

Episode 5: “God Help Us”

When tragedy, illness or loss feel overwhelming, and relief seems beyond our reach, many believers appeal to their faith for strength. First, Karen Cavanagh, a Catholic from Slingerlands, New York, is called to the Sufi path as a way of healing from a traumatic brain injury. Karen travels to Konya, Turkey, to combine her Catholic faith with the practice of becoming a whirling dervish, a member of a group that worships through meditative dance. Next, in Lima, Peru, a teenager by the name of Beto prays to the Lord of Miracles, a painting that depicts Christ on the cross and that is revered throughout the country. Beto has been selected to march in an annual procession honoring the icon, bringing pride to his family. Then, in Lebanon, 13-year-old Walid, a Syrian refugee whose family fled their home in war-torn Syria, still finds a way to participate in Ramadan, the Islamic faith’s month of personal and spiritual reflection, observed with fasting and prayer. Finally, in Indonesia, 19-year-old Buddhist monk Bodhi Cahyno believes meditation can help him find a source of inner strength after enduring a challenging childhood. Guided by his mentor and teacher, Bodhi travels to the Indonesian holy site of Borobudur—the world’s largest Buddhist temple—to celebrate Vesak, an annual ritual that commemorates the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha.

Questions to consider:

- What resonated with you most in this episode?
- What new insight did you gain from “God Help Us”?
- Which rituals and practices sustain and deepen your belief?

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