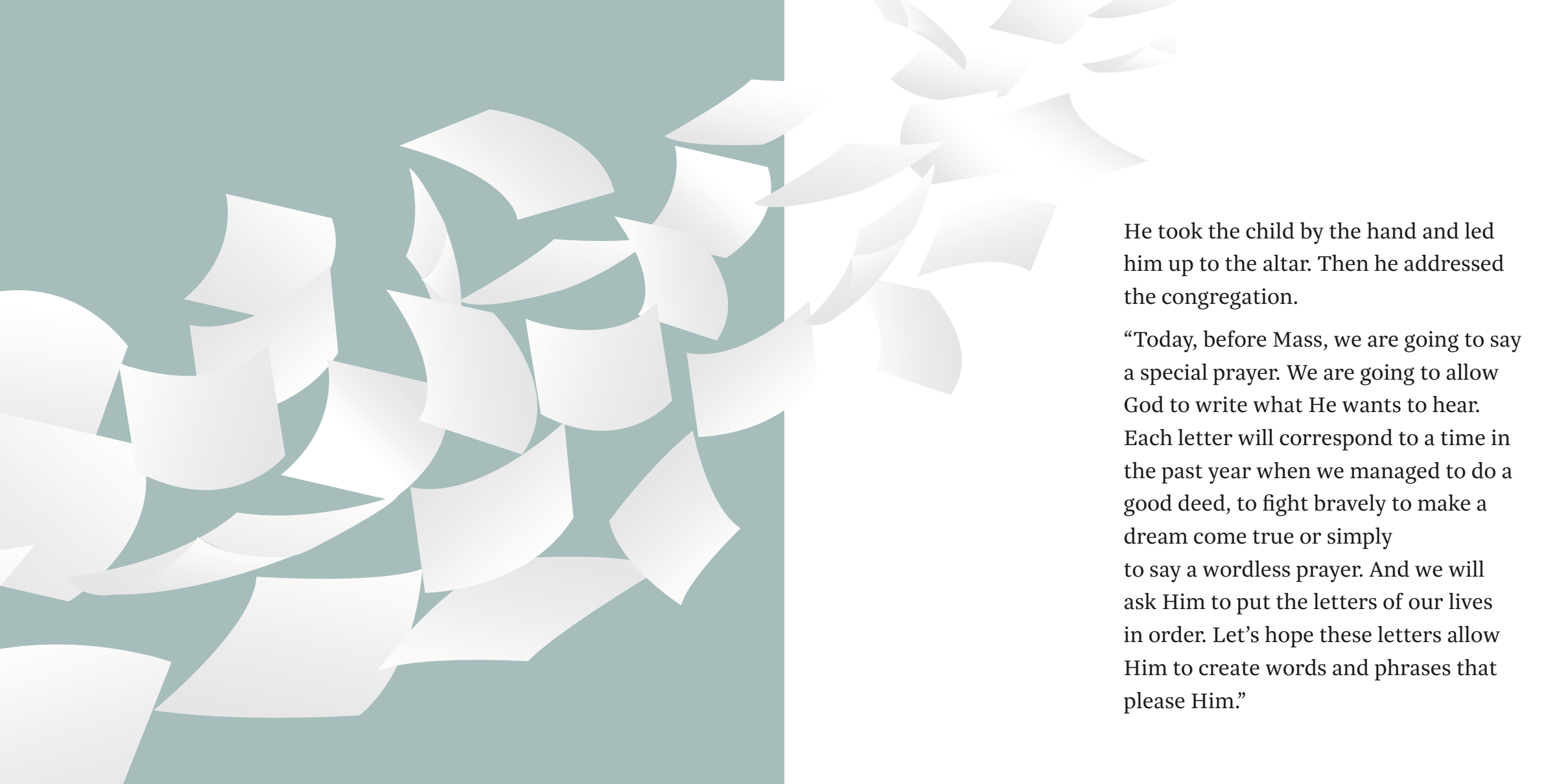
“I’m sorry, Father, but I never learned how to pray. I grew up in the streets, with no father or mother. Today is Easter Sunday, and I felt I needed to talk to God. Since I don’t know what language He speaks, I’m just repeating the letters of the alphabet that I know. I thought that, up there, He could join the letters together to create words and phrases that were pleasing to Him.”

The child stood up.

“I’ll leave,” he said. “I don’t want to disturb people who know how to speak to God properly.”

“Come with me,” said the priest.





He took the child by the hand and led him up to the altar. Then he addressed the congregation.

“Today, before Mass, we are going to say a special prayer. We are going to allow God to write what He wants to hear. Each letter will correspond to a time in the past year when we managed to do a good deed, to fight bravely to make a dream come true or simply to say a wordless prayer. And we will ask Him to put the letters of our lives in order. Let’s hope these letters allow Him to create words and phrases that please Him.”

With his eyes tightly closed, the priest began reciting the alphabet. And soon the whole church was saying:

“A, B, C, D...”



**The end**