

Work Liturgy

The word “vocation” comes from a Latin word that means “to call.” Vocation is not just something that God calls you to do; it is also the kind of person God calls you to be.

It is so easy to separate “church” from the rest of our lives, but God created us to live and work with him and for him in every aspect of life. We are created for work.

The following liturgies are from the series: *Every Moment Holy*. Try reading one of these work liturgies out loud before you go into work every day and see how it changes your approach to vocation and the way you see your job.

A Liturgy for Joy in Good Works

O Lord, renew our spirits and draw our hearts to you,
that our work would not be a burden, but a delight. Give us such a mighty love for you
that our obedience will be sweet.

Oh, let us not serve you with the spirit of bondage as slaves,
but with the cheerfulness and gladness of children, delighting ourselves in you, and
rejoicing in your work.

Amen.

(Nashville, Every Moment Holy Volume III, 2023, 48-49)

A Liturgy For Artists and Makers

O Christ, through whom all things were made that have been made, meet me in this
lesser making.

Channel my creativity.

Guide my hands and heart.

Give me discipline to steward well my craft.

Let me find a fertile place to sink my roots within the long tradition and continuing
conversation of your children who, across thousands of years, have sought

to display beauty,

to articulate truth,

to celebrate holy mystery,

and to somehow echo eternal yearnings
in the things we create.

Let me, in the short span of my life, contribute something more to that good
conversation.

And let me release my expectations of the times and places and ways in which it might
be received.

Let me instead simply craft the finest offering I am able — within my given limits of time,
and skill, and circumstance — and then offer it to you to use it as you will.

Let that be enough for me, O Lord.

Amen.

(Nashville, Every Moment Holy Volume III, 2023, 67-68)

A Liturgy Before Teaching

O God, who in wisdom
laid the world's foundation,

Remind me it is no trivial task to teach:
to inspect and wonder, to discipline and discern,
to see the world through the eyes of those still fresh in learning it,
to show them nature as you made it,
and invite them to know it more fully.

Teaching often seems summed up in mere grades
and emails
and papers
and raised hands
and disruptions,
but really it is a feast,
a community,
a gift,
a discovery of the world and its inherent value.

We see in teaching a divine act that forms and shapes; it weaves in all of history and
matter and truth and goodness and offers it to students in a way which may guide their
thoughts and their decisions and may change them for good.

In your hands, our Great Teacher,
nothing is wasted or lost.
No failed lesson plan or disruptive student can thwart your plan for all humanity-
for redemption and restoration.

Thank you for letting me play a small but noble role in that plan.
I pray my students desire to know, and not just appear to know, or seem to know, or
kind of know.
I pray that all knowledge leads them closer to seeing you, and delighting in the way you
crafted the world.

Do what I cannot-turn their gaze to you.
And just as the robin does not busy herself with anything but the task before her, let me
teach today, and teach well.

Remind me now of the humanity and dignity of my students.
They are not good or bad students, not obnoxious or obedient,
but human beings, not more or less or other.

My students are dear to you, God, capable of great virtue,
and this is just the beginning of
their lifelong commission, their ambition of knowing you
and your creation better, more fully.
Sober me to the reality of my students' future happiness or future misery.

Teach me to steward their affections well: by speaking earnestly of things that matter,
by carefully separating truth from falsehood, by condemning unrighteousness, by
valuing beauty and whatever is
true and excellent and praiseworthy.

Teach me to direct them to true goodness, to knowing and imitating you, to beholding
the beauty of a dandelion, a novel, an idea, an equation,
and in all of this,
the harmony of all of creation, the thread of brokenness and restoration, the
appearance of injustice and
the coming justice of the whole world— let me remind them and myself that its
goodness sings of you.

Amen.

(Nashville, Every Moment Holy Volume III, 2023, 15-17)

A Liturgy for Those Employed in Manual Labor

Lord, I confess that I often find little joy in the hard labor set before me each new workday. To sweat under beating sun, slog in drizzling rain, or layer clothing against the icy winter as I grind through another physically taxing job can become a monotony which I endure with little more reward in sight than a weekend off and a steady paycheck.

In the midst of this strenuous pattern, as the reservoir of my own strength and skill runs dry, I am awakened again to see that you alone are my provision and supply. For I am reminded daily of the curse of Adam to toil by the sweat of his brow.

I am reminded by the ache of muscle with every nail driven, by the strain on back of heavy loads lifted, by the strike of spade into earth with wearing repetition, that I am made of this same dust in which I labor.

And so, Father, remind me now that work itself was not part of the curse that drove me from your presence.
For even within your perfect garden, before the splintering of creation, you gave work to humankind and commanded that we continue your great labor of bringing order from chaos.

It was by your strength the channels for the rivers of the earth were excavated.
It was by your power the foundation stones of the towering mountains were set.
With keen eyes you graded the hills and laid the green sod upon them.
And you saw that it was good.

And you invite me to join you now in these fundamental labors of bringing beauty from barren rock and habitation from the uninhabitable.

Just as I shared in this world's breaking, I am called to share in its remaking.

For you were not content to let your creation fall and remain in disrepair.
You were not afraid to get your hands dirty.
You were willing to become weak, to become the carpenter and feel the sting of a splinter as you joined and carved wood into that which would be of service to others.
You, Jesus, were a man well acquainted with the expenditure of sweat, and strain of muscle, working for the better part of your life with saw and chisel.
And you understand the combination of skill and brute force required in the hours set before me.

So let me not be ashamed of such labors and the service they provide to others. Let me not shy away from the most menial of tasks, even those which simply prepare the ground for others to build upon, even those which bring no glory or recognition of a job well done. You worked not for momentary recognition or glory, but in humble obedience to your Father's will.

So now guide my calloused hands that in them the humble hammer, level, rake, shovel and other tools of my trade might become as consecrated instruments for your purposes. Give me the strength and stamina to work hard, the knowledge to know my physical limits, and the wisdom to work safely.

And, when my work is done, the ability to see that it is good and to rest.

Amen.

(Nashville, Every Moment Holy Volume III, 2023, 22-25)

A Liturgy for Mechanical Repairs

Father, I have neither the skill nor tools to repair all that is worn in this world—all that clinks and clanks and clatters, all that stutters, stalls, and does not start.

And indeed you do not call me to attempt what your hands alone can achieve.

Yet you have gifted me in this fight against the physical effects of the fall, in the salvaging of what is broken down, rusted, and out of balance, to perform a restorative work against the abrading forces of time, grit, rust and friction.

So as I begin this repair I offer my service first to you, recognizing that there is a greater context for my labors today. This law that everything we create is ever running down and in need of repair, is an evidence, and a symptom, of our true condition.

For this world is broken.

And I am broken.

And just as this machine is incapable of replacing its own aging components, so am I helpless to fix the grinding consequences of sin upon my own soul.

"Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

You created me for eternity, and you are not willing to throw away that which is falling apart. It is your good pleasure to take what is seemingly beyond repair and perform a great restoration.

So even now as I refit this failing mechanical equipment, O Restorer of Souls, perform your restoration in me.

For though I am skilled with machines, I am not always so skilled at repairing and maintaining relationships with those you've placed in my life and with whose service and care I am entrusted.

I ask that your invisible internal work become more evident in my life through greater patience, greater forgiveness, and greater love for those I encounter today.

Now in this work before me, as I undertake this repair, grant me wisdom to trace and identify the source of mechanical failures. Give me insight to choose the best course of action. And provide peace, amid frustration, when minor maintenance turns into major repairs.

O repairer of the broken, I offer my service to you now.

Amen.

(Nashville, Every Moment Holy Volume III, 2023, 31-33)

A liturgy for Unseen Labors

O Lord, who works in a thousand unseen places, I pause in your presence as I begin my work today.

Nothing is unknown to you, and you know that my labors often go unrecognized by others. At times, this has disheartened me.

Yet this I believe: to work is a valuable gift.

You've placed me here with an opportunity to tend these tasks for your glory and for the good of your children.

May I not be blind to the beauty before me.

Be thou my vision, Lord.

For in your sight the task at hand becomes an act of worship. And as the touch of your hand sweeps through, may these labors be sanctified. Holy Spirit, meet me in this work with the power of your presence, for in your presence is the fullness of joy.

Yes, there may be joy here also, even in this.

How much of your work, O God, is unnoticed? You have created all things, and by your Spirit they are sustained.

How often do I neglect to thank you for the breath in my lungs, for the grass beneath my feet, for the varied flavors of food, for colors, and kestrels, and laughter? You have worked all these things into your creation. Indeed, the world revolves around your unseen acts. Yet despite our lack of acknowledgement, you are constant in care and unceasing in service. May I humbly follow this pattern.

As I go about my work today, give me eyes to see you at work in the world. Let me not forget the centuries of good and faithful servants who were never recognized on earth, but whose heavenly reward awaited them, secure and unseen.

May I be more attuned to brothers and sisters around me who are similarly laboring, many in more trying circumstances than my own.

Let me work today to the rhythm of your Word, inhaling and exhaling, my very breath declaring your abundant kindness:

Let my soul be at rest, *you have been good to me.*

Great is your steadfast love. *Your faithfulness endures forever.*

You give life and breath to all, *you satisfy every need.*

And now, Lord, establish the work of my hands, not for my name but for yours, that these labors might bring blessing from trial, peace from chaos, flourishing from barrenness, justice from abuse, and beauty from its lack.

I give you my work as an offering.
Do with it as you will.

For my deepest satisfaction comes not from being seen by others, but from being profoundly and forever seen and known by you.

Amen.

(Nashville, Every Moment Holy Volume III, 2023, 33-37)

A Liturgy for One Who Works the Nightshift

PEOPLE: Yours, O Lord, is the day.

Yours also is the night.

THE ONE GOING TO WORK: While others have moved through the work of the day, I have slept, keeping a counter-rhythm as the bustle hummed around me.

Now, as the day declines and I rise, bless the rest I have had, O Lord, and multiply its effects in my body, for I am weary, and the fog of sleepiness seems always to hang about me.

The edges fray, O Lord, for I am one who keeps time in two worlds: a hand in the day; a hand in the night, circling, circling.

The evening is as morning to me, and the morning marks the dawn of night.

But at all hours you are with me.

At all hours you are at once working and resting as you rule over your creation.

Somehow, by the mysterious workings of your Holy Spirit, let me be at work and also at rest in you this night.

O Christ Our Light, all hours belong to you.

You made the sun to rule the day, and the moon to govern the night.

Help me to find an ally in the moon-that light that shines because it mirrors a greater light. May my own life reflect, however partially, you, O Light of the World.

Often work is itself a mirror, reflecting to me something about myself I would not otherwise notice. Help me to see myself more honestly, both my strengths and my weaknesses, and to trust that you are at work in my life as I work this night.

Yours, O Lord, is the day.

Yours also is the night.

And I pray you would meet me, O Lord, as you have often met your children, in the night hours:

Under a dark sky,

you gave Abraham your promise.

All night long, Jacob wrestled
with you to receive a blessing.

Nicodemus came to you under the cover of dark, Lord Christ, seeking to know you better.

And you, Jesus, labored in prayer through the night and knew the loneliness of those hours:

"Watch with me," you said.

Even you had to steel yourself for the work that was yours to do.

And so, I join the company of those who have gone before me into the labor of the night hours, which is also a vigil. May my work be prayer, and in and through it may I keep company with you, Lord Christ.

Be with _____,

O Christ, for the work of this night.

Bless them and keep them.

Make your face shine upon them, and be gracious to them.

Turn your face toward _____,

and give them peace.

I lift to you the work ahead, that which is known, and that which is unknown to me.

(Specific concerns for the upcoming shift may be voiced.)

There is nothing that can come tonight that is a surprise to you; all is known to you. So I entrust myself to you, Lord God: heart, soul, mind, and strength.

(The following optional section may be prayed if a spouse or family will be left alone through the night.)

I trust to you those I love from whom I am absent as I work. Bless the sleep that they enjoy, and keep watch over them while I am away. When they feel afraid, or are gripped by worry for my well-being and are tempted to imagine the worst, may your Spirit minister comfort, like a warm hand on their back.

And when we feel the pain of aloneness begotten by our opposite schedules, may we find ways to turn toward one another, reach through the fatigue, and show each other loving attention and gentleness.

Grant me then the grace

to be aware of your faithful presence: you who are always at once working and resting as you rule over your creation.

And when the daylight comes, help me receive

from you the sleep I need, to wake at nightfall, and again keep watch with you.

*Yours, O Lord, is the day.
Yours also is the night.*

Amen.

(Nashville, Every Moment Holy Volume III, 2023, 37-42)

A Liturgy To Begin the Day's Creative Labors

Almighty God, Maker of All Marvels,

Any good thing that we know, see, or can imagine
has its source in you.

It is your nature to delight in beauty, and from your first ordering of creation into manifestations stunning and sublime, we received lines, shapes, forms, colors, values, space, and texture.

From your vast imagination we received unity, balance, movement, tone and melody, words and story, rhythm, emphasis, and contrast.

As you are the Lord of lords, so you are also the Creator of creators, and you invested in your creatures - made in your image—a consonant desire to fashion those materials of your creation into new expressions, both beautiful and meaningful.

I too am moved by this call to create, this drive and desire to shape and express, to craft artifacts that others might pause and ponder.

I too am compelled by a quiet hope that those who consider my handiwork might sense in it some rippling echo of the symmetry with which you imbued your creation, some small reflection of the beauty that whispers, and shouts, and sings of you.

The minutes before me are set aside for such creating. So consecrate this space and these moments, O Christ.

Meet me in this hour as I hover over this chaos of raw materials and unrealized ideas. Inspire me to envision what new creation might be called into being. Then train my eyes, my ears, my hands to translate that vision into tangible forms.

Even as you filled your servant Bezalel with your Spirit thousands of years ago, endowing him with skill, ability, and knowledge to devise and implement artful designs for the adorning of your tabernacle—even as you were pleased to enliven his labors,

would you also be at work within my own today, breathing into them some breath of life?

Now give me confidence in my calling as a maker. Give me courage to imagine, and attempt, and fail, and assess, and hone, and imagine again, as I better learn what it means to labor as a sub-creator, fashioning new works from the original elements you created.

Protect my heart against the slow poison of my perpetual desire to be relevant and adored. Rather, give me a zeal for the truth, expressed from a genuine love and an unselfconscious delight in beauty.

When pride intrudes, when I exult in my seeming success, or in the illusion of my own originality and significance, remind me that there is nothing new under the sun, that all I have has been granted as a trust.

Then lead me instead to invest my talents as means to serve others, from a posture of right humility— for all gifts you have distributed to your people are given, not that we might build our own little empires, but that we might collectively build up your Church, and care well for our cultures.

So let me labor to create hospitable works that serve well all who will encounter them. Bless me with eyes to see my limitations— of time, skill, opportunity, notoriety, and resources—as gifts of grace to be enjoyed; tracks to run along that will yield a truer creative freedom, teaching me that my art-making is in no way divorced from the mundane details of my life and my relationships, from the soil and sweat and tears and humor and hope of it all.

And on those days when I chafe against my tethers, when I find I cannot span the distance between my grand visions and my finite abilities, when I am tempted to abandon my half-wrought creations, or to wallow in my failures, remind me then that your love for me was never based on my performance, and that you will weave even my little catastrophes together for my good, and for your glory. Let me learn how my weaknesses might render me a better conduit for your strength, making of me a co-laborer more compassionate with the weaknesses of others.

Remind me that even as I fashion this work of art, so am I your work, daily fashioned by you —and that is the crafting that matters more. Therefore, loving Maker, meet me in the joys and struggles that attend this holy calling.

Let me always approach it as a holy calling.

O Lord, shape the path before me— even the small step along that path that I will take today.

(The ending section might be memorized and prayed as often as desired during the day's labors.)

Now, in this hour, let me
faithfully and purposefully work grace and beauty into the lives of the people around me, in these places you have assigned to me.

Amen.

(Nashville, Every Moment Holy Volume III, 2023, 51-56)