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Our Lord Was Baptized, You Know: Reflections on a Spiritual Adventure

Marta Sutton Weeks
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In *Our Lord Was Baptized, You Know*, Marta Sutton Weeks, an Episcopal priest, shares her life story of faith and service.

The book begins with a fictionalized scene from the author's childhood, when she and some other children attempt in their own way to sort through the concept of baptism. The character representing the author does not want to be baptized into any religion; one of the children makes a childlike suggestion that baptism is necessary, even for atheists. In the author's note following the story, Weeks acknowledges the unlikelihood of such a child becoming an Episcopal priest. The fiction sets the tone for the nonfiction that follows, but some readers will find the transition between the two jarring.

The book is organized chronologically, and the title is a reference to Weeks's early questions and ensuing personal debate about baptism. As the rest of the book unfolds in memoir form, readers see how Weeks progressed, one step at a time, from a skeptical girl to a person of faith who entered the priesthood at age sixty-two.

The first section paints a picture of the author's childhood using her recollections, family stories, and stories her mother and sister wrote about their own childhood experiences. Weeks's childhood is set against the backdrop of Mormonism in Utah, though her family was not Mormon. Having decided she wants to raise her future children as Christians, Weeks's faith is tested when her fiancé's Anglican mother insists that her future daughter-in-law be baptized before the wedding.

As Weeks moves forward in her adult life, a thought keeps recurring: "I should become a priest." At every major intersection of her life, the question appeared. She explains, "It was such a gradual awakening that I can't recall a specific date, or place or moment when I knew I was going to be a priest."

The end of the book presents an enlightening look at the process of becoming a priest. Weeks shares her poignant reflections about exploring Christianity intellectually: "I'd always felt it more important to *be* a Christian and had never thought much about Christianity in intellectual terms." She also shares content from her letters to God during her time in seminary, a time when she found herself at odds with certain issues (the idea of a woman priest was still controversial in the early 2000s, for example), even as she was aligning herself with the church more fully. Readers will be intrigued by Weeks's ahead-of-their-time thoughts and beliefs, from her changing views on religion to her boldness in braving criticism for entering the priesthood.

The quality of her writing befits the author's background as a Stanford University graduate and as a member of the board of trustees at the University of Miami. Her sentences are vivid and succinct, and her story is detailed and personal without being self-indulgent.

Weeks's book may inspire people who struggle with being at odds with certain religious beliefs, and even perhaps those who question their faith.

MELISSA WUSKE (March 29, 2013)

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