



Cleansed by Fire

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Churches are burning and a man is murdered, plunging a small Texas town into a state of fear. Father Frank DeLuca, pastor of Prince of Peace Church, is thrust into an impossible dilemma when he hears that another church will be burned. But the disturbing information comes to him via the confessional, and church law forbids him from telling anyone—even the police.

He doesn't know which church, when, or by whom. Still, he can't sit idly by, and no law prevents him from looking into the matter himself. The crimes have set the town's residents on edge, fraying the bonds of trust. Is the mysterious newcomer with ties to the drug scene involved? What about the man who says maybe the churches deserved to burn? Or the school drop-out into alcohol and drugs who attacks the priest with a knife?

Countering this are a young widow whose mission is to make others shine, and a youth choir determined to help those whose churches have been destroyed by the arsonist.

Father Frank's investigation leads him dangerously close to the local drug scene and he soon discovers the danger has come to him. Can he save his own church? Can he save his own life?

Cleansed by Fire Details

Date : Published January 15th 2012 by Dancing with Bear Publishing

ISBN : 9780615590660

Author : James R. Callan

Format : Paperback 368 pages

Genre : Mystery, Christian Fiction, Fiction, Cozy Mystery

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From Reader Review Cleansed by Fire for online ebook

Cathylou Jones says

What a great read

Everything about this book is great. From the very beginning it hooks your interest and pulls you into the setting and events. Figuring out who and why the events occur. Couldn't put it down.

Fran says

Cleansed by Fire: Author: James R. Callan

Smoldering embers of ashes fill the air darkening the sky and float into the black clouds caused by the streaks of flashing red flames that radiate throughout the outer perimeter of what was a magnificent structure. Nostrils filled with the smell of sulfur, the sky and the night air lit up with orange and red flames spreading so fast, engulfing the structure and swallowing it whole leaving darkness and soot in its wake. As the arsonist enters the next victim or structure, chooses his mode of accelerant and the pours it on the floor, standing back to admire his handiwork never showing one shred of remorse or caring for human life or the sanctity of the churches he decided to destroy. A simple match- struck, a piece of paper that will swallow up the flame when barely touching its surface and the explosion that follows leaving the entire room, building appearing like a huge orange and yellow ball but not one that anyone would want to touch or play with.

Father Frank DeLuca receives congregants daily and welcomes them to come to the confessional and ask for forgiveness for their sins. What happens when someone confesses to a murder or crime that he has committed or has knowledge of and you are bound by confidentiality to keep the person's words silent and to yourself? What happens when one young man, one parishioner, confesses to knowing who set fire to the Pine Valley Baptist Church and asks the Father to forgive him for his sins and what he knows? Should his hands be tied? What if he could prevent another tragedy by someone leaking the information to the police? What is morally and ethically correct?

Close your eyes- Can you see the red and orange flames spread over this once magnificent church? Can you hear the choir singing their hymns? Can you smell the scent of the rotting wood, pine and materials that were used to build this structure? Feel the intensity of the heat filling that already humid air and hope that it does not ignite any trees and cause some wild fires. Receiving confession and being absolved of your sins is almost that a criminal being granted immunity when they commit a crime? What about someone who could prevent one?

The Prince of Peace Church is one whose parishioners work with young youths, teens to foster better character development, teach sportsmanship, encourage creativity and keep competition at a minimum. Many of the congregants have special talents that they are willing to share with the teens and when Father DeLuca asks Georgia Peitz to tactfully volunteer her help with the new choir she is more than happy to agree. Popsters is the name of the choir and the enthusiasm the teens that signed up to become part of it need to be organized, motivated and led by someone who understands music, has patience and enjoys working with teens. The woman in charge named Phyllis is really kind and sweet but totally disorganized but with the

welcomed help of Georgia and her own husband Roger things get off to a really positive start. With the choir on its way to success and the basketball teams reorganized beginning the new season of Three Summer B-Ball, the focus should have been on working with these teens but the Father was worried about something else. Teens are often, if not properly guided to find ways of making money, getting involved with the wrong people and enticed by big cars, money and the promise of more for either using or selling drugs. A black Trans Am seems to be lurking around at every basketball practice and when the Father tries to approach the person behind the wheel the confrontation will let the reader know there is much more to come and it will not be good. *Cleansed by Fire: James R. Callan: Teens, church groups, teachers, YA's, fiction lovers and firefighters this one is for you.*

When the Calvert Road Baptist Church is burned and Father DeLuca sees it the author shares the heartache, the sadness and the history behind the church with the reader. When he meets with the Reverend of that church he extends a welcome mat to him and his congregants to use his church if they have to showing one more side of this amazing man.

Father Frank was a man of morals and virtue and after seeing the devastation at both churches feelings of guilt enveloped him thinking there was some way he could have prevented the inevitable from happening. Realizing that the confession came from a teen, he decides to use that as the basis for his sermon hoping to encourage them to make better choices and not fall prey to peer pressure. What a great way to teach character education and encourage kids not to succumb to bullies.

But, the confrontation with the man in the black car did bring some results as the police detective in the area questioned the boys on the basketball team along with the father and certain information is brought to light. Then, one young man comes forward with some information that would send the Father to investigate what might be a lead to who is behind the fires and why this man in the black Trans-Am is lurking around wanting in on the drug action in the area. But, when he gets too close, frequents a bar named the Corral what happens next alerts the reader that the Father is in real danger and more than just his tires getting punctured and the firebug in the bar burning a piece of paper shaped like a cross, might be in store for him. With the help of Detective Mike Oakley the Father hopes to find out even more.

Then an encounter with a young man named B.D., the father of the boy who confessed, four slashed tires and Father Frank begins to assess all of the evidence, the incidents and tries to connect the matchsticks that might have caused the fires, the knife that slashed his tires and the hope that all of the pieces will solder together and not create more tragedy. Then the same young man admits knowing that there is going to be another fire and Father Frank needs to decide what to do. The seal of the confessional is sacred but talking to someone else might create a solution that would ease the pain. But, which church was next and how to alert the other Fathers and Reverends without telling what he knows? After meeting with the Monsignor he gets a different perspective and figures out how to use what he learned before the confession to relate to the police hoping to stop the next fire from happening. So, is the father of the person who confessed? Is the bad man into drugs? What about B.D.? Could it be someone hiding in plain sight? Then another fire and Father Frank rushes to the scene. Warned by the police to stay out of their way his guilt and strong feelings to solve the crime and prevent more fires wins out. But, this time it is more than just a fire, it is murder too as a body is found in the burning inferno too scorched to immediately identify. Three churches within the same vicinity would Prince of Peace be next?

Then we get to know Georgia better and within the sadness comes some joy as she and the police detective seem to connect and the teens in the choir come together to try and help raise funds to help rebuild churches that were burned. But, Father Frank is relentless and a link between the murdered man and one man from the community just might ignite a spark to solve the crime. But, will it before someone else or another church

burns?

Author James. M. Callan brings to light many important issues that teens face today besides, drugs, peer pressure and school. The teens in this story prove that good character education, wholesome summer programs and working together for the community and for more than just the greater good are vital lessons that teens can learn from reading this book as well as the way the author handles the dating question between Georgia and Mike will allow young teens to realize the proper meaning of the word Date.

Things begin to move in a different direction as the man in the black car drops off on B.D. who overdosed on the Father's doorstep letting him decide whether he lives or dies. Next, an encounter with the paper burner will definitely bring a smile and a special prayer for our Father to your lips. What happens next will definitely surprise you as the pieces will start to fall into place and the arsonist revealed?

Just who committed the murder and who burned the churches you will have to learn for yourself. How all of the four suspects tie together and what happens to the young man who confessed, what about B.D. I promised I would not tell. Child abuse is something no young boy or girl should endure and parents should not turn a blind eye. Just how this fits into to the entire plot and the surprise ending with its special twist that you will never expect, read Cleansed by Fire and find out just how important and powerful the word Forgiveness is as author James. M. Callan and his cast of outstanding characters will teach you the reader and many others just how important it is to have faith.

Fran Lewis: reviewer

Let's give this book: **FIVE GOLDEN STARS**

IJ says

Father Frank DeLuca, pastor of Prince of Peace Catholic Church - is the good guy, trying to do the right thing, not only in his church, but in other's that are mysteriously getting burned down. All of the churches up to this time have been Baptist Churches.

Sammie comes to confession with Father Frank, tells him he knows of the Baptist Church burning, but will give little of other details.

So.. Father Frank sets out with the aid of the local policeman Mike to try to figure out who is doing the burning. There are many suspects, so you get to meet all of them, and try to figure out the mystery along with Father Mike.

There is a little romance going on between Mike the Cop, and Georgia. This takes place in a small town in

Texas, so you get a great bit of Texas charm with the book.

Great for a Cozy Mystery, also learned a little bit more concerning the Rite of Confession, and what it means to the priest who is hearing them.

There is a twist at the end... so be prepared. Looking forward to reading Book 2 of the series.

Was asked by the author to read and review, glad that he came to me with this request.

This book and others can be found at For the Southwest By the Southwest Book Corner. Great place to borrow FREE Kindle E-books for 2 weeks, and pick up really great bargains on other Southwest books.

Todd Simpson says

This is a wonderfully written book. I love finding a new Author that can truly capture my attention like James R Callan has for me. There is a very diverse range of characters in this story, and I especially like Father Deluca. Sammie Winters knew who burned the Pine Valley Baptist Church, but he wasn't about approach the police about it. Disclosing it to Father Deluca in confessional was a different story though. With Pine Tree only having a population of 18,000 any strangers tended to stand out. However Father Deluca doesn't get very far when he starts to make enquirers about the driver of a black Trans Am that has been seen hanging around. The Priest is sure that he must be dealing drugs to the kids in the area. It's not long before another church is set alight, and Detective Mike Oakley confirms that it is definitely arson again. Frank has seen what drugs had done to other kids, and when he hears one of the boys has dropped out of school, he's not scared to go into a bar full of bikers to try to locate him. You would picture a man of the cloth not venturing very far from the church, but father Deluca would do anything for his congregation. When all four of Father Deluca's tyres are slashed, he knows he's made an enemy, or someone is telling him to keep his nose out of things. He's going to need to do everything in his power to stop his church being burnt down, and stopping the arsonist killing someone. It was so easy to lose myself in this book for so many enjoyable hours. Certainly an Author I'll be watching out for in the future.

Fictionophile says

In my last reading 'road trip', I visited a rural, East Texas town. Pine Tree, Texas boasts myriad churches, many of them Baptist. There is however one Catholic Church – and it is here that we meet Father Frank DeLuca, our protagonist.

Father Frank is six feet tall and a very fit 175 pounds. In his youth he played basketball and his love of the game has played a part in his organizing a youth basketball group for his younger parishioners. He is devout, and takes his vows VERY seriously.

He is put into a difficult position when he is told something in the confessional that should be reported to the police. His vows surrounding the 'seal of confession' forbid his revealing what he has learned. His new knowledge concerns the burning of churches. A nearby Baptist church was burned to the ground and he learns that one of his young parishioners might know who did it. When yet another Baptist church is razed,

Father Frank is desperate to find out who did it without compromising his sacred vows.

His young ‘flock’ is threatened by the increasing use of illegal drugs. Father Frank lost a dear friend to drugs whilst he was in college, so he has a special and personal reason for being against drug use. When Father Frank spies a black Trans-Am with tinted windows, he becomes very suspicious. Not only is the car hovering around the basketball court, it is also at the scene of the church fires...

Also featured in the novel is Georgia. She is a staunch Roman Catholic and a young war widow. Active in the Church, she has a natural gift for organizing. Father Frank introduces her to a local policeman, and they begin dating.

“Cleansed by fire” marks the beginning of the Father Frank mystery series. I guess you could term this novel as a ‘Christian Cozy Mystery’. Not my usual sub-genre of mystery, and thus not a personal favorite. The characters were well-developed, the pacing slow but steady. It reminded me a bit of the Grantchester mysteries, only I actually like the Grantchester mysteries more... It did have some requisite ‘red herrings’, but for the most part I felt it dwelt more on the Christian aspects than it did on the mystery aspects. It espoused the Christian virtues of forgiveness, and doing good unto others while it opposed violence of any kind. If Christian Cozy is what you like to read, then I assure you, you’ll love it.

I was provided a complimentary digital copy of this novel by the author via his publicist.

Jay Williams says

This book was a quick read with a very straightforward plot. At times it read like an advertisement for the Catholic Church, since the church was the nexus between all the characters. It was not difficult to figure out who the bad guy was, but it was interesting to follow the process that resulted in the identity of the arsonist and murderer being revealed. The style of writing provided the information, but not much excitement. The priest, Father DeLuca, was the person everyone want heir religious leader to be. however, most of the other characters were one-dimensional, and provided a stereotypical cast.

Denise Zendel says

Churches are burning, a man is murdered and small-town priest Frank DeLuca is caught in the middle of it all – he has a good idea whodunit, but can’t tell police because he knows what he knows through the Sacrament of Reconciliation (f.k.a. confession). If he squeals, he’s out of a job and in conflict with his own core beliefs.

Suspects include a mysterious, menacing newcomer, a whackjob who says the churches deserve to burn, a dropout who clocks Father Frank with a board and attempts to stab him, and one of his young parishioners who may have fallen in with a bad crowd. The police tell him to stay out of things, but he can’t. He knows he can do some good and possibly save some souls, so he sets out to uncover the culprit.

Subplots include a budding, chaste romance between a couple of supporting characters - a plucky young widow who lost her soldier husband in Iraq, and who more or less runs the church, and a young detective who likes her, as well as a struggling teen choir.

I struggled a bit with trying to figure out the time setting for this book. Father Frank muses about drugs being a scourge, which places it in current time, but the youth choir gets all excited about singing “Yakety Yak”, which made me think maybe the plot was set in the 60s. Also, some of the slang patterns seemed a bit off.

I was given a copy of this to review. I read it partially out of obligation. On the minus side, I found the author to be a bit ham-handed with the religious aspects. Sincere, but ham-handed. Even so, the characters were appealing, and I was interested enough to want to finish it and learn who the bad actor was. The ending surprised me – I don’t want to give anything away, but the character I was expecting to be the bad guy wasn’t. This was a good treadmill book.

J.R. says

A confession alerts a Catholic priest to the repetition of a crime that already has him concerned.

An arsonist is targeting churches in his community and church law prevents Father Frank DeLuca from alerting police. But that doesn’t mean he can’t seek other means of action—even if it puts him on a collision course with a series of dangerous characters and subject to violence.

The fires up to this point have all been at Baptist churches in his small Texas community. Still, Father Frank is ecumenical in his desire to help those who have suffered loss and dedicated in his effort to identify the perpetrator. On top of this problem, he’s irked by a mysterious stranger who is approaching the town youth with questions about drugs.

Concerned for all the youth of the community, Father Frank is already busy setting up a basketball league, caring for his flock and supporting the efforts of some parishioners who have formed a teen chorus.

In many respects, Father Frank reminded me of G. K. Chesterton’s Father Brown, though Callan’s creation is a more modern and athletic person, likeable and even human enough to be closely tempted to fisticuffs on a couple occasions.

A cozy read with an engaging cast of characters and a few surprising plot twists along the way.

Holly Morey says

This is a fairly predictable story and I would consider it a good beach read. Churches are burning in East Texas and Father Deluca becomes involved, when one of his parishioners confesses to knowing that there will be more fires. Father Frank narrows the suspect list down to four men in town. Frank's dilemma is whether to tell the police what he knows, since he obtained the information in the confessional. I liked the characters and the story, even though I figured out the ending, way before the book was over. It was a very easy read and good for relaxing.

Erth says

now i am hooked. This was such a great, easy and creative book. i was hooked after the first page.

The characters were easy to fall in love with and follow, along with the story. the author made the mental visions so easy and vivid of the surroundings and the characters actions felt so real.

i would highly recommend this author and this book.

Autumn says

<http://fallenoverbookreviews.blogspot...>

I received this book to give an honest review.

We are introduced to Father Frank DeLuca who is a Godly man and is really involved with his Church as the pastor. During confessional Father Frank hears something disturbing about Churches burning he knows that by the Church law he can not say anything. Though that doesn't stop him from investigating who could be behind it. Father Frank makes it a mission to try and find out who is starting these fires before they continue. Though will he be too late? I really liked how even though this is a Christian book it wasn't anyway pushing beliefs down your throat. It was nice to see Father Frank as a man who just wanted to follow God but also see justice served to the person or persons behind the fires. He was also very good with the kids and wanted to see them stay away from the drug scene. Even if that meant putting himself in a sticky situation to get answers.

This was a good mystery and there wasn't a dull moment within it for me. I found Father Frank's humor to be awesome especially toward Georgia and her love life. Each of the characters in the book were well written and stood out in their own way. Even Earl in the black trans am. I was glad to get his full story towards the end.

If you are looking for a good mystery, great characters, and a steady plot then pick this book up. I know I can't wait to read the next one to see what else Father Frank has in store for us.

Elaine says

Cleansed By Fire is a good clean mystery. It was easy to follow and kept moving along.

Someone confessed to Father Frank knowledge of a recent fire that destroyed a local church. Unfortunately because of church law Father Frank can't tell anyone what he knows even after the boy comes back telling the priest that there will be another fire. Frank can however look into things on his own.

He is involved with the local boys in playing basketball and while there are games going on, he continually sees a black car just hanging around the area. The car is also at the church fires making Father Frank suspicious.

The Christian message of God's forgiveness is shared and while Father Frank tells a character that he has to

change, it's actually God who changes us. If we could change on our own, we wouldn't need God.

Mary Hamilton says

Two churches have burned to the ground in a small East Texas town. It's arson, and Father Frank Deluca receives a clue during a parishioner's confession. He's bound to secrecy, but that doesn't stop him from investigating himself. And there are several suspects: the newcomer in the black TransAm, a teenage addict, a man in a bar who says the churches deserved to burn.

Father Frank is a character I'd like to know personally. I loved his grasp of human frailty and his struggle to always be an honorable representative of our Lord.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this mystery. Although I managed to eliminate one suspect rather early, I wanted to keep reading to find out exactly who and why. The author keeps us in suspense when he leaves Father Frank unconscious in his own church which has been set afire.

I look forward to reading future Father Frank mysteries.

Megan says

I was able to read this quickly, but had it not been that I needed to read it for a challenge I probably would have set it aside and not read it as fast as I did. The mystery was okay, but it wasn't that gripping. I don't think I'll be continuing this series.

Dorothy Deusing says

Gods support

Religious story's are so refreshing. Very good story line. Well put together. I love mysteries and this was a very good one.
