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Everyday Sacraments

Sometimes it’s the littlest things in life that bring us the most joy; they bring us the most satisfaction and are able to calm us when we are anxious. No matter how insignificant they may seem to others, in our lives we have things or people we come to know as sacraments. These symbols are different for everyone and can come in various shapes and sizes. Although they may not make sense, they are often large parts of our life. In his article, Leonardo Boff discusses the meaning of a sacrament and the idea that almost anything can be one. Just like Boff describes, I have sacraments in my life that would make no sense to anyone else. There is no rhyme or reason for these items being sacraments in our lives yet they have come to mean so much to us.

In Boff’s eyes, sacraments are “…signs that contain, exhibit, recall, visualize, and communicate another reality, a reality different from themselves but present in them.” In his article, he describes two instances of sacraments, the aluminum cup and the cigarette butt. His definition suggests that the cup and the cigarette butt take him to another reality. They make him think of a time and place different from the present. The aluminum cup had been used by his family in many different situations and because of this had value to him. It told him the history of his family and provided nourishment and growth to all those he loves. The cigarette butt was a lasting reminder of his father. His father’s last breath was spent on that cigarette. To him it became a symbol of his father, not just a typical cigarette butt.

Boff presents a great depiction of what a sacrament truly is. Normally when you hear of a sacrament it is one of a few distinctly outlined by the Church. His examples helped me to realize that sacraments occur outside of the Church and can sometimes have nothing to do with religion. As I read the article I began to think of things in my own life that have come to be sacraments to me. Family is a huge part of my life so as I learned about the aluminum cup Boff discussed, I couldn’t help but think about items in my own family that could be considered a sacrament not only to myself but also the rest of my family. These examples opened my eyes to all of the sacraments that exist in my own life, all of which I need to be thankful rather than take them for granted.

As I read this article, two sacraments in particular came to mind. Eventually I thought of a few more but the two I will share are the most prevalent in my everyday life. The first of these is a necklace I received while on a Kairos retreat. This retreat is designed to deepen your own faith and relationship with God. It was a very powerful retreat and an experience I will treasure for the rest of my life. It was almost as though it was a turning point in my faith journey and brought me immensely closer to God as well as the others on my retreat. It is a constant reminder of what happened that weekend and why it was so important. The cross is a palpable memory from that time that I will have with me the rest of my life. The second of the sacraments I thought of is actually a large collection of things. Whenever someone write me a letter or sends me a card, I save it. When I receive notes and letters like this, it reminds me of the love people have for me. It may sound like somewhat of an egotistical thing to say, but I enjoy being able to reread the kind words or thoughtful notes someone has written to me. I am not exactly sure why these things have come to mean so much to me but in their own unique way, each of these items has come to be sacraments in my life.

The topic of sacraments is not one I have ever studied in depth. Before, I knew of the different sacraments you can receive in the Church but was unaware that there were any other types. After reading the article initially, my eyes were opened to the many things that could be considered a sacrament in my life. As I pondered the different things that were indeed sacraments in my own life, I realized just how important these things were to me. If I were to lose either of the two main sacraments in my life, I would be rather upset about it. The experience of writing this paper has shown me that anything in life that has meaning and takes you to a different place, is a sacrament.