



At the Still Point: A Literary Guide to Prayer in Ordinary Time

Sarah Arthur (Compilation)

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With a title inspired by T. S. Eliot, this “literary” prayer book is for every Christian who has ever felt led to pray while reading a novel or a poem. These great writers know the things of God but speak in metaphor. They tell the truth, as Emily Dickinson put it, but they “tell it slant.” In not stating out loud what they know, they have left much to our imaginations—which is a way of saying they have trusted the Holy Spirit. *Let those who have ears, hear.*

At the Still Point: A Literary Guide to Prayer in Ordinary Time Details

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From Reader Review At the Still Point: A Literary Guide to Prayer in Ordinary Time for online ebook

Tim says

A literary devotional for ordinary time, offering some 29 weeks of set prayer and Scripture readings, accompanied by literary texts (poems and excerpts from novels, heavily from 19th century England and Russia). Very well done. The Advent and Epiphany one is just as great.

Abby Tamkin says

I haven't actually read the whole thing, but I've switched over to the Advent/Epiphany one, and have read enough of this that I can say it's wonderful.

Looking forward to starting over with this one and getting through the whole thing after Pentecost.

Pamela says

Had the privilege of meeting and talking with this author, having my copy of her book signed, and then walked into an ordination where she accompanied her husband in his ordination. Blessings to their family!

This is a wonderful collection of pieces of literature gathered together to enhance prayer sessions. Almost avoiding the usual religious writers, Sarah Arthur selects intentionally authors from various times, ideologies, from Auden, Austen, Donne, Dickinson, Eliot (T.S. and George), Keillor, Tyler, Whittier, Wilde, and many more, arranging their writings into 29 weekly themes, along with prayers, scriptures, etc.

A good place to find a way into closer relationship to God, especially for those who may have turned away from religion due to past experiences, or for those who wonder "what the God thing is all about".

Thank you, Sarah Arthur, for a book that brings literature, scripture and prayer together for me in one place.

Rebekah Byson says

This book is mostly Christian themed poetry from the 16th, 17th, and 18th century, with some excerpts from classic literature. The excerpts were not so bad, and I was able to add some more ideas to my want to read list. However, the poetry was tedious. I don't know why I ever torture myself attempting to read poetry. The concept of this book was to use this poetry to inspire weekly prayers. Now I know I'm not the target audience for a book like this, but I was intrigued by the idea of using literature for spiritual purposes. However this book failed at that purpose.

Jennifer says

A lovely and inspiring collection of devotional readings for the fertile season of Ordinary Time.

Kimberly Coyle says

My go-to devotional book for Ordinary Time. Arthur has exquisite taste in literature, and I find she always meets me right where I am with both scripture and art. I highly recommend every one of her literary guides.

Laurie says

Sarah Arthur appears to worship as she writes of the truths revealed subtly or indirectly through lines of poetry or passages of prose. She notes that:

We remember certain scenes from certain books like we remember major life events: they become part of our personal histories, listed among the episodes that marked turning points in our lives. Indeed, many of us might include a poet or an author, whether dead or living, among our spiritual mentors. On a quiet evening, curled up with a good story, we have encountered the memorable character, the articulate phrase, the evocative image, the small suggestion, the smuggled truth, the shattering epiphany, which changed us, and we weren't even looking to be changed. It enriched our lives, and we didn't even know our own poverty. We were not the same people afterward. Part of the power of such moments is that they sneak up on us when we are unaware. Spiritual insight, wrapped in the cloak of fiction or poetry, slips inside the back door of the imagination; and suddenly there it is, nonchalantly sipping coffee at the kitchen table. It pours another cup, invites us to have a seat. Well, it seems to say, and what will you do with me now? We were not expecting a spiritual moment because we didn't think we were reading a spiritual book. Our defenses were down. The bolt was unlocked. So the intruder gets further, pushes much deeper than if we, bristling with suspicion, had been expecting a salesman proselytizing at the front door."

She does caution though...

"We must be careful, an English professor of mine once warned, not to "baptize" a literary work just because we happen to love it. A book may "baptize" our imaginations (in the words of C. S. Lewis), but we cannot turn, therefore, and become celebrants at the local library, pronouncing words of institution over every poem that delights us. Even so, many of us have experienced a moment of spiritual awareness while reading a book that was not necessarily intended for that purpose...I am not suggesting that you stretch any of the readings in the direction that suits your current spiritual mood: otherwise the reading may break. However, I am inviting you to read these works differently than you might, say, for an English class or for personal entertainment. I'm inviting you to experience them as an act of worship, which was how many of the authors experienced or even intended them, and also as an opportunity for prayer, for conversation with God."

Arthur, Sarah (2011-07-21). *At the Still Point: A Literary Guide to Prayer in Ordinary Time* (Kindle Locations 125-168). Paraclete Press. Kindle Edition. "

And so I eagerly, expectantly, and yet somewhat cautiously enter into the first week's readings -- not able to honor the "weekly devotional" structure of this book -- desiring to snack in it, reaching in as I might into a box of Sees candies -- what will I taste and savor next? I will try to pace myself.

Danielle says

An unusual devotional guide I really appreciated and added to my morning scripture readings.

Gina says

I have read this book twice and am very sure I will read it many times more. I love the collection of poetry and fiction. The work that must have gone into this collection (and the two others that go along with it) is impressive. A beautiful and moving daily devotional.

Brooke West says

I'm glad I used this. There were times when it was boring, tedious, or laborious... but that was a reflection of me and the length of Ordinary Time.

Julie Davis says

This unusual devotional is a book after my own heart. Sarah Arthur has thematically arranged classic and contemporary fiction and poetry to look a little deeper at the worship inherent in the words.

Designed for use in Ordinary Time, themes range from "Seeking God's Face" to "Quarrels with Heaven" to "Rending the Veil." Readings are taken from such diverse fiction sources as *The Wind in the Willows* and *Mansfield Park*, and from poets spanning the Italian Christina Rossetti to Enuma Okoro, a contemporary Nigerian-American.

I must admit I've had this book since the beginning of Ordinary Time and now we are approaching the end of it. I haven't written a review until now because, to tell the truth, I do not know how to do it justice. However, I will try.

The daily readings pull one into an almost inadvertent practice of *Lectio Divina**. It makes me slow down, look outward for God and inward for my self, and brings me to a place I haven't been before.

I usually am not drawn to poetry and the daily immersion leaves me feeling as if I've stepped out of real time

when I'm done reading it. It shakes me up mentally in the best possible way. It is transformative, even if I can't label the transformation ... which, now that I think of it, may actually speak to the authenticity of the "shaking up" that these meditations carry for me.

I do wish that the publisher had provided room for the daily scripture readings instead of simply putting the reference. I, for one, am too lazy (yes, I said it and it's true) to go look up the references. It may have taken a few more pages but would have made *At the Still Point* a complete devotional. However, that is a small point and certainly one that is easy to remedy, if only I overcome my laziness with a bit of forethought in having a Bible to hand.

I hope that this book does well because I would really love it if Arthur did volumes for Advent, Lent, and Easter. Definitely recommended and not just for Catholics or Christians but for all spiritual seekers who love transformation through words.

Emily says

i started this half-way through, but it's been awesome!

Janelle says

Enjoyable; helped me develop a morning reading habit

I meditated on the Psalm every day each week and divided the readings so that I read at least one every day. The downside was that I wasn't always reading Scripture every day (except for the Psalm), but I enjoyed being exposed to different poems and excerpts. I started late, so I only read a few weeks from this book, but I look forward to making my way through the entire thing next year. I never really paid attention to the liturgical calendar before, but it's kind of fun. Now on to Advent!
