

***Immersed in the sacred:
Discovering the “small s”
Sacraments***
by Kathy Coffey

About the author

Kathy Coffey is a mother of four who brings her experience of family life and love of her mountain-filled home of Denver, Colorado to bear on the idea of sacrament. She is an editor, workshop speaker, and award-winning author of several books and articles, including *Hidden Women of the Gospels*, *God in the Moment*, and *God Knows Parenting is a Wild Ride*.

About the book

The search for that which leads to a deeper, richer life now begins with those places, people, and things around us. Those are the places where God can be found, the “small s” sacraments in our daily lives, if only our eyes and hearts are open to them. Through the window of Kathy Coffey’s personal experiences, we see how the holy meets the mundane and are invited to open a window on this connection in our own life. Prayerfully enter the *Meditation on Sacraments and Daily Life* on pages 14–15. *How has this changed your view of the sacred reality?*

St. Augustine in the 5th century said, “there is nothing that cannot become a sacramental encounter.” Coffey uses this broader definition of sacrament to enable each of us to enter into a sacramental world on a daily basis.

Places

Any place where we meet God is a sacramental place. Coffey takes us to more traditional images of where the holy resides: mountains, where the grandeur of God’s creation is revealed; quiet gazebos and retreat centers where we find the reconciliation with God which leads to peace and insight. She leads us also to more unexpected places, such as a ladies dressing room where the mother-daughter bond is affirmed. Place is connected to much that is or can be holy for us: memory,

ritual, nature, significant events, family space.

- *Reflect on and discuss such places in your life. Where is your family’s holy ground?*
- *A “Ramada Inn Retreat” led the author to reflect on the smallness of God, the brokenness where God resides. Does this image challenge or comfort you?*

People

God is to be found in all people. A beautiful way to discover how God has been found in others who have ministered to you is through the reflection on pages 59–65. Coffey shares her reflections with us; share yours with your group.

“The marvels a compassionate God can work in us, no matter our human limitations” is sacramental (page 69). Many marvelous people are introduced on the following pages, from friends who join together to work as the body of Christ to randomly encountered strangers filled with Christ. These everyday “small s” sacraments can shed light on the “big S” Sacraments by helping us to enter into the mystery of Christ.

- *Do you find sainthood everywhere as Graham Greene did? Do your encounters with everyday people shed new light on a revered saint or holy person?*
- *Does the author’s chapter “Lunch Bunch” on chronos vs. kairos challenge your view of sacred time?*
- *How do those around us who lead a sacramental life shed light on the nature of God or our relationship with him?*

Activities

Sacraments draw on basic activities, and we can meet God while cooking, bathing, playing; even exercise can be a vehicle for grace. Kathy Coffey finds the comfort of God’s transcendent nature in a terrible day, a revelation about life in the polar opposites of two movies.

- *In which activities do you find transformation? Renewal? Revelation? Did you find any of the activities the author mentions surprising? Why?*

Objects

Long used as a metaphor for God’s love, objects can “give weight and substance” to love. Traditional objects—water, oil, candles, wine—join everyday objects—Christmas ornaments, seeds, computers—as vehicles for grace. They can trigger memories of God-filled moments or be used for stabilizing rituals. Water we snorkel in can renew the gifts of baptism; a town fountain can remind us of the eternal life offered by Jesus at the well.

- *John speaks of God in the physical world; how do you find him in the physical world? What objects connect images of the holy with the everyday?*
- *In a materialistic society, how do we find “holy” objects without succumbing to materialism? Do you find this challenging?*

We are lovingly called throughout the book to make connections in our own life, between the sacred and mundane, between what we see in and learn in Religion and that which we experience in the world.

- *How has this book changed your view of sacraments, both big S and small s?*
- *What is your idea of a sacramental life?*
- *How do you or would you lead such a sacramental life?*

As you read...

Suggestions for further reflection: Coffey uses quotes from many other writers throughout the book. Pick out the quotes that speak to you where you are in your life now. Reflect on them. Share with your group how they touch you. Now find a book by that particular author (an extensive Bibliography is included at the end of the book) and make another connection to the holy!