



# Between Midnight and Dawn: A Literary Guide to Prayer for Lent, Holy Week, and Eastertide

*Sarah Arthur*

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Join poets and novelists from across the centuries as you travel through the liturgical seasons of Lent, Holy Week, and Eastertide. With the popular collections *At the Still Point: A Literary Guide to Prayer in Ordinary Time* and *Light Upon Light: A Literary Guide to Prayer for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany*, this third collection of daily and weekly readings from classic and contemporary literature completes the church calendar. New voices such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Benjamín Alire Sáenz join well-loved classics by Dostoevsky, Rossetti, and Eliot. Light in the darkness, illuminating the soul. *Between Midnight and Dawn: A Literary Guide to Prayer for Lent, Holy Week, and Eastertide* will use imagination to draw you deeper into God's presence. Read it through, then use it as a resource for years to come.

## Between Midnight and Dawn: A Literary Guide to Prayer for Lent, Holy Week, and Eastertide Details

Date : Published January 1st 2016 by Paraclete Press

ISBN : 9781612616636

Author : Sarah Arthur

Format : Paperback 272 pages

Genre : Poetry, Christian, Religion, Spirituality, Christianity

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## **From Reader Review *Between Midnight and Dawn: A Literary Guide to Prayer for Lent, Holy Week, and Eastertide* for online ebook**

### **Catherine McNiell says**

Lent hasn't even begun yet and I've already had to purchase this book three times because I keep giving my copies away! I've loved each of the first two books in this "Literary Guide" series by Sarah Arthur, and this one does not disappoint. If you are looking for a thoughtful, interesting way to read yourself through the seasons of Lent and Easter, this is the book for you!

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### **Erin F. says**

A beautiful book. "Between Midnight and Dawn" is the perfect finale to the trilogy of literary guides to prayer compiled by Sarah Arthur. This final collection of poems, literature, and prayers cements Arthur's ability to act as theologian and thoughtful curator. She's a master at selecting threads of thought appropriate to the season. The contemporary selections (Kate James' poems, my word!) pair wonderfully with the classics ("The Secret Garden," a personal favorite).

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### **Ashlee Cowles says**

*Between Midnight and Dawn* is a "literary guide to prayer for Lent, Holy Week, and Eastertide." So to be clear, this work is meant to lead readers who celebrate these liturgical seasons through a collection of great literature that explores themes of darkness and light—themes many of us experience deeply in the dead of winter, when spring is on the horizon, but still feels so far away.

Let's start with the title. As soon as I realized it was a line from a T.S. Eliot poem, I knew this was my kind of devotional (by which I mean, a devotional for someone who has difficulty connecting with most devotionals). I love T.S. Eliot's poetry because I have no idea what he's trying to say. And yet I know exactly what he's trying to say. His words evoke paradoxes that resonate, mysteries that are as true and clear as the clang of a bell, but oh so hard to explain. That pretty much sums up what I often feel during the season of Lent and even Easter—a time of ancient traditions and mysteries that go deep and ring true, but can be difficult to articulate in a world of abrupt soundbites and short status updates.

In contrast to the fast, cursory internet reading of everyday life, Sarah Arthur has compiled a collection of words meant to be savored. As she poignantly states in the introduction, these are words for those who have "lain awake during moonless hours between midnight and dawn," and who often feel that "the darkness is final. It owns the earth utterly. It takes hold in the tick of the clock and the stillness of the woods and the shallow breath of your own mute body...It is the last and definitive night." Yet as every insomniac knows, "by some magic that cannot be quantified, it is not. The earth stirs, inhales, stretches...Light, where there was no light, makes visible: first the outline of a window, then the edge of the bed, your own hand, a book open on the covers. There's no saying precisely when the turn happens. But it does. Every morning. From the beginning of the world."

This book is a literary treasure trove all about the turns. It is also about the long nights in between them—the

still points that are not always peaceful. *Between Midnight and Dawn* contains excerpts from beloved classic writers and poets such as George MacDonald, Emily Bronte, Charles Dickens, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Christina Rossetti, yet there are many selections from contemporary authors, too: Luci Shaw, Scott Cairns, and Wendell Berry, to name just a few. If any of these names are familiar, then you will surely appreciate the encounter with old friends, but be prepared to make new ones as well.

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### **Nick Jordan says**

I can't wait to read the final (for me) one: *At the Still Point*. I adore these collections. The slightest knock is that I'd like to see fewer repeated poets, allowing for more poets to be included.

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### **Amanda Rogozinski says**

This rich compilation of poetry and prose excerpts is structured as a devotional for the liturgical seasons of Lent, Holy Week, and Eastertide, though its meditations can also be recognized as paralleling the journey of a life: we are born into dust (Ash Wednesday), journey through seasons of mourning (Lent) and seasons of uplifting (Easter), until finally we anticipate resurrection into eternity.

Unlike other devotionals, this is not a collection of five-minute "devos" formulated by an encouraging verse, often taken out of context, and a following "gear up for the day" paragraph loosely based on the short biblical quote. Instead, Arthur's selections work together to press into each week's subject from multiple angles by grouping together passages from the five main sections of the biblical cannon (Psalms, Prophets, Letters, and Gospel) along with five literary readings. Since the ambition of these selections is to fuel reflection and prayer, the reader is given the freedom to read them all at once, one a day, or to flip back and forth out of order. I found myself reading them all the first day of the week, then returning to contemplate them more slowly in subsequent readings.

Arthur's choice of readings is robust, pairing old friends (Jane Austen, Frances Hodson Burnett, John Donne, Gerard Manley Hopkins, T.S. Eliot to name a few), with many new friends (Marcie Rae Johnson and Nathaniel Lee Hanson are new favorites), some of whom have yet to be discovered by the public spotlight. In this volume, Arthur brings together voices as old as the 3rd century up through modern times, spanning selections from Iran, India, and Syria, through all the ethnicities that make up America. This is a coming together of the global and trans-generational body of Christ. It is the fellowship of struggling toward God together, and learning to pray from one another; a pre-amble to a future where we will come before God from every nation and tongue as one voice.

For more reviews visit [TheWillowNook.com](http://TheWillowNook.com)

Note: Thanks to Paraclete Press for a review copy of this book. All opinions are my own.

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### **Julie Davis says**

I really loved Sarah Arthur's first devotional, *At the Still Point*, which was for ordinary time. It was an unusual devotional with thematically arranged classic and contemporary fiction and poetry. Of course, that was right down my alley and it became a favorite devotional. I can vouch that Arthur does a wonderful job of choosing pieces that speak both to poetic or literary content and to the Christian message.

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At the time I reviewed it, I wished for devotionals to cover the rest of the liturgical year. Arthur obliged with *Light Upon Light* for Advent. Now with *Between Midnight and Dawn* for Lent and Easter, my wishes have come true.

I'll be using this throughout Lent and Easter.

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### **Tina says**

I enjoyed Sarah Arthur's literary guide to Advent better than this guide, but I don't know if that's because I like the Advent season better or if it is because it was the first literary guide of hers I read. This guide follows the exact same format: opening prayer, four scriptures, variety of poems/readings, closing prayer. Still very good and thought provoking. She has one more guide for Ordinary Time, which I will most likely pick up at some point.

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### **Alice Fugate says**

I had always thought of Lent as a time to give something up in order to focus more on God, but I never participated because it seemed more like a second stab at New Year's Resolutions. For people, not for God.

In the introduction to Sarah Arthur's newest literary guide to prayer, *Between Midnight and Dawn* (for Lent and Eastertide), she explains that Lent is "the season of repentance, of soul-searching, of Christ's lonely journey to the Cross."

I never thought about Lent as the season of darkness, loneliness, and hurt that follows the light and joyful company of Christmas. I see it in myself: after bright new belief or rekindled hope, my faith wanes and I hurt. I find that even though God has won, I am mortal, fighting still, choking on sorrow and wrapped in confusion. These things do not disappear because we believe. We ache, groaning in the terrible, dark loneliness.

But Sarah Arthur provides us with companions to walk with us through the darkness to Holy Week, to speak words of understanding and comfort until we rise with the light, until Easter breaks upon the world with light and celebration and we find the joy of the resurrection, the dawn that always comes after the night.

If you've never read one of Sarah Arthur's literary guides to prayer (*At the Still Point* and *Light Upon Light*), I would encourage you to jump into those after this one. For each season in the church calendar, she compiles scripture and classic and contemporary poetry and prose passages around a weekly theme for the reader to pray through. Reading great literature alongside Scripture gives the reader a different perspective on God's Word. These guides are a way to encounter God through the words of our fellow humans, suffering and rejoicing just as we do.

This book is for those in darkness, for we will see a great light.

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### **Brian Allain says**

This new book by Sarah Arthur is similar to the wonderful formats she used in "*Light Upon Light*" and "*At*

the Still Point". It is a combination of scripture, prayer, poetry, and fiction. I am amazed at the excellent pieces she found to include! My favorites for the most part are the fiction pieces but also some of the other pieces are humorous. All thought-provoking.

I have great respect for all of Sarah's work!

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### **Tony Wesley says**

I used this faithfully last Lent and will use it again during the current reason. The breadth of the sources made this particularly appealing.

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### **Jim says**

With the season of Lent upon us, I have found a wonderful guide to prayer and reflection for it with Sarah Arthur's *Between Midnight and Dawn: A Literary Guide for Lent, Holy Week, and Eastertide*. (Paraclete Press 2016).

*Midnight and Dawn* draws upon relevant readings from the Psalms, Old Testament, Epistles, Gospel accounts and a deep breadth of literary excerpts from 17th century poet George Herbert to 19th century poet Gerard Manley Hopkins to contemporary American poet Anya Silver. The result is a rich and inspirational guide for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter.

The title, which draws upon a portion of TS Eliot's "The Dry Salvages" in *Four Quartets*

Between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception,  
The future futureless, before the morning watch  
When time stops and time is never ending;  
And the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning,  
Clangs  
The bell.

is divided into twenty-one sections with six given to the season of Lent beginning with Ash Wednesday, eight for the Holy Week and the Triduum (Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter) and then seven for the following seven weeks of Easter.

I have used similar guides in the past and found them very helpful to/for me. But what I appreciate about this guide is the rich literary pieces featured in the readings.

For example,

there is this quote from Alfred Lloyd Tennyson's "In Memoriam A.H.H"

Thou seemest human and divine,

The highest, holiest manhood, thou: Our will are ours, we know not how:

Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

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Then there is Anya Silver's "Ash Wednesday" which includes this line

If God won't give me His body to clutch,  
I'll grind this soot in my skin instead.

The result is some wonderful imagery that truly gave me a pause for reflection on this season of the Christian faith.

I really liked *Between Dawn and Midnight* and I am going to be using it as part of my Lenten prayer and meditations.

Note: I was received a galley copy of this book via the publisher and Net Galley in exchange for a review. I was not required to write a positive review.

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### **Leah says**

What a beautiful book to not only take me through lent but through the whole Easter season. I loved how the author was able to tie various pieces of literature, both classic and contemporary and poetry to scripture. It made for a different and wonderful spiritual experience of both seasons.

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### **Michael Poteet says**

The book's front cover and title page claim Sara Arthur "compiled" "Between Midnight and Dawn," but she's done more than that. She has carefully and lovingly curated this collection, arranging a treasury of poems and excerpts from fiction in ways that spotlight each contribution's beauty, both as its own piece of art and in relationship to others. This book leaves no doubt Arthur really is well-read. She has not only read and reread but also lived with and loved each of these texts for a long time before sharing them with us. Like a scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven, she brings out treasures new and old to illuminate the mysteries of God's saving ways.

"Between Midnight and Dawn" is a beautiful contribution to the church's devotional life, and I look forward to spending more time with it over the next several months. Thank God (literally) there are well-read lovers of the written word in our midst, who really know how to sift literature's riches for much more than mere illustrations—who can train us to hear (as Arthur writes in her introduction) voices calling us to raise our eyes and look to the east for God's dawn.

(Please read my full review at <http://bit.ly/1PiK0CA>)

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### **James says**

We are nearing the beginning of Lent. I love this season! I find the preparatory seasons of the church calendar (Lent and Advent) great times to press into devotional practices which are difficult for me the rest of the time. Wednesday, I will find a church service to attend so I can get the Face-palm of Death (AKA the Imposition of Ashes). I will fast. I will engage spiritual disciplines. This season is sacred time and I enter in eager to see what God will do *in me*.

>One of my conversation partners this Lent will be *Between Midnight and Dawn: A Literary Guide for Prayer for Lent, Holy Week, and Eastertide* (Paraclete Press, 2016), compiled by Sarah Arthur. This is one of three devotionals Arthur has edited following the church calendar (also: *At the Still Point: a Literary Guide for Prayer in Ordinary Time*, and *Light Upon Light: A Literary Guide to Prayer For Advent, Christmas and Epiphany*). *At the Still Point* was the only one of these devotionals I have read any of before, though my Ordinary Time resolve is nowhere near as resolute as my Lenten devotion.

*Between Midnight and Dawn* pairs suggested weekly Scripture readings with prayers, poetry and fiction readings. There are seven readings for each week of Lent—six poems and one piece of fiction. During Holy Week and Triduum, there are scriptures and 5-7 literary selections for each day, before returning to the weekly format of Scriptures, poetry, and fiction for each week of Eastertide.

The poems and fiction are selected to lead us deeper into the land of Prayer. Arthur suggests reading this literature, applying aspects of *lectio divina*—*lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (reading it again, several more times, slowly), *oratio* (paying attention to words and phrases) and *contemplatio* (shifting our focus to God's presence, p.13). Certainly, this takes a little bit of time. The story sections are longer (because 'fiction doesn't work its magic right away'), so Arthur suggests saving the story for a day of the week when we have time to just focus on the story.

*Bread and Wine: Readings for Lent and Easter* (Plough Publishing. 2002) is a similar sort of *devotional*, using literature as a way into this liturgical season. Arthur's selection is different in that she is more focused on reading literature as an act of prayer, and the scriptural readings (absent from *Bread and Wine*) give focus to daily practice.

As of yet, I haven't really read the book, only scanned the selections, the poems and stories selected. Arthur has chosen both contemporary and eminent voices from the past. Poets like Hopkins, Donne, Rosetti, Herbert, Tennyson but also those like Luci Shaw, Katherine James, Scott Cairns, John Fry, Tania Runyan). There are stories from Buechner, Chesterton, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, George Macdonald. There are some favorite poets and poems I am surprised to not see here, but I am interested to read the ones which Arthur has chosen. I am excited to journey with poets and storytellers on my Lenten journey

Notice of material connection: I received a copy of this book from Paraclete Press for the purposes of review.

If you would like to get a copy for yourself for Lent you can purchase it from

Paraclete Press

Amazon (also available on Kindle)

Barnes & Noble

or wherever fine books are sold.

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## Laurin says

This collection contains a wide variety of poetry, prose, and prayers -- Eastern, Western, and in translation. It warmed my soul and helped steady my footing as I tried to recover a link to the Holy this year. Highly,

highly recommend if you are a literary type who wants to commune with God but isn't sure what that looks like anymore!

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