

*The Sacraments: An Interdisciplinary and Interactive Study.* By Joseph Martos. Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2009. vi + 274 pages. \$24.95 (paper).

This work is a revision/expansion of the author's earlier *The Catholic Sacraments* (1983). Significant portions of the current work are taken verbatim from the earlier work but with the important addition of hundreds of questions accessible via the book's companion web site. These questions invite the reader to assess whether the data and positions presented in the book do in fact make sense. This invitation to the reader makes the book particularly suitable for college classes on the sacraments though it should also be pointed out that at times the number of questions per page of text might give readers a sense of being bogged down. The current text adds sections on transformative, postmodern, and liturgical theologies of the sacraments as well as chapters on the contributions of ritual studies and on the relationship between the sacraments and morality; these additions reflect important trends in sacramental theology. The text retains sections on the contributions of psychology and sociology, the history of the sacraments, and the sacraments' impact on personal, communal, ecclesial and global spirituality.

What this book does best is present in summary fashion important themes and ideas – from within the Catholic theological tradition and from without – that have shaped and are presently shaping Catholic thinking on the sacraments. The author also repeatedly explores why and how sacraments apparently do not always have the effects intended by their celebration. The on-line questions prompt readers to examine whether and how claims advanced by important thinkers and strands of the tradition do or do not correspond to their own experiences, generating the promise of good class discussions. Further, the questions invite readers to assess whether what the author himself is saying about sacramental effects corresponds to their experiences and to engage in email conversation with the author about the book. The book's web site contains a number of additional resources ranging from videos of sacramental celebrations to suggestions about how to use the book in a classroom.

I would add three points by way of critique. It should be noted that while the end-of-chapter bibliographies are greatly expanded (from nine references to forty-one in just the first chapter!) there is little incorporation of works published since 1983 into those portions of the text taken from the earlier book. I would raise questions about the adequacy of the presentation of the sacred / profane split in the history of religions presented in the text. Finally, there are places in the text that are critical of official Roman Catholic teaching but the text at times omits aspects of that teaching (e.g., in *Gaudium et spes* no. 40 on the mutual relationship of

church and world and no. 43 on the split between faith and practice and in *Sacrosanctum concilium* no. 48 on liturgical participation) that would support points the author wishes to make.

This book is a welcome addition to the literature (and web sites) available to college instructors in sacramental theology.

*Villanova University*

TIMOTHY BRUNK

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