

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PRIEST

Good evening Professor. I'm sorry if I kept you waiting at all, and I know it's getting rather late. As you can no doubt see, life around here is somewhat hectic at the moment. Well, I say at the moment, but really it's always like this. So you want to know what a typical day of a priest is like? Well, I'm sorry, but I can't really help you there. You see, there is no such thing as a typical day for me, or indeed for any priest, no matter what their faith. What I can help you with is telling you what my day has been like, which will be as close as you can get to a 'typical day' for a priest of Sigmar.

My temple, as much as it can be said to belong to anyone but Sigmar, is neither especially large nor small, but as the only temple of Sigmar servicing the town attracts a sizeable congregation comprising of most of the population. I am a priest, and alongside four other brothers in the temple, we serve Sigmar under our high priest, His Excellence, Father Wilhelm. There are also nine novitiates, and we each are responsible in overseeing their training and initiation. We all live and sleep in the temple, and much of our day is spent in and around it.

My morning began like every other, with the sounding of the dawn bells. On most days of the week these are a hand bell sounded by one of the novitiates in the temple, rousing all the priests. On Festag the hand bell is replaced by the sounding of the temple bells, which ring out across town for an hour after dawn, calling the faithful to the weekly worship of the Festag Throng. Today is Marktag, so I was awoken by the sound of a hand bell.

After waking, washing, and dressing, we congregated before the altar where one of my fellow priests lead the entire temple in the dawn prayers. These are prayers said by all Sigmarite priests to welcome the morning, give thanks for a safe and restful night, and pray for a blessed day. We take it in turns to lead the prayers, and on some days one of the novitiates does the duty, whilst on Festag Father Wilhelm leads the prayer. We pray not only to Sigmar, but also to each and every Imperial God, lest we bring the wrath of the Gods down on all our heads.

Once the dawn prayers were completed, we gathered in the dining hall of the dormitory wing for a simple breakfast. In addition to the clergy, the temple also has a small number of laymen who assist in the day-to-day upkeep and running of it. Amongst these are two servants, Martha and Giorg, who prepare the meals alongside one of the novitiates. In more austere temples mealtimes might be silent—I hear Ultricans are beaten if they speak—but we chatter amongst ourselves over breakfast, discussing any manner of things. Mealtimes are the only times outside of worship when the entire temple is gathered together, and the priests and high priest use it as a means to address various temple issues.

I forget what we discussed over breakfast this morning, but I do remember Brother Robert chided the novitiates for not having doused all the candles from the night before properly, before coming to bed. They were lucky it was Brother Robert who chose to rebuke them—had it been Brother Leopold or Brother Markus, they would have been rebuked with a stick, not a tongue.

After breakfast the clergy disperses to carry out our morning chores. We each have our chores, which change from week to week, and depend on our seniority within the temple. As a priest of seven years, I am excused most of the more menial of chores, without being utterly drowned in the boring administrative chores of the senior priests. Instead I have a little of both types to do.

This morning I was carrying out repairs to the temple along with three of the novitiates. I was a builder and carpenter before I joined the cult, and my skills from my previous life are still valued within the temple. I like to think that I've always been fond of the hammer. Yesterday we were up on the roof mending and replacing broken tiles, which afforded a spectacular view across the town, but today was a little less exciting as we were repairing some of the older pews. I like to use my time with the novitiates to teach them a little of what I know, things that might not be otherwise taught to them over the course of their theological education, so I instructed them in the basic points of carpentry as we went along. Some of the other priests—I'm sure you can guess which ones by now—frown on such diversions, preferring to teach the novitiates solely the purity of prayer and worship, but His Excellency is rather more forward-thinking and open-minded, and permits us to teach the novitiates whatever we see fit.

By midmorning I left the novitiates to get on with the repairs by themselves, for I had some other duties to carry out before the midday prayer. Our duties are not merely constrained to those within the temple itself, and most of us will leave the temple at least once a day to carry out business around town, which usually involves dealing with matters of spiritual concern and superstitions among the flock.

One of the townsfolk came to me as I was carrying out my chores this morning to tell me that over night a strange wind had blown a tree down and crushed a house. The townsfolk were all riled up and blamed Old Mother Hurbert, a lonely old woman who lives on the edge of town. Of course she is harmless, but there are those folk—both in town and in the temple—who think she is a witch. I decided it best to hurry into town to deal with this before it became a crisis.

By the time I had got to the town a crowd was gathering at the house to survey the damage. Luckily no one was killed, but the mob still believed that it was the work of a witch! I tried to reason with them, but they were determined that blood be spilt.

I was determined not to let them—I knew it was not the will of Sigmar this day, and so with faith on my side stood in their way, striking my hammer against the ground and causing it to ring out with the sound of thunder. The crowd paused and I spoke to them, declaring that this was not the work of a witch, but of the Gods. I pointed to the house and asked if it had been blessed this season by a priest to protect from ill spirits. The owner looked sheepish and confessed that it had not, for he had not had the time or the money to make an appropriate offering. I let his admission speak for itself and offered to perform a blessing to protect from any more trees, in return for an appropriate donation to the temple coffers, of course. The crowd dispersed shortly afterwards—a blessing is much less interesting than a burning.

I returned to the temple a little later than I had intended, arriving back at the temple to hear the sounding of the noon bell—the passage of time in the temple, and indeed the town, is marked by the tolling of the temple bells. I hurried to the altar where the other priests were gathering for the saying of the midday prayer.

After midday prayer it was time for a change of duties. Just as in the morning, in the afternoon everybody has set chores to carry out, and this changes from day to day. The afternoon's chores are usually less hard work than those of the morning, especially during the heat of summer.

This afternoon I was tasked with teaching a small group of novitiates. Some temples have dedicated teachers called catechists, but we must make do with the combined wisdom and learning of the brothers. We take it in turns to instruct the novitiates, giving them lessons on all manner of religious topics, such as the history of the cult or the study of Sigmarite scriptures. Today we studied an excerpt from the Book of Sigmar, which is my favoured holy tome, despite what some of the other Brothers might believe about its authenticity. We read it together, the novitiates helping their fellow students who are not as good at reading yet, learning the passages and prayers by rote, as well as discussing the various interpretations and comments that have been added to the book since it was first written.

By the middle of the afternoon I set the novitiates to some private studying to keep them busy, for I had my own work to do once again. This time I have a sermon to prepare and write, to deliver at evening prayer. We each take it in turns to give sermons, whether at evening prayer or at the Festag Throng—although Father Wilhelm usually gives that sermon, the most important of the week. Researching and writing a sermon can take a lot of work, although we do reuse them throughout the year or exchange them with one another. The fussier amongst the priests insist that each day a new sermon is penned afresh, but we do not all have time to spend our days writing! I decide to draw on the lesson this afternoon and prepare a sermon about the lessons learnt in both the Book of Sigmar and in the altercation with the tree in town.

Evening prayer comes as the sun is beginning to set, and I was pleased to see that there were more than the normal attendees from town tonight. For many, the Festag Throng is the sole time during the week that they come to the temple, although our doors are always open. But in these troubled times, many of the townsfolk have turned to their faith to see them through, and our congregation numbers have swelled inexorably, even during the usually quiet services of midweek. No doubt the clear message delivered to the townsfolk earlier today about the wrath of the Gods stirred the piety in more than a few as well.

Prayers we said and then I delivered my sermon. After the sermon the sun set, as it always does, Sigmar be praised, so the final evening prayers were said and a blessing offered to all amongst the congregation who wish to step forward.

After evening prayer the brothers and initiates all had dinner together. The topic for discussion over dinner is usually far less gossipy in nature—as it often is at breakfast—and more spiritual, with debates raging about all manner of theological points. Tonight was doubly the case, for a noteworthy guest arrived earlier and is stayed for dinner and the night. He is a wandering priest called Father Bauer, and although I do not know him, Father Wilhelm's deferential demeanour implies that he is certainly well known. The rich, if practical, cut of his robes, coupled with a hammer that looks less ornate and more battle-worn, suggests that he is no mere friar but a warrior priest. The righteous fire that burned behind his eyes as he debated matters of faith after dinner confirm this to my mind, and I will try to remember to say a battle liturgy for him in the morning to keep him safe from Sigmar's enemies.

After dinner, the novitiates have their final chores to perform before bed, whilst the rest of us are blessed with time to ourselves. Father Wilhelm, Father Bauer, and Brother Leopold will likely continue to argue well into the night, but I excused myself. Normally I would retire to the library—little more than a small study lined with theological tomes, in truth—or to the room I share with Brother Gerant, where I engage in private studies until I fall asleep.

Of course tonight, professor, I am here talking with you, explaining how there is no such thing as a typical day for a priest of Sigmar. So now you have heard what today was like for me—I can guarantee that if you return tomorrow evening, I shall tell a different story entirely.

—BROTHER BREGANT, PRIEST OF SIGMAR