Recovering the Sacraments as Everyday Spirituality

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This paper supports a transformation of perception and participation in the church’s sacraments from passive, ethereal events reserved only for formal liturgy to daily experiences connecting the mind, body and spirit to provide vital support and guidance in following God’s ways daily through the human journey. This work conceives of a developmental structure of the sacraments activated by energy located in seven physical centers in the body flowing from the base of the body to the brain, setting the stage for ascending and transcending levels of mind-body consciousness connections. As such the paper is about the interplay of sacraments and spiritual development, in other words the human developmental stages to which the sacraments can contribute.

This paper proposes a daily celebration of each sacrament as the most authentic expressions of our human development and spirituality, in addition to the large communal celebrations of the sacraments in formal liturgy, where in some Christian churches access is limited (for example Baptism & Confirmation—one time ceremonies; Marriage—not available to celibates, gays; Holy Orders—restricted to men). The paper is divided into four parts; here is a summary of each of them.

I. SACRAMENT AS CONNECTOR

A sacrament can be imagined as an event connecting the finite human and the infinite God. The sacraments function as symbols that both point beyond to something else and connect one to the reality to which they point. Sacraments bring together the transcendent (the mysterious) and the immanent (the concrete) binding spirit and matter—body and soul.

II. SACRAMENTS ARE PERFORMED AS RITUALS

Ritual taps into to our imagination, a higher function of the brain. Ritual provides time and space where the norms of everyday living are temporarily suspended. Sacraments engage us in rituals that move us into another consciousness in which we are made aware of our connection to the divine—the merging of God present and God transcendent.

The bridge to God’s activity in the ritual happens through the interaction of symbols on the senses. Areas of the brain not ordinarily active are opened—literally creating an opportunity for higher consciousness. Through repeated experiences and guided reflection our ability to access these higher states, our sacramental awareness, is strengthened—a bridge is built.

Thoughts and feelings (the elements of faith) have their home in the body's energy centers: neurons of the brain, muscles and bones. Thus faith is an embodied experience, grounded in our physical bodies. Our physical body is the home for our deepest encounters with
God. Our spirit needs our body as much as our body needs our spirit—they belong together. Sacramental life assures that this connection is vital—alive and full of meaning.

III. SACRAMENTS AS THE LIFE FORCE IN THE ARCHTYPICAL EVENTS OF OUR DEVELOPMENT (birth, death, separation from parents, initiation, marriage, the union of opposites, etc)

Human development is activated by energy located in seven developmentally related physical centers in the body. The paper traces the energy centers that run along the length of the spine from its base to the crown of the head which contain the "spiritual instructions" for what it means to be fully human. In the Hindu tradition these energy centers are called Chakras and are understood as ascending plateaus of human development. They likewise relate to the Hebrew Kabbalah—or Tree of Life. In Christianity they are related to the sacraments. This paper points out how each sacrament activates one of these seven developmental “centers of spiritual and physical energy,” responding to a spiritual developmental task.

IV. THE SPIRITUAL/DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

The paper explores specific developmental tasks of each of the sacraments:

Baptism is about acceptance igniting the energy ("life force") to become one with the community/tribe—loved and thereby affirmed as worthy. The base of the spine is the location of this first energy center in the body - it contains the resources through which we feel grounded and affirmed in that feeling of being connected.

Eucharist is about Intimacy igniting the power or the life force of communion arising out of our deep desire to connect, to relate with another. The gut is the location of this second energy center in the body. This is our emotional center and governs intimacy, (sharing our emotions with another person) sexuality and creativity, ultimately seeking right relations.

Confirmation is about Self Esteem igniting the divine energy of self esteem. The solar plexus is the location of this third energy center in the body - as experienced the expansion of my chest when I feel proud.

Marriage is about Connecting the Physical and the Spiritual dimensions of the body igniting the energy bonding flesh and spirit; body and soul. The heart is the location of this fourth energy center in the body. It is symbolic of our relationship with God.

Reconciliation is about truth, igniting the energy to align oneself to God’s will. The throat is the location of this fifth energy center in the body, where we exercise the ability to speak one's truth, making correction as needed.

Holy Orders is about Leadership/Vocation. The energy of ordination ignites a response of service to the call from the community for leadership. The forehead is the location of this sixth energy center in the body, directing the path of leadership.

Anointing is about Letting Go. The energy of the Sacrament of the Sick is ignited by God’s calling us into a new, an ultimate level of intimacy. The crown of the head is the location
of this seventh energy center in the body – the feeling of what is beyond the body, awareness of this connection to someone higher.

V. THE EDUCATIONAL TASK AND THE SACRAMENTS -- AWAKENING SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The educational focus of the paper is on techniques of consciousness raising. Based on the developmental understanding of the sacraments and the biological basis of the vital energy connecting us to the Divine, the paper concentrates on the processes of education that sharpen the psychic senses of hearing, feeling, vision and intuition.

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In each sacrament (in a progressive order) we can discern a developmental task that manifests the human’s outreach to conform to God’s will, or better, God’s tug at the human.
INTRODUCTION

This work comes out of some five years developing and teaching a course on the sacraments at Loyola’s Institute of Pastoral Studies, where I have taught for the past 21 years. My course organizes a study of the sacraments using the work of Carolyn Myss - *Anatomy of the Spirit* to provide the structure of human development. It is grounded theologically and historically with Joseph Martos’ *Doors to the Sacred*. It draws relational/pastoral insight from Bernard Cooke’s *Sacraments and Sacramentality*.

I want my students to view the sacraments as awakening spiritual consciousness; increasing our awareness—attuning us to God’s sacred presence, as the means by which we organize our lives—creating order out of life’s chaos, binding together spirit and matter—body and soul.

Course concentrates on the sacraments as every day spirituality, an area not traditionally the focus in such a course. This new direction can be illustrated in a portion of my course description:

*What is most distinctive about Catholicism? Many would answer: “the sacraments.” While this is no doubt true, it is fair to wonder just how vital is the sacramental life of Catholics? Are the sacraments cultural rituals that family tradition demands be fulfilled? Are they “performances” to be observed—single and solitary moments of devotion reserved for special occasions? Are they “magical” moments that change the soul of the participant? Or, are they powerful awakenings of awareness of connection to the Divine — do they have the ability to turn on innate spiritual power?*

*Sacraments are rituals that act in profound and mysterious ways. They are doorways to sacred communal memory--important links in “remembering” sacred relationships that exist here and now--relationship to deeper parts of self, relationship to one another as the human family and ultimately our relationship to God.*

*The seven canonical sacraments of the Catholic Church correspond to seven key points of human development. They infuse the human journey with the sacred and impart the gifts needed to live a life based in spiritual principles of sacramental relationship. They provide bodily experiences of divine presence in the here and now and ultimately guide us in authentic spiritual expression. It is through awakened sacramental awareness that we become mediators of grace – sacraments - in the world.*

I. SACRAMENT AS CONNECTOR

A sacrament can be imagined as an event connecting the finite human and the infinite God. Consider a sparkplug. When it is firing, energy bridges or connects the two sides. The function of sacraments as symbols1, then, is both to point beyond to something else and to

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1 From the Greek σύμβολον (symbolon) with the root words συν- (syn-) meaning “together” and βολή (bolē) “hurl”, *symbol* has the approximate meaning of “to hurl together” two contrasting things. The opposite is diabolic *diabolon* – from which we get the word *devil*, and it means to push apart. Cf. Marianne Sawicki, *The Gospel in History: Portrait of a Teaching Church: The Origins of Christian Education*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988.
connect to the reality to which they point. Sacraments tie together the transcendent (the unseen) and the immanent (the seen) binding spirit and matter—body and soul, revealing the reality that overlaps these two worlds. Through this connection the mysterious becomes apparent in the concrete. Sacraments accomplish a spiritual effect when the transcendent appears as present in the concrete so that the finite condition is likely to experience transformation. In this way, the whole cosmos, human beings, and the enfleshed Jesus Christ act as material realities that are means for personal communication from and to the triune God. Sacramental ritual is able to reveal a level of reality that is otherwise inaccessible to the self-understanding of ordinary human experience—it holds a mirror in which we catch a glimpse of the soul (created in the image of God).

Theologically, Jesus is the sacrament or the physical presence of God; the Church is the sacrament or physical presence of Jesus, the body of Christ; and the Church celebrates sacraments, or enacts the finite expression of God’s presence.

II. SACRAMENTS ARE PERFORMED AS RITUALS

Ritual taps into our imagination, a higher function of the brain. Ritual provides time and space where the norms of everyday living are temporarily suspended. Under these circumstances we enter a different relationship with the material world and are transformed. Sacraments engage us in rituals that move us into another consciousness in which we are made aware of our connection to the divine—the merging of God present and God transcendent. Through this merging with the sacred we are open to receive ongoing spiritual instruction and are energized in the carrying out of such instruction. For example, the Holy Spirit appearing as flames ignited spiritual strength in the disciples at Pentecost moving them beyond human fear and instructing them to go out and teach. The disciples were in fact changed/charged, they went our fearlessly and were able to understand the people—their ongoing ministry was divinely inspired.

Ritual separates us from the rhythms of everyday life, suspending the usual ways or “rules”– new ways of relating to self, others and God are enacted. God’s way (kingdom) becomes operative; an alternative future is possible.

The bridge to God’s activity in the ritual happens through the interaction of symbols on the senses. Areas of the brain not ordinarily active are opened—literally creating an opportunity for higher consciousness. [See Section 5 of this paper, The Educational Task where this is elaborated upon through spiritual practices.] Through repeated experiences and guided reflection our ability to access these higher states, our sacramental awareness, is strengthened—a bridge is built. We are instructed in how to live in God’s ways and we have the spiritual power to do what it takes to live out the instruction. Without this vital connection with flesh, the brain, spiritual

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2 For more in-depth discussion of this see Keenan Osborne, Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World chapters 4 and 5: – Jesus and Primordiality and The Church as Foundational Sacrament
3 Much of the material from this section comes from my reading of David Hogue Remembering the Future Imagining the Past: Story, Ritual, and the Human Brain, The Pilgrim Press 2003.
instruction might remain an abstract idea. The physiology of sacrament puts the awareness of God's will in the body where it will be lived.

Sacramental experience resides in the right lobe of the brain while interpretation for action is a function of the left hemisphere. Sacrament as symbol activates the corpus callosum or connective tissue in the brain. We are meaning seekers. When yesterday’s explanations no longer work for us we seek new ways of understanding ourselves and life’s dynamics. We seek guidance from others and we go within ourselves to find answers.

Sacramental ritual provides and energizes this opportunity for new understandings. It quiets the functions of the left brain and activates the functions of the right brain. The logic we had created, or the world’s logic is suspended, and a new logic is formed as the Spirit puts down a tap root to fundamental experience.

In ritual we are able to live in a world in which the Kingdom (God’s way) is truly at hand—here and now.

Transcendence is not an act of leaving behind the physical (human) reality, but of awakening us to the awareness of the sacredness present in the here and now—making actual Jesus’ declaration, “the Kingdom of God is within.”

Thoughts and feelings, the elements of faith, have their home in the neurons of the brain, in our muscles and in our bones. Thus faith is an embodied experience, grounded in our physical bodies. Our physical body is the home for our deepest encounters with God. Our spirit needs our body as much as our body needs our spirit—they belong together. Sacramental life assures that this connection is vital—alive and full of meaning.

III. SACRAMENTS AS THE LIFE FORCE IN THE ARCHTYPICAL EVENTS OF OUR DEVELOPMENT: birth, death, separation from parents, initiation, marriage, the union of opposites

Human development can be conceived as a combination of biological, psychological, emotional or spiritual processes activated by energy located in different physical places or centers in the body. Bodily energy moves to mental and then emotional (spiritual) energy, thus, we speak of the body, mind, spirit relationship. What makes us human is our physical electricity. Electricity creates magnetism – attraction. A key term in describing the body and its energy systems is that of magnetic connection -- the attraction nature of the magnetic signifies communication of the whole body to reach part. Energy is magnetism.

Science speaks of six centers of electric activity -- called the plexus (a network of nerve fibers): sciatic plexus, pelvic plexus, solar plexus, cardiac plexus, brachial plexus, the brain and we might add the soul for a seventh center. At issue is how well do these seven energy centers communicate -- transmit data, and what is the quality of magnetics in each system.

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5 I am indebted to Caroline Myss and her work The Anatomy of the Spirit: The Seven Stages of Power and Healing (Three Rivers Press, New York, 1996) for making me aware of this relationship between the sacraments and the levels of human development. Her work is a major source for this paper.
6 In physics, energy (from the Greek ἐνέργεια - energeia, “activity, operation”, from ἐνεργός - energos, active, working”) is a quantity that is understood as the ability to perform work.
7 The sensing of magnetic fields in organisms is known as magnetoception. Signals can be recorded from the nervous system.
These energy centers run along the length of the spine from its base to the crown of the head and contain the spiritual instructions for what it means to be fully human. Spiritually they hold our force of life, our vitality—the presence of grace within us.

Various religious traditions talk about these seven life centers in strikingly similar ways. In the Hindu tradition these energy centers are called Chakras and are understood as ascending plateaus of human development. They likewise are outlined in the Hebrew Kabbalah—or Tree of Life - Jewish teachings about stages of life development or energy flow in life - 10 qualities of the divine nature that can be grouped in seven energy levels - spiritual powers that we are mandated to develop and refine in our life journey. In the Christian tradition we have the classical seven sacraments. Each sacrament activates one of these seven developmental centers of spiritual and physical energy, responding to a spiritual developmental task.

Here is a brief outline of these seven energy centers, highlighting the biology, psychology and sociology related to each of the areas.

The **first** can be called the **tribal center**. Physically the center is located in the feet, the legs, the tailbone. Socially, it can be conceived of as the family or the tribe. The energy of childhood history, ages birth to seven, is stored here. Mental and emotional issues focus on safety and security, the ability to provide for life's necessities, feeling at home, social and familial law and order. The archetype for this center is the tribe.

The **second** is the center for partnership. Physically the energy is located in the sexual organs, the pelvis, lower back, hips, the liver, the bladder and the lower intestinal area. This energy is manifested in terms of social value through money, the ownership of things in the physical world: property, investments, territory – all values from the first the tribal energy center, values because they are protections against threats to the self or the tribe. The instruments by which this energy is expressed are power, weaponry, force and money. Psychologically this is the area of control issues, blame and guilt, money, sex and power. Also it is the root center for Creativity, ethics and honor in relationships. One can describe the human journey as movements through stages of power, which becomes most evident in this area of the body. This is the flight/fight center of the body. It is also the vengeance center of the body. These are key issues in sacramental development. The task of sacramental development is building an awareness of the magnetic/energy flow in the body so as to conform our energy with the will of God. We look at this matter of developing awareness more in section four on the educational task.

The **third center** is that of personal power and self-esteem. The physical locations in the body are the abdomen, stomach, the kidneys, the upper colon, adrenal glands, the pancreas and the middle spine, the solar plexus. This is the most fragile part of the body. The mental and emotional issues are trust, fear and intimidation, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect, responsibility for making decisions, sensitivity to criticism, personal honor. The focus here is personal identity. The key questions are who am I? What am I to do? Anxieties here are fear of failure and criticism.

In this center we can become more aware of the transfer of energy or magnetism. It is here we are more aware of moving from the body to the mental or emotional dimensions of ourselves. If I need your approval I magnetically transfer my energy to you. If this happens it means I have not developed enough personal power/energy. It is in this center where we deal
with issues of responsibility. Here is the seat of ambition and competition (note there is a
difference between ambition and vision -- they operate at different energy centers.) The issues of
bulimia and anorexia are related to issues in this energy center.

These first three energy centers are primarily about relationship with the
physical/external world. The next center, the fourth, is the locus of energy relating the body to
the mind and the spirit.

The fourth center is the heart energy center. The physical location of the energy in this
center is the heart and the circulatory system, the lungs, the shoulders and the upper arms, the rib
and the breasts, the diaphragm. Concentration of energy is on the emotional self, love,
forgiveness, compassion – our ability to nurture and care for others. In contrast to the third center
where the focus is self respect, the fourth center has self love is its focus. The energy in these
two contrasting centers operates at different magnetic frequencies. At the mental level, in this
middle center, life is evaluated according to the heart whereas in the lower centers it is evaluated
according to the "tribe" and at the upper levels according to the head.

The fifth energy center is the center of will and power. Energy here is noticed
physically in the throat the mouth, teeth and gums, neck vertebrae and the shoulders.
Emotionally and mentally the energy here is focused on the will (the energetic component of
willpower) and self expression. If the energy of the will is blocked it may show up in problems
with the throat (speech defects), the neck and shoulders.

At this fifth level we can note an evolution of our willpower – a movement from tribal
control in the lower centers to self control in the middle centers to an eventual turning over
control to God in the highest center. In the middle stages a rebellion is evident in developing
one's ability to make a choice, a struggle between the emotional will and the mental will. If there
is not a congruency between these two this is where addiction arises, where the power of the will
is abdicated to a force or substance outside of ourselves. As we know the power behind the
addiction is not the substance so much as our self perception. A self perception of inadequacy
deludes my mental clarity that this addiction is self-destructive. At our highest level of energy –
the energy by which we relate directly to the transcendent God, we experience a release of our
will to a higher order of guidance – the ultimate act of the will is to release the will entirely. This
evolutionary reflection on the development of the will and its power is based on the notion that
there is an energetic part of the self that survives death – the soul. Thus the ability to understand
the will and its power is based on the fact that I am more than my body, mind, and emotion –
there is a transcendent me. The will is what we employ to determine where to put our energy. A
major task in the development of spirituality is the discipline of the development of willpower.

Emotional, spiritual and mental issues centered here are following one’s dream, judgment
and criticism, faith and knowledge, and the capacity to make decisions.

The sixth center is the energy of the mental field – this is the center of wisdom and
intuition. The physical location of this energy is the brain, the cerebral function, the nervous
system, the eyes (sight) and ears (hearing), and the nose. The energy in this center is about the
movement of thought into wisdom (truth). The most powerful energy organ in the body is the

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8 DVD Vision, Creativity and Intuition -- a 10 hour videotaped program by Norman C. Shealy and Caroline M. Myss June 1, 1994
Tape #15.
heart. The search for truth, then, is blocked when the heart and mind are not in sync. The ultimate congruence then is that of heart and mind and will. And thus it is apparent that the journey of human development is a journey rooted in the physical, encompassing the emotional, incorporating the will, focusing on the mental, and moving to the spiritual.

The energy of this center then focuses on self-evaluation, truth, intellectual abilities, feelings of inadequacy, openness to the ideas of others, the ability to learn from experience, and what today we call "emotional intelligence."  

**The seventh center of energy – the transcendent self** physically is located at the crown of the head and is encompassed in the muscular system, the skeletal system and the skin. A high use of the energy in this center moves us toward a spirit of forgiveness and a sense of detachment – based on the philosophical understanding that change is constant. It is a lack of forgiveness and attachment that keeps us holding onto the past.

As this paper moves specifically to the sacraments, I would like to make an observation on a distinction between religion and spirituality. The energy for religion is high in the first energy center, as religion can be considered external and tribal. The energy for spirituality is more clearly centered in the seventh center where a person has taken on and incorporated religious truths internally.

**IV. THE SPIRITUAL/DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS**

**Baptism** is about acceptance: "This is my beloved in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1: 11). Baptism points to the birth of the self. Baptism taps the energy (gift, grace, power, life force) to become one with the family/community—loved and thereby affirmed as worthy (“cleaned up” – a submersion in water – a death to the old self). Baptism attends to the task of letting us feel safe in the group or community. It opens us to be able to access the necessities of the spiritual life. It provides a community in which to experience a social law and order. The challenges which baptism addresses are: the need for security, a sense of law and order, gaining access to resources for our development.

The base of the spine is the location of this first energy center in the body - from it we access the vitality through which we feel grounded and affirmed in that feeling of being grounded. Imagine a gesture that is common in the baptisms of infants where the minister or the parent will hold up the child for the congregation to see. Often this is done with the child's bottom firmly held (grounded) in the right-hand and lifted up for all to see.

**Eucharist** is all about Intimacy/relationship: "Do this and remember me" (connect to me) (Luke 22.19). Eucharist points to the birth of the emotional self – our forming bonds with others. The paradigm of intimacy and table fellowship in the early Christian communities represent this. Eucharist ignites the power or the life force of communion arising out of our deep desire to connect, to relate with another. It is as we relate to others – communion with others – that we become aware of our strengths and weaknesses. Our developmental task to become a person, to grow as an individual, is exercised in the unions that we form with others. As we begin to encounter the other we grasp the significance of the encounter with the opposite as essential for our own self-definition.

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9 Myss, *The Anatomy the Spirit* p. 99
The task of this sacramental energy center is to learn to interact with others, to manage our power of choice. This power to connect presents us with several challenges to the way we connect with others: 1) the challenge to master sexuality – sexual relations with another; 2) the challenge to master power (expressed through office and/or money) – the power relation we have with another through our status or place in the work force, or through sports competition.

The gut is the location of this second energy center (life force) in the body. This is our emotional center and governs intimacy, (sharing our emotions with another person) sexuality and creativity, ultimately seeking right relations. When we are not emotionally connected sex and power get out of hand and creativity is short-circuited or worse, we create destruction.

**Confirmation** is all about self esteem – We are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). Confirmation points to the birth of our social self, the one for others. Confirmation ignites the divine energy of our self esteem. The spiritual developmental task is to relate to myself as whole and good. The challenge is to master the ego, develop personality and self esteem. The solar plexus is the location of this third energy center in the body – cf. the expansion of my chest when I feel proud of myself. This third life-force center is the seat of personal power - the will. This is where we have the chance to use our power for the good of humanity or for personal gain at the expense of humanity. Here is the birth of the altruistic self where we stand up for what is right, whole and good—meaning good for the whole. It is here -- with a firm foundation in self acceptance confirmed by the community and in the proper (just) intimacy relationships with another, that we can, with that self-esteem, turn out toward others. Without fully engaging the power of this sacrament it means we lack the fullness of what creation in the image of God really means. We shrink from the demand of truly being ourselves, standing on our own two feet. It is with this sacrament, this stage of development that we begin the process of strengthening our willpower.

**Marriage** is all about connecting the physical and the spiritual – "That all may be one, as I, Father, am one with you" (John 17:21). Marriage points to the birth of the relational self. Marriage ignites the energy bonding flesh and spirit; body and soul. The spiritual developmental task of marriage is two-fold: first to marry my body to my soul and then to marry the body and soul of another. The underlying issue in marriage is do we have two integral human beings that present themselves for marriage? A sense of integrity is the person’s sense of unity in him or herself.

The challenge of marriage is to master love, forgiveness and compassion -- the ability to stand with another in their shoes. The heart is the location of this fourth energy center in the body. A key theme in marriage is that of forgiveness. One cannot be connected (to self or another) until one deals with the past and this is the issue of forgiving or healing the past.

**Reconciliation** is all about truth – “It is the truth that will make you free” John 8:32. Reconciliation points to the birth of the mature personality. Reconciliation ignites the energy to continually align and realign myself to God’s will. The spiritual developmental task is to keep my word—to live my truth. The challenge is to master the will and authentic self expression. The throat is the location of this fifth energy center in the body -- the ability to speak your truth, making corrections as needed. The sacrament of Reconciliation puts us back in integrity when we stray. Sin is going against whom we are. It is about our lack of integrity -- our not being one with God. Fear and constriction surrounds it. A strong will is developed by examining (an essential step in the matter of confession) what has authority over us and coordinating our will and our physical body.
Holy Orders is all about leadership/vocation – “Preach the Good news to all” (Matthew 28:18). Orders points to the birth of the responsible self. The energy of ordination sparks us to respond in service to the call from the community for leadership and stewardship of God's creation. The spiritual development task is that of detachment – to be for others. The challenge is to master the mind - to develop intuition, insight, wisdom. The forehead is the location of this sixth energy center in the body (sometimes known as “the third eye”). Full development of this energy allows us to truly “see” another person, cutting through the masks and connecting to their essence and likewise making ourselves available to the soul of another.

Anointing is all about letting go -- "Into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Anointing points to the re-birth of the new self. The energy of the Sacrament of the Sick is ignited by God’s calling me into a new, an ultimate level of intimacy. The spiritual development task is to move from the known and enter the mystery. The challenge is to let go. The crown of the head is the location of this seventh energy center in the body – the feeling of what is beyond my body, awareness of this connection (cultivated by the sacramental life) to someone higher. This sacrament represents an ending and a beginning. Ultimately it is a connection between the known and unknown.

V. THE EDUCATIONAL TASK AND THE SACRAMENTS -- AWAKENING SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

This paper now moves specifically to religious education. A major educational task of this approach to sacraments is the development of the consciousness of the constant presence of the divine. The ultimate aim of this development of consciousness of energy is to move from intuition to vision. This happens epistemologically when we begin to see things symbolically rather than literally. This is the beginning of wisdom. It is a movement from the literal linear to the vertical symbolic.

Pedagogically in my course I ask the students to do a sacramental meditation/examination at least every three days during these 15 weeks of our course and to keep a log of the meditation. Here is the meditation I provide them.

A Daily Sacramental Meditation

1. Baptism  Feel your connection to and support by all of life . . . to the basic sense of your humanity. Locate an awareness of energy in your feet . . . or seat     By what/whom especially have you been accepted today?     What shape or form has this connection taken?     Some one you talked with in the elevator?     A conversation with your son/daughter?     Walking in the air this morning?     To whom/what have you felt disconnected?     Failure to communicate with your spouse?     Not walking this morning?     Having the experience of “two ships passing in the night” with a colleague at work?     Where do you feel grounded?

2. Eucharist  Sense the energy you have received from others today . . . that has gone out from you in your creative acts today.     Locate an awareness of energy in your loins, gut     What shape or form has it taken?     As you worked . . . did you sense your power of intimacy?     How have these been acts of receiving from and giving to others?     How have you overpowered others?     Have you turned them in on yourself . . . Felt a fear of sharing yourself with another, what others offered?
3. **Confirmation** Focus on your level of *self-esteem*. Self confirmation  
   Sense the feeling of strength in your chest (or lack of it)  
   How have you expressed *self-confidence* today?  
   What shape or form has it taken? . . .  
   Standing up before a group knowing what you were talking about.  
   Reaching out to others  
   Have you compromised your *honor* – who you are - in any way?  
   Have you been afraid to reach out to others?  
   Concerned only with self nurturing?

4. **Marriage** Be aware of the *connection* between your body and your soul.  
   Have you felt *connected* to yourself today?  
   Where in your body do you sense the?HUH?  
   What has been the extent of your *love and compassion* for another?  
   What has been your *connection* to a significant other?  
   What shape or form has it taken?  
   How have you been disconnected today?  
   From self – not in touch with your actions or your emotions, or your best thinking?  
   Not in touch with a loved one... feeling disappointed with a spouse?

5) **Reconciliation** Examine any *fear* that exits within you.  
   Where do you feel it?  
   Does your throat feel constrained?  
   What shape or form has your expression of fear taken?  
   Has it been a compromise of who you are?  
   Have you *spoken* that fear to yourself or another today?  
   How has this fear compromised your truth?

6) **Holy Orders** Connect to your power of *leadership*.  
   Be conscious of the energy you exercised in deliberation today - are you aware of a concentration of energy in your head?.  
   What wisdom and understandings have you *provided* for others today?  
   Have you felt confused or frightened in your *vocation*?  
   What shape or form has this taken?  
   A *decision* about your family budget?  
   Have you not responded to a call for leadership?  
   Have you let others down?

7) **Anointing** Look at your *relationship* with God today.  
   Where have you allowed God’s life to *enter* your mind, body, and spirit? Where did you sense that?  
   Was there a time of solitude of simply listening for the voice of God?  
   What shape or form did this take?  
   On the bus or in your car?  
   A few minutes at your desk after your read an e-mail about the death of an old friend?  
   Where have you *surrendered* today?  
   Where have you not let go?  
   In an argument with your spouse?

The **New Physics**

The major insights for the remainder of this section of the paper dealing with education for sacramental awareness come from the work of Pete Sanders. Sanders bases his work on consciousness of the soul on the new physics. Briefly over the last 100 years beginning with Einstein we have come to a new way of looking at "reality." Since Einstein the new scientists today are operating on the basis of quantum physics or perhaps better called “extra dimensional physics” (including string theory and M-theory - membrane theory). They are saying "reality is not what it used to be." Unbound by the limitations of Newtonian physics where encountering reality is limited to four dimensions: length, high, depth, and time, we now see reality in at least 10 dimensions or more. A desk, a chair, you, me – the full scope of who we are widens into dimensions beyond the four we know. However, science has not yet developed the technology to measure these dimensions. The new higher sciences focus on these other dimensions (beyond the four). In doing so, they provide the opportunity for the "hard sciences" to contribute to human higher (or soul) consciousness. The point is that extra dimensional or higher physics establishes...
scientifically that there are more than the four physical dimensions to reality; there are at least six
more dimensions pointing to a higher or deeper consciousness than we can gain from the
technology that we access through the measurements of high, length, depth, and time.

**HSP- Higher Sensory Perception**

We get to this higher consciousness through higher sensory perceptions (note, the term is
deliberately using the modifier "higher" not "extra"). Sanders denotes four higher sense
preceptors: psychic feeling, psychic intuition, psychic hearing and psychic vision. Karl Rahner
also speaks of the spiritual senses. According to Sanders one can also speak of different
directions of extradimensional energy flow that can affect soul conscious (and/or affect/assist in
different types of meditation) for example a) upflow, b) inflow, and c) flow thru. Upflow is our
consciousness of the soul connecting to higher energy, eventually the energy of God. That is, we
become conscious of God's grace -- a glimpse of the beatific vision -- joy, love, ecstasy, etc.
"Inflow" is soul consciousness at an inner dimension where we perform introspect on possible
hurts, addiction or blocks in our life that keep us from living what we aim for as "God's will."
"Flow thru" is soul consciousness at a lateral dimension in which we concentrate on our vocation
(from one side of the flow - upstream [what in our past life is a touchstone to where we are
going] and the other the downstream [where we are being called to].

**Higher Consciousness and the Brain**

Here, briefly, is where Sander’s work in brain science comes in. He claims it is a lack of
knowledge of the brain that keeps us from assessing the psychic or soul level. In other words, as
a parallel to his work on the soul in higher physics [with its breakthrough on the one hand that
scientifically points to dimensions of higher consciousness and yet it's lack of technology on the
other hand to scientifically measure these higher dimensions], so his work on the brain points out
the inadequacies which hold the brain back from accessing the soul dimensions of reality. One of
the levels of the brain is the limbic brain. It is our fight/flight trigger. In early human
development we relied heavily on this brain so that we would not become some predator’s lunch.
However, today it has a negative effect of keeping us, at times, in fear and holding us back as we
attempt to move up to touch the higher energy of God's presence, or move in to honestly look at
what is holding a back from doing God's will, or keeps us from looking out to where our
vocation is calling. (Note there is an interesting negative force parallel to the limbic brain, in
physics and it is gravity. Gravity is what keeps physics stuck at the Newtonian level.)

Modern brain science has worked on overcoming the negative power of the limbic brain.
An example is the use of such drugs as Prozac, etc. Sanders with the vision of higher dimensions
of the soul (psyche) from higher physics moves to "HSP" (higher sensory perception versus ESP
extra sensory perception) and mental techniques of quieting the limbic brain and allowing
consciousness to upflow, inflow and flow through.

A word more on Sedona and then a look at all of this in terms of the sacraments. Sedona
is known for its concentrated energy centers (popularly called vortices). Sedona is surrounded by

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10 Sanders, *You Are Psychic*.
12 Sanders, *Access Your Brain’s Joy Center*
the most beautiful red rocks\textsuperscript{13}. From time immemorial native people came to these rocks for "spiritual boosts." That is folks came to these sites (some are up flows, some are inflows, and some are flow-thur’s) because of their concentration of psychic (soul) energy to more fully connect with God: God up there, God within and God calling us forward. I believe we can conceive of the seven sacraments as seven energy centers or seven concentrations of God’s energy. When we celebrate them communally in high ritual we can (if we keep the limbic brain at bay) experience them as energy (grace) that enhances our commitment to God.

Sander’s work opens up the hard sciences, in this case higher physics and brain theory, as new means for us to gain greater interpretation of what we mean by the soul. It is not foreign to Christian theology to use the natural knowledges of the day to help explain and interpret the supernatural knowledges. This began in early church history with Paul and the Greek fathers, explaining to the wider world the good news of faith in terms of the dominant conceptual worldview of the day -- Platonic philosophy. No one articulated a more astute explanation of the faith in Platonic terms than Augustine. In the 13th century as the world was on the brink of modern science, it was the theologian Aquinas who tapped into Aristotle and produced what he called a "natural theology." Interestingly enough as modern science developed on the basis of Aristotelian philosophy, the gap between faith and science actually widen in what came to be called the "modern era." It's only since the middle of the 20th century when science has found Aristotelian logic inadequate for its own endeavors that with quantum physics and its higher dimensions there has been a synthesis with the “ideal” world of Plato. That which was thought of in modern times as an absolute distinction between matter and soul no longer is maintained under the paradigm higher physics operates from. It is these breakthroughs in higher physics and, eventually, other sciences that has made a re-accommodation of faith and science possible. This opens up again the age-old possibility of the project of theology -- faith seeking understanding and understanding including science.

Vatican II’s encounter with modernity provided the Roman Catholic Church a choice point for a premodern or postmodern direction. In the document, \textit{Gaudium et Spes} (known in English as "The Church in the Modern World" but in Latin American Spanish as "The Church in These Times") the European and the U.S. church moved from a premodern expression of Catholicism and embraced modernity. This embrace of modernity, a most necessary step for a church that had been so antimodern throughout the nineteenth century, however, happened at a time when the larger intellectual culture was abandoning modernity as bankrupt and moving into a future called postmodernity.

A prime scientific representation of this move was post-Newtonian physics -- quantum or higher physics. Teilhard de Chardin, one of the pillars of Vatican II, signaled this direction -- but in the attempt to overcome the anti-modernism of the premodern church, the first thrust of Vatican II did not embrace the postmodernism of de Chardin. As a result, while the first decades after Vatican II were a liberation from the chains of a premodern church, its modernist direction

did in fact imitate what happened with modernity in the larger culture – a rejection of the premodern – imagination, symbol, ritual, the mystical as medieval.

This laid the groundwork for the restorationism we have been experiencing for the last fifteen years. However, this restorationism is a restoration of the premodern church. The heir to Teilhard, Thomas Berry offers a vision of the postmodern culture as one which is a true synthesis of the premodern and the modern. It is a "third way" which respects and combines the mystical and the scientific, rather than the rejection of either as is done in the first two ways.

Often this dialogue between science and faith does not tolerate or embrace the tension of seeming contradiction. One side seems to need to see itself is right and the other is wrong. Certainly as one reads the declarations in the catechism of the Catholic Church it appears that people of that faith would not be able to hold in tension, for example, a notion of the evolution of human souls with the declaration that God creates each soul individually. Unfortunately when scientists and theologians sit down they don't put all their cards on the table, but hold trump cards that mitigate for them the ability to embrace the tension of both/and.

**Practicing the Spiritual Senses**

About 30% of Sanders work is on what I related above - the theory behind higher consciousness. However the other 70% (and this is where Sanders has done he is unique [original] work) is in learning mental (psychic) exercises or techniques for moving into the area of the soul. I will share the basic technique -- what's Sanders calls the "soul shift," i.e., shifting to higher sensory perception. Where I am going to is what we all simply know as a method of meditation. For example, see the works of Anthony DeMello, or Thomas Keating, or certainly the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. Sanders bases his meditation techniques in higher physics and brain science (Keating does much of this as well).

**The Shift to Soul**

The soul shift means shifting your attention our perception from your physical body to your spiritual soul. Here is my interpretation/compellation of several of Sanders' techniques to do this.

a. Clear any outside psychic energy that may be bombarding you. For example, perhaps you just heard a very hard story about the death of your close friend’s mother; or as a chaplain you just came from a very difficult death. In your emotions there is much outside psychic energy that you need to clear away. Here is Sanders technique for this. Imagine your head and imagine a big funnel pouring down into the center of your head. Now imagine at the top of your forehead a drain plug. Begin to cleanse yourself of psychic energy by pulling the stopper out of the drain plug at the center of your forehead. Now imagine all kinds of purifying energy going into the funnel above the crown of your head. It rushes down to your lowest of the seven chakras (energy centers in your body) and then moves up cleansing each of these and going out the drain in your forehead.

b. Now become as calm as possible; take a few breaths to move you into an alpha state of brain vibration.

c. Now you move into the exercise that brings you into a shift to nonphysical or soul consciousness. Direct your conscious attention to your feet, be aware of the feeling of
your feet in your shoes, on the floor, move your attention up to your calves, move your attention up to an awareness of feeling in your buttock, now to your stomach, to your chest, to your limbs and fingers, to your neck, to the back of your head, to your forehead. Now move your attention out of your body by way of the back of your head to your soul. Imagine your soul as existing in a space just outside the back of your head. At this point you no longer are relying on your physical senses to aid your imagination, but you move to your four psychic senses -- the visual, the audient, the gut, and the intuition. Allow your imagination to take over and let yourself psychically sense wherever your imagination takes you -- by way of one or more of the four psychic senses. First of all you might imagine, visually, your soul filling the room that you're in. You begin to “see” the four corners of the room and the light fixture at the top of the room (all of this I should mention is done with your eyes closed). And then you allow your soul to soar out of the room perhaps up into the heavens and you begin to imagine an encounter with the incredible energy that's in the cosmos. You might also move back in time and imagine yourself walking with Jesus along the road in Galilee. You might imagine yourself encountering a relative who has passed -- perhaps your father. In any of these encounters -- both where you go and what you sense -- be open and don't force your imagination. Don't worry about where it came from. At this point particularly if this is an up flow sensation simply allow your soul to be filled with whatever energy is in the place your imagination has taken your soul.

This exercise is just the basic and the start of the spiritual or psychic meditation. This can be developed to the point where you imagine yourself sending some of the psychic energy to someone in need, someone you promised to pray for. You can send that psychic energy to a place in a situation that you will encounter later in the day and draw on it at that time. This meditation can also be developed as an inflow experience with psychic energy, where you draw that energy in to your body and soul to address physical and spiritual healing. And the meditation can take the form of a flow thru experience with psychic energy in which you look at vocation, what you are called to do.

What these psychic practices offer to the framework of spiritual theory on which my course on the sacraments is based, are practical and strategic exercises that apply this theory and render it functional in the very practice of the sacraments. So, as people have gone to Sedona for centuries because of the concentration of psychic energy in rock sites there, in the Christian tradition we have concentrations of psychic (spiritual) energy (grace) in the seven sacraments. As we celebrate them publicly in our communal ritual, if we have the means to open our psychic senses to these ritual concentrations of energy, we can connect to that energy for purposes of up flow, inflow and flow through. As we connect to the sacraments outside of public communal liturgy we can daily draw on the sacraments’ energy.¹⁴

¹⁴ Here is Pete Sanders’ website [http://www.freesoul.net/] and on it you will find his published materials. The thing I like about Pete is not just that he has a practice (in our terminology ministry) focus but that he’s really able to make some rather important scientific findings clear, relatable and usable.
Conclusion: Broader Significance of This Work

The Roman Catholic Church’s Vatican II directed the people to explore the sacred presence of God in creation—God’s *immanence*. Sacraments are this Church’s traditional way of connecting the sacred and the worldly (spirit and body), making our awareness of this partnership real. However, it seems the response of the present Roman Catholic hierarchy’s spirit of “restoration” in reemphasizing the “rubrics” (e.g., the issuance of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [2003] and the present restoration of pre-Vatican II language in the mass) accentuates the *transcendent* nature of the Eucharist—and with this the indispensable role of the priest as THE ONE who can cross the sacramental bridge from the earth to heaven. It is possible this restoration has pushed the pendulum too far back in the transcendent direction so that once again for example the Eucharist is seen as “thing,” (white host) and not a dynamic relationship—moving us back to a magical mentality. This work’s broader significance then is twofold: 1) to revisit the transcendent/imminent character of our relationship with the Divine and 2) to put the experience of the sacraments in the hands of the laity for their everyday practice of the spiritual life.

I like to compare the formal celebration of the sacraments in high liturgy with the pilgrimage people make to the red rocks at Sedona, Arizona. Here in the presence of these red rock meditators can have a profound upflow or inflow experience of energy. However, these visits strengthen and anchor this experience but they are not the limit of the experience. This same experience of upflow and inflow consciousness can happen on a daily basis back home—in the city or in the country. The same happens for the Catholic at the Eucharist on Sunday, the celebration of a diocesan Confirmation, Ordination or at the bedside of a loved one receiving the Sacrament of the Sick. These experiences of high liturgy strengthen and anchor the sacramental experiences but are not the limit of these experiences. These experiences of intimacy, self-esteem, leadership/vocation and letting go happen on a daily basis.
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