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Inquiry | Inquisition

Jake Crouse

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Uniform rows of conviction
confine me to their symmetry.
The white-washed blocks
enclose the room in staggering levels,
subtly breaking the conforming environment.
Two distinct patterns,
one half a block shifted from the next.

Us.
 Them.
Us.
 Them.

“Regarded as the most personal sacrament...”

Searching myself.
Mind peeking in corners,
afraid to search.
White noises rises
over the whispers.
I refuse.

“...is that of penance, or confession.”

Faces, juxtaposed, facing forward.
The ghastly blocks, glued together,
pastel shades covering bound gray areas,
hand in hand
 facing me,
 taunting me-
 red rover.

He’s nowhere in the rows.
He’s nowhere in the spaces.

“It is a process for baptized individuals...”

You can't choose who you are born to.
You can't choose anything until it's too late.

I am drowning.

Youthful innocence requires that
we play with others,
grow with others,
sing with others
commune with others,
drink juice together,
chase ghosts together,
repeat stories together.
Seven deadly sins.
Seventy times forgiven.
Stories written by dead writers,
Recited by clueless pastors and bishops
and children.
They rewrite themselves in my head.
Seven thousand questions,
Seven billion vessels
Without an answer.

“...to, again, overcome guilt...”

I know it.

He couldn't care.

She doesn't.

She asked.

I lied.

He doesn't.

Don't ask.

The priests don't recognize my voice.
The church sings with the organ.
The organ recognizes my voice
in shivering stanzas.
It mourns for me.

My pew, colder each service.

I am frozen.

I watch the pastor
break the stale bread
as the wine transfigures
into water.

“..and receive the forgiveness...”

Blank pale blocks.
Blank pale faces.
Unable to fill the blanks.
 No one is looking.
What is this feeling?
Why am I scared?
 No one is looking.
Should I repent?
Should I confess?
 No one is looking.
Is that what Adam thought?
 Someone was looking.

I am guilty.

He’s nowhere in the rows.
He’s nowhere in the spaces.

The stories of the apostles -
 found me here.
The proofs of the apologists -
 turned away.
The warnings of the apostates -
 vanished.

The mute apologies.

“...of God.”