

The Guest

By Fr. Brendan McGuire ©2026

He came to the door on an ordinary evening,
no thunder, no angels, no announcement of light,
just a quiet knock
and a face I half-recognized
the way you remember a dream
only after waking.

I let him in.
What else could I do?
He asked for nothing much:
a chair by the window,
a meal at the table,
a room down the hall.

He was a good guest, I'll say that.
Took his meals quietly,
kept to himself,
never rearranged my furniture
or commented on the dust.
I could almost forget he was there.
Almost.

Slowly, the way light fills a room
before you notice the sun has risen,
he became a friend.

I found I didn't mind his company
in the living room, reading by the fire,
or in the kitchen, where he'd pour the tea
and listen without rushing me.

He moved gently through the dining room,
the hallway, the study.
Each room he entered grew a little warmer,
a little more like a home
and less like a place I was hiding in.

But there were rooms I kept locked.
The garage, piled high with the junk of years,
broken things I swore I'd fix,
boxes I couldn't name
and didn't want to.

And one room in particular,
the room at the end of the hall
where I had stuffed
every hurt, every wound,
every shame I couldn't speak aloud,
the door swollen shut

with the weight of what I'd pushed inside.

He never forced the lock.

He just stood near it sometimes,
the way a shepherd stands near a gate
waiting for the lost one to come home.

In time, I let him into the garage.
Together we sorted through the wreckage:
old regrets, rusty resentments,
projects abandoned, promises forgotten.

He didn't judge.
He just helped me carry things to the curb.

But that room.

That room.

He asked about it gently, once or twice.

I changed the subject.
He asked again, months later,
with the patience of someone
who has all of eternity
and is in no hurry to use it.

One night I opened the door.
I don't know if it was courage
or exhaustion,
desperation or trust,
maybe all of these at once,
tangled together the way grace sometimes is.

He stepped inside and said nothing.

Just began.

Lifted the old wounds from the floor,
the ones I'd been stepping around for years.
Cleared the broken stories from the shelves.
Took the shame down from the walls
where I'd hung it like dark curtains.

He didn't ask permission.

I protested at first.

"Careful with that one," I said.

"That one's complicated."

"That one still bleeds."

He carried it all out anyway,
tenderly, the way a mother lifts
a sleeping child from a car seat,
and I realized:

I didn't want any of it.

I never did.

I just didn't have the strength
to carry it out alone.

When the room was empty,
we discovered something underneath it all:
a beautiful sofa, worn soft with years,
facing a window I'd forgotten was there.

He sat down.
Patted the cushion beside him.
"Sit," he said.
And through that window:
a landscape I never knew I had.
Green hills rolling toward a still pond
where birds gathered to drink,
their wings catching the late light.

We sat together a long time.
Then he said, so gently
it was almost breath:
"This is what freedom looks like."

Now when someone comes to visit,
I don't mind where they go.
Every door is open.
Every room can bear the light.

The wounds of the past are healed
or healing still,
and the house is not perfect,
a mess here and there,
dishes in the sink sometimes,
a garden half-tended.

But all are welcome.
He cleaned my house
and taught me how to keep it clean.

And that room at the end of the hall?
It's my favorite room now.
The sofa, the window, the pond, the birds.
That's where I go to sit with him.

That's where I learn
what I could never learn alone:
that the room we fear the most
is the room where love has been waiting
all along.

*"Behold, I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,
I will come in and eat with them,
and they with me."*

— Revelation 3:20