

SACRED



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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 Gallogly, 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](https://www.facebook.com/sacredthemovie), [@SacredTheMovie](https://www.instagram.com/SacredTheMovie), #SacredFilmPBS

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