



# The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage

*Paul Elie*

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# The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage

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**The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage** Paul Elie

**The story of four modern American Catholics who made literature out of their search for God**

In the mid-twentieth century four American Catholics came to believe that the best way to explore the questions of religious faith was to write about them-in works that readers of all kinds could admire. *The Life You Save May Be Your Own* is their story-a vivid and enthralling account of great writers and their power over us.

Thomas Merton was a Trappist monk in Kentucky; Dorothy Day the founder of the Catholic Worker in New York; Flannery O'Connor a "Christ-haunted" literary prodigy in Georgia; Walker Percy a doctor in New Orleans who quit medicine to write fiction and philosophy. A friend came up with a name for them-the School of the Holy Ghost-and for three decades they exchanged letters, ardently read one another's books, and grappled with what one of them called a "predicament shared in common."

A pilgrimage is a journey taken in light of a story; and in *The Life You Save May Be Your Own* Paul Elie tells these writers' story as a pilgrimage from the God-obsessed literary past of Dante and Dostoevsky out into the thrilling chaos of postwar American life. It is a story of how the Catholic faith, in their vision of things, took on forms the faithful could not have anticipated. And it is a story about the ways we look to great books and writers to help us make sense of our experience, about the power of literature to change-to save-our lives.

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