

"AN INSPIRING RESOURCE FOR OUR TIME."

– Diarmuid O'Murchu, author of *Evolutionary Faith*



NO ORDINARY TIME

THE RISE OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE
AND EVOLUTIONARY CREATIVITY



A BOOK OF HOURS FOR A PROPHETIC AGE

JAN PHILLIPS

Praise for No Ordinary Time

In No Ordinary Time and its daily readings for one week, Jan Phillips has packed a lifetime of “AHA’s”—thoughts that suddenly give us clarity about ourselves and other selves, the world around us. You will keep sentences in your mind, on your bulletin board, in your pocket and in your heart.

Gloria Steinem, activist, author of *Revolution from Within*

Superb book for finding inspiration and guidance for maneuvering through these extraordinary times. Jan Phillips is spot on in knowing what it takes to get us through into the world we all want. Don't hide this book on a shelf but keep it always in sight to go back to again and again.

Elisabet Sahtouris, PhD
Evolution biologist and futurist, author of *EarthDance: Living Systems in Evolution*

The Book of Hours without a Monastery, Psalms without a Psalmody, Prayer without Gregorian Chant! Jan Phillips weaves an intriguing and inspiring tapestry synthesizing the wisdom embodied in an ancient tradition with the spiritual awakening engaging sojourners of the 21st century. This book provides a creative synthesis from monastery to market-place, from psalmody to poetry, from monastic time to the sacredness of every day, and every hour therein. Jan Phillips has provided an inspiring resource for our time.

Diarmuid O’Murchu, author of *Evolutionary Faith*

Jan Phillips is that rare blend of deep, creative thinker, passionate heart and true visionary. Her clear and special talent to communicate and to inspire action is needed now more than ever as we all try to navigate these extraordinary times.

Rev. Wendy Craig-Purcell, Unity Center of San Diego, author of *Ask Yourself This*

No Ordinary Time is not so much a book to be read as a sacred moment by moment practice to be engaged in. This is in stark contrast to most books whose ideas we read and forget the next day. If you are committed to exploring and living your destiny in service to life, No Ordinary Time is an extraordinarily practical wisdom teaching and gift you can give yourself that can help you embody the Divine in your own unique way.

Jeff Hutner, editor, *New Paradigm Digest*

An out-of-the-box Book of Hours that will stir your soul, stretch your mind, and embolden your contributions to mending the planet. Jan Phillips blends creativity, mysticism, and spiritual practice into startling and illuminating new configurations.

Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, authors of *Spiritual Literacy*

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JAN PHILLIPS

No Ordinary Time —
The Rise of Spiritual Intelligence and Evolutionary Creativity

A Book of Hours for a Prophetic Age

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INTRODUCTION

Seven times a day do I praise thee. Psalm 119:164

These are no ordinary times. We are witnessing and participating in an evolutionary leap unlike anything in our history. There is evidence in the human family of an upward shift in consciousness, a maturing spirituality, a connectedness that grows more intimate and global by the day. And that uplift is countered by the dissolution of myths that no longer serve us and the demise of institutions that have underpinned our culture since the beginning of our history. Our planetary worldview is shifting to wide angle as we awaken to the reality of our interdependence.

We are the myth-makers and co-creators of the 21st century, the prophets and writers of new sacred texts. Growing up spiritually is a requirement of us this hour. There is no Geppetto God out there pulling strings. We are the vessels of the Divine, agents of Supreme Intelligence, neural cells of our home planet, and it is our job now to call God home, to tend to the kingdom that is all around us, and to create stories and cultures of hope and compassion.

This book is a call to mindfulness, a reminder that evolutionary action begins with stillness, that visionary ideas arise from spiritual practice. It is a book for people conscious of their power and ready to co-create new sacraments and ceremonies that celebrate the Divine dwelling within us. It is a handbook for people committed to justice, peacemaking and spiritual integrity who are eager to evolve themselves spiritually and creatively.

While its form is taken from the medieval *Book of Hours*, its content stretches into the future—an ancient chalice for tomorrow’s wine. It is a guide to reclaiming your spiritual authority, rethinking your inherited beliefs so you can create a life that is prophetic, ecstatic and true to your soul. It bridges the One and the many, East and West, masculine and feminine, darkness and light through an array of stories, poems, prayers and songs.

The *Book of Hours* originated in the Middle Ages as a way for people to stay spiritually mindful. The Jewish practice of saying prayers during the day was adopted by Christians as the basis for their daily spiritual practice. The Jews of the pre-Christian era had a source of devotional verse in the Book of Psalms, which included 150 prayers, poems and hymns. Christians adopted this book for their own use, and the “Psalter” soon became their main devotional text as well. Monks and nuns recited the Psalms according to guidelines laid out in monastic rules established primarily by St. Benedict.

In order to distinguish the divisions of time between the prescribed prayers, the Catholic Church established the canonical hours, also referred to as the Divine Office. Life in many medieval communities revolved around these hours of the day which were designated as Matins (midnight), Lauds (sunrise), Prime (6:00 a.m.), Terce (9:00 a.m.), Sext (noon), None (3:00 pm), Vespers (sunset), and Compline (9:00 p.m.)

Over the centuries, a number of supplementary texts were added to the Psalter. It became customary, for example, to frame the Psalms with “antiphons”—brief passages that helped to create Christian significance in the old Jewish texts. The antiphons were joined by a variety of prayers, canticles, hymns, readings from the Bible, and dialogues. The book that was developed for lay people who wished to incorporate elements of monasticism into their devotional life was called *The Book of Hours*.

This *Book of Hours* is designed for the same purpose—to give people a way to stay spiritually grounded throughout the day. It is based on the premise that we are in consort with our own Source and Creator, the Invisible One known as God and the visible one known as Earth. I am writing it for the ones who already know there is no distance between the Divine and the mortal, who al-

ready engage in an unmediated love affair with the Creator, and who, in such large numbers, have had to leave the churches that refuse to be relevant in these times of crisis. Many of these words will seem blasphemous to religious adherents who think there is only one way to be faithful, but one of the greatest ways we can serve each other is to challenge each other's thoughts.

When the German philosopher Jean Gebser wrote about his vision of the emergence of human consciousness, he referred to the myth of Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom, who was born from the head of Zeus. In *The Ever-Present Origin* (1949) Gebser uses the ancient myth to capture the epic struggle and effort of human development:

And it would be well for us to be mindful of one actuality: although the wound in the head of Zeus healed, it was once a wound. Every "novel" thought will tear open wounds . . . everyone who is intent upon surviving—not only earth but also life—with worth and dignity, and living rather than passively accepting life, must sooner or later pass through the agonies of emergent consciousness.

If this book does what I hope it does, you may experience some of these agonies as you release the old for what is emerging. I have stretched in my spiritual practice to think and pray not only as a Christian, but as a Jew, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Native American, an atheist, a post-theist. I try on different hats as I light my candle, and while my thoughts might change or my prayers change, the Presence I am steeped in never alters, the Ground of my Being never moves. No matter what my spiritual stance, awe and adoration are the common ground. As I wrote one day during my morning prayers: "If there is a God, I am in awe. If there is not a God, I am in greater awe."

We are not here to debate what God means. We are here to live out the meaning of God, to BE the God we want to see in the world. This book is a holy book, full of reverence, praise, lamentations, and songs. It is one poet praying, to forces visible and invisible. It is one person sharing her intimacy with the Beloved. It is an adventure in aliveness, a sojourn for the soul. Come along. Let go and lift up.

No Ordinary Time

CHAPTER ONE MONDAY

When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. 1 Corinthians 13:11

AWAKENING

At an early age, I learned that God was a Being who dwelled in a place far from where I ever stood. I learned to commune with the transcendent God of the Above, not the immanent Divine Within. But over the years, as I let go of childish thinking and took responsibility for my spiritual life, my perception of God changed dramatically. I am guided now not so much by teachings that were handed down to me, but by ideas that have risen up from within—a shift that began thirty years ago when I was a young postulant nun in a religious order taking my first theology class.

The Jesuit priest stood in front of the room and asked us what we believed about God. One postulant raised her hand, stood up and said “God made me to show His goodness and to share his everlasting life with me in heaven.” I nodded my head in agreement, having memorized this years ago just like everyone else in the room.

The priest looked dismayed. “That’s it?” he asked.

“Yes, Father.”

“Sit down,” he barked, looking around for the next hand.

Up it went, and the next brave soul stood up saying, “In God there are three Divine Persons, really distinct, and equal in all things—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

I nodded again, and the priest frowned. “Is that the best you can do?”

“Yes, Father.”

“Next,” he yelled, as she took her seat, looking around in wonder.

By now, we’re all confused, but one more raised her hand.

“God can do all things, and nothing is hard or impossible to Him.”

“Sit down,” he said.

He rolled his eyes, crossed his arms and surveyed the whole group of us with a kind of silent disdain. By now, I’m feeling anxious and blood is rushing up my neck. I feel hot and sweaty. My first anxiety attack.

“How could he do this?” It seemed so mean. He asked for our ideas about God and yet, when we said them, it felt like he took a sledge hammer and smashed our beliefs into a thousand pieces. A tear rolled down my cheek.

It was a moment of devastating loss, incomprehensible sadness. I felt as if everything I believed in, everything on which I had based my life, was now being challenged. We sat there, thirty of us, for what seemed an eternity, reckoning with the obliteration of God as we had known Him. What if everything we believed wasn’t true? Did Father Grabys know something we didn’t know?

Finally the priest spoke. “You should be ashamed for having nothing more than catechism answers to this question. Are you just a bunch of parrots, repeating everything you’ve been taught? Hasn’t anyone here gone beyond the Baltimore Catechism in your thinking?”

The air was thick with silence. Hands were folded, eyes cast down. Tears cascaded down my face. I prayed he wouldn’t call on me.

“You must come to know what is true about God from your own experience,” said the priest. “If you are to be a nun worth your salt, you have to arrive at a faith that is deeper than your learning, one that is rooted in your ultimate concerns and rises up from the nature of who you are.”

I looked up at him, wondering how in the world to build a faith from my human nature. Wasn’t faith something I was born into? Something I inherited, from the outside? I was a Catholic by default. They told me everything I was supposed to believe. That was the point, wasn’t it? I was just lucky to be born into the one true faith. I certainly didn’t have anything to say about it. That’s what infallible popes were for.

I raised my hand and asked him how someone could create a faith from the inside out, and why we even needed to since we knew what we needed to know from the catechism.

“What you believe, that is religion,” he said. “Who you are, what you live for—that is faith. And that is what we are here to explore, to create and to de-