Sweeping Global Documentary *Sacred* Explores the Universal Experience of Religious Ritual Through Life’s Milestones on Monday, December 10 on PBS

Directed by Academy Award-winner Thomas Lennon, the film weaves scenes from around the world by more than 40 different filmmakers, into a single work

At a time when religious hatred dominates the world’s headlines, the feature-length documentary *Sacred* explores faith as a primary human experience, revealing how people across the world turn to ritual and prayer to navigate the milestones and crises of private life. Premiering nationwide Monday, December 10 at 10 p.m. on PBS (check local listings), *Sacred* embarks on a global journey of spirituality, tracing religious ritual at birth, adolescence, marriage, death and other key moments of human life. The film will be available to stream the following day at pbs.org/sacred and on PBS apps.

Academy Award-winning director Thomas Lennon commissioned or sourced contributions from top international filmmakers in order to capture more than 40 diverse stories from 25 countries – never once leaving his New York office. Sweeping in its global reach, yet intensely intimate, the film is a tour de force that unifies these disparate scenes into a single work, told without narration, without experts and, for long stretches, without words at all.
“Today, not many people would dispute the importance of religion,” said director Thomas Lennon, “But we in media usually look at it socially and politically. Here the goal is to plunge the viewer into a series of private experiences of faith and hopefully the intensity of that encounter shakes up our reactions, triggers something fresh.”

Setting the stage for the journey, Sacred opens with a monk embarking on his Kaihogyo, a 1,000-day walk around Mt. Hiei in Japan. Continuing with a young Muslim father from Cairo chanting the call to prayer to his baby, who is only minutes old, the film’s approach is both lyrical and linear as it drives forward in time: from the initiations of infancy (bris, baptism and more) to coming-of-age ceremonies in Mandalay, Jerusalem and the San Carlos Apache Reservation, featuring boys and girls at the cusp of adolescence. In Spain and then India, the film encounters teenagers as they lean on their faith to navigate the most intimate pressures of their lives: the strains between two parents and the prohibitions of dating. The film travels through marriage and the trials of adulthood through to the rites—some of them solemn, others riotous and drunken—by which we remember and honor our dead.

Sacred has screened at numerous festivals across six continents, including DOC NYC, Frozen River Film Festival, International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA), Montclair Film Festival, Sarasota Film Festival, Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival, Spirit Film Festival and Tokyo International Film Festival. It was also shown at the RiverRun International Film Festival, where it won the Special Jury Prize.

Sacred is a WLIW LLC production for WNET in co-production with Japan’s WOWOW. Thomas Lennon is director and producer. Jessica Wolfson is co-producer. Julie Anderson and William F. Baker are executive producers. Stephen Segaller is executive in charge. Maeve O’Boyle is supervising editor. Nick August-Perna and Maeve O’Boyle are editors. Music is by Edward Bilous.

Major funding for Sacred is provided by The Gerald and Janet Carrus Foundation, George and Abby O’Neill, the David M. Milton Charitable Trust, Rosalind P. Walter and The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations. Additional support was provided by Lise Strickler and Mark Galloggly, The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, James and Judy Boyle, and Mary Beth and Knowlton J. O’Reilly. Musical score produced with the generous support of the Stephen and Anna Maria Kellen Foundation and Fordham University.

Websites:
pbs.org/sacred, facebook.com/sacredthemovie, @SacredTheMovie, #SacredFilmPBS

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streaming sites, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each week. WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as Nature, Great Performances, American Masters, PBS NewsHour Weekend, the new nightly interview program Amanpour and Company and a range of documentaries, children's programs, and local news and cultural offerings. WNET’s groundbreaking series for children and young adults include Get the Math, Oh Noah! and Cyberchase as well as Mission US, the award-winning interactive history experience. WNET highlights the tri-state’s unique issues and culture through NJTV News with Mary Alice Williams and MetroFocus, NYC-ARTS, Treasures of New York, Theater Close-Up, and WLIW Arts Beat. WNET creates online-only programming, including the award-winning series about gender identity, First Person. Through multi-platform initiatives Chasing the Dream: Poverty and Opportunity in America and Peril and Promise: The Challenge of Climate Change, WNET showcases the human stories around these issues and promising solutions. The weekly program SciTech Now explores the nexus of new ideas in science and technology. Through THIRTEEN Passport and WLIW Passport, station members can stream new and archival THIRTEEN, WLIW and PBS programming anytime, anywhere.