

Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life
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“*Liturgy of the Ordinary* will train your eyes to see holy beauty all around.”

“With the writer’s (and indeed the poet’s) gift of slowing down and paying the best kind of attention, Tish Harrison Warren connects the moments of an ordinary day with the extraordinary pattern of classical Christian worship. . . . With its laugh-out-loud moments and moving descriptions of a life lived imperfectly but well, this is a great gift of a book – an ordinary book, in one way, but also not ordinary at all.”

– **Andy Crouch**, from the foreword

“If Christianity is to retain its witness in our frenetic and fragmented age, it must take root not only in the thoughts and emotions but also in the daily lives and even bodies of those who call Christ Lord. Tish Harrison Warren has beautifully ‘enfleshed’ the concepts and doctrines of our faith into quotidian moments, showing how every hour of each day can become an occasion of grace and renewal. If you want to know how faith matters amid messy kitchens, unfinished manuscripts, marital spats, and unmade beds, *Liturgy of the Ordinary* will train your eyes to see holy beauty all around.”

– **Katelyn Beaty**, print managing editor, *Christianity Today*

“*Liturgy of the Ordinary* is a baptism of vision. Tish Harrison Warren warmly and wisely helps us find God in the strangest of places: standing at the sink, sitting in traffic, stooping to make a bed. As it turns out, our everyday habits are imbued with the holy possibility of becoming new people in Christ.”

– **Jen Pollock Michel**, author of *Teach Us to Want*

“Tish Harrison Warren shows us what it looks like to be . . . shaped and formed, in a book as down-to-earth and inviting as it is wise. I don’t know of any book that’s more winsome in commending a life lived in sync with the church calendar.”

– **Wesley Hill**, assistant professor of Biblical Studies, Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, Pennsylvania

“This beautiful book will brush the dust from your dingy days and reveal the extraordinary that is to be found in the ordinary. No mundane daily task will be the same once these pages open your eyes to how the work of your hands reflects the ways of the Creator and the rhythms of eternity.”

– **Karen Swallow Prior**, author of *Booked* and *Fierce Convictions*

“In this moment in culture, when much feels complicated and shallow, Tish Harrison

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Tish Harrison Warren writes regularly for *The Well*, and her writing has also been featured in *Her.meneutics*, *Christ and Pop Culture*, *Churchleaders.com*, *Anglicanpastor.com*, *Art House America*, *Mere Orthodoxy*, *Christianity Today*, and the *White Horse Inn*. After seven years in campus ministry with InterVarsity Graduate and Faculty Ministries at Vanderbilt and UT-Austin, she now works with InterVarsity Women in the Academy and Professions. Warren has a masters in theology from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and is a priest in the Anglican Church in North America, serving at Resurrection South Austin. She and her husband live in Austin and have two young daughters.

Warren offers a beautiful and life-giving narrative: a way toward the ordinary sacred. This book is gentle in its simplicity and rich in wisdom. I wish I had read it a decade ago.”

— **Micha Boyett**, author *Found*

“God’s life and kingdom surround us on every side. But how do we find this reality and derive our life from God’s—like a branch does from the vine? In *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, Tish Harrison Warren reveals simple, grounded, and beautifully repetitive practices in the small things of our workaday lives and the rhythms of liturgy. Tish gets it. If you let her be your guide, you too will get it: a life in God in your everyday life.”

— **Todd Hunter**, bishop, Anglican Church in North America, author of *Giving Church Another Chance*

“Tish Harrison Warren is both a priest and a mother who changes poop diapers. She embodies the high calling of the church and the high calling of the home and in those dual vocations has written a book of tremendous importance. . . . Tish writes with candor, insight, and intelligence about the sacredness of quotidian living. The highest compliment I can offer is that her book inspired me to go back to my dirty sink and my screaming kids with a renewed sense of purpose.”

— **Andrea Palpant Dilley**, contributing editor, *Christianity Today*

“Big gifts often come in small packages—sometimes even a plain cardboard box. Tish Harrison Warren has a talent for unpacking these gifts that God has placed all around us.”

— **Michael Horton**, professor of theology, Westminster Seminary California, author of *Ordinary*

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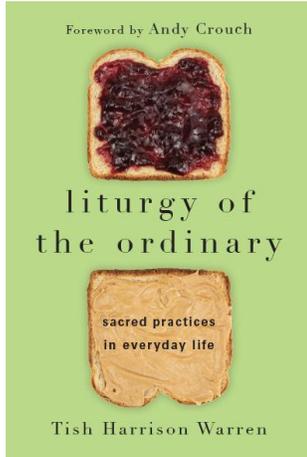


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“We are nothing but human, unimpressive, vulnerable, newly born into the day.”

I wake slowly. Even when the day demands I rally quickly – when my kids leap on top of me with sharp elbows or my alarm blares – I lie still for the first few seconds of the day, stunned, orienting, thoughts dulled. Then comes, slowly, the dawning of plans to make and goals for the day. But in those first delicate seconds, the bleary-eyed pause of waking, before the tasks begin, before I get on my game, I’m greeted again with the truth of who I am in my most basic self.

Whether we’re children or heads of state, we sit in our pajamas for a moment, yawning, with messy hair and bad breath, unproductive, groping toward the day. Soon we’ll get buttoned up into our identities: mothers, business people, students, friends, citizens. We’ll spend our day conservative or liberal, rich or poor, earnest or cynical, fun-loving or serious. But as we first emerge from sleep, we are nothing but human, unimpressive, vulnerable, newly born into the day, blinking as our pupils adjust to light and our brains emerge into consciousness.

I always try to stay in bed longer. My body is greedy for sleep – “Just a few more minutes!”

But it’s not just sleep I’m greedy for – it’s that in-between place, liminal consciousness, where I’m cozy, not quite alert to the demands that await me. I don’t want to face the warring, big and small, that lies ahead of me today. I don’t want to don an identity yet. I want to stay in the womb of my covers a little longer.

This morning I wake (slowly) on an ordinary day, a cool morning in mid-March. I do not know what lies ahead, but I wake in a bed I know, a house I live in, a routine, a particular life, in medias res.

The psalmist declares, “This is the day that the Lord has made.” This one. We wake not to a vague or general mercy from a far-off God. God, in delight and wisdom, has made, named, and blessed this average day. What I in my weakness see as another monotonous day in a string of days, God has given as a singular gift.

When Jesus died for his people, he knew me by name in the particularity of this day. Christ didn’t redeem my life theoretically or abstractly – the life I dreamed of living or the life I think I ideally should be living. He knew I’d be in today as it is, in my home where it stands, in my relationships with their specific beauty and brokenness, in my particular sins and

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In the overlooked moments and routines of our day, we can become aware of God's presence in surprising ways. How do we embrace the sacred in the ordinary and the ordinary in the sacred?

Framed around one ordinary day, this book explores daily life through the lens of liturgy, small practices, and habits that form us. Each chapter looks at something – making the bed, brushing her teeth, losing her keys – that the author does every day. Drawing from the diversity of her life as a campus minister, Anglican priest, friend, wife, and mother, Tish Harrison Warren opens up a practical theology of the everyday.

struggles.

In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard reminds us that where “transformation is actually carried out is in our real life, where we dwell with God and our neighbors. . . . First, we must accept the circumstances we constantly find ourselves in as the place of God’s kingdom and blessing. God has yet to bless anyone except where they actually are.”

The new life into which we are baptized is lived out in days, hours, and minutes. God is forming us into a new people. And the place of that formation is in the small moments of today.

Alfred Hitchcock said movies were “life with the dull bits cut out.” Car chases and first kisses, interesting plot lines and good conversations. We don’t want to watch our lead character going on a walk, stuck in traffic, or brushing his teeth – at least not for long, and not without a good soundtrack.

We tend to want a Christian life with the dull bits cut out.

Yet God made us to spend our days in rest, work, and play, taking care of our bodies, our families, our neighborhoods, our homes. What if all these boring parts matter to God? What if days passed in ways that feel small and insignificant to us are weighty with meaning and part of the abundant life that God has for us?

Christ’s ordinary years are part of our redemption story. Because of the incarnation and those long, unrecorded years of Jesus’ life, our small, normal lives matter. If Christ was a carpenter, all of us who are in Christ find that our work is sanctified and made holy. If Christ spent time in obscurity, then there is infinite worth found in obscurity. If Christ spent most of his life in quotidian ways, then all of life is brought under his lordship. There is no task too small or too routine to reflect God’s glory and worth.

I have a friend who was a missionary in Calcutta among the poorest of the poor. He told me that what struck him was how mundane life was even in such a foreign and challenging place. His decision to go overseas felt daring and bold, but he was surprised to find that wherever he was on earth, much of his day was spent sitting with people, taking care of business and chores, taking care of his own body, knowing his neighbors, seeking to love people, sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing. Whether you’re Mother Teresa or a stay-at-home-mom, whether you’re a revolutionary, a student, or a tax attorney, life is lived in twenty-four-hour days. We have bodies; we lag in energy; we learn slowly; we wake daily and don’t know what lies ahead. We eat, work, walk, play, and sleep.

In these pages we look at life in one day. We look at faith in small moments, spiritual formation in its molecular form – not because this is all that matters, but because the only life



any of us live is in daily, pedestrian humanity.

I like big ideas. I can get drunk on talk of justification, ecclesiology, pneumatology, Christology, and eschatology. But these big ideas are borne out—lived, believed, and enfolded—in the small moments of our day, in the places, seasons, homes, and communities that compose our lives. Annie Dillard famously writes, “How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.” I came across Dillard’s words a couple years before I went to seminary, and throughout those years of heady theological study I kept them in my back pocket. They remind me that today is the proving ground of what I believe and of whom I worship.

And every new day, this is the turn my heart must make: I’m living this life, the life right in front of me. This one where marriages struggle. This one where we aren’t living as we thought we might or as we hoped we would. This one where we are weary, where we want to make a difference but aren’t sure where to start, where we have to get dinner on the table or the kids’ teeth brushed, where we have back pain and boring weeks, where our lives look small, where we doubt, where we wrestle with meaninglessness, where we worry about those we love, where we struggle to meet our neighbors and love those closest to us, where we grieve, where we wait.

And on this particular day, Jesus knows me and declares me his own. On this day he is redeeming the world, advancing his kingdom, calling us to repent and grow, teaching his church to worship, drawing near to us, and making a people all his own.

If I am to spend my whole life being transformed by the good news of Jesus, I must learn how grand, sweeping truths—doctrine, theology, ecclesiology, Christology—rub against the texture of an average day. How I spend this ordinary day in Christ is how I will spend my Christian life.

— Adapted from chapter one, “Waking”