

“SACRAMENTS”

by Virginia Cary Hudson

Sacraments are what you do in Church. What you do at home is something else. Cooking and sewing and running the Bissel sweeper and eating and sleeping and praying and scrubbing yourself are not sacraments.

When you are little and ugly somebody carries you in church on a pillow, and you come out a child of God and inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. They pour water on your head and that's a sacrament. When you are twelve you walk back in yourself with your beat dress and shoes on, and your new prayer book your mother buys you and you walk up to the Bishop, and he stands up, and you kneel down, and he mashes on your head, and you are an Episcopal. Then you are supposed to increase in spirit. Then everybody kisses you and that's a sacrament. Only I left out the bread and the wine. That's a sacrament, too. I tasted some of that bread in the choir room and it tasted just like my gold fish wafers.

Then when you are married, you go back to church dressed up like you never were before in all your days. Somebody sings “Oh Promise Me’ and your sweetheart is waiting up by the preacher, if he doesn't forget to come, and you get a new shiny gold band on your finger and leave town. And that's a sacrament.

Miss Molly Anderson got all ready to get married and she let me see all of her lovely clothes all spread out on the bed in the spare room. Only she didn't get married. The bridegroom forgot to come back. He traveled. And I guess he took the wrong train or something. Mrs. Anderson shut the shutters, and nobody would come to the door, and when I went around to the kitchen door to take Miss Molly some cinnamon drops, the cook says to me, she said, “Go away, scat.” But Miss Molly didn't care if he did forget to come. She bought her a new bath suit with a big sailor collar, and ruffles around her knees and she married Dr. Thomwood, and I like him. He is handsome. That old absent-minded bridegroom was always saying to me, “Little girl, isn't it time you were going home?” And I had only just got, I mean gotten there. And I barely had sat myself down in the parlor.

And then you get carried back in the Church again. But you are dead and it takes six people to lift you. And everybody cries and that's the last sacrament you are going to get.

Mrs. Parks was old and so sick she didn't even know her own children. Maybe she was tired fooling with them all those years and just acted like she didn't know them. When Mrs. Parks died I sure didn't cry because I bet when she waked up and found she was dead she was just tickled to death.

One day we got tired of playing hop-scotch and skin the cat, so Edna Briggs said, "Let's play Baptizing." I said to Mrs. Williams, "Can we, I mean may we play Baptizing in your rain barrel?" And she said to me, she said, "Yes, indeed," and she just went on tatting. So I put on my father's hunting breeches and got Judge Williams' hat off the moose horn rack, and I dressed up like the Baptist preacher. That was when Edna ran to get all the kids. And I said to them I said, "The Lord is in his Holy Temple, keep silent and shut up" And then I said, "All you sinners come forward and hence." And nobody came but Melvin Dawson. He is just two years old. Poor little Melvin. He is so unlucky. I got his by the back of his diaper and dipped him once for the Father, and once for the Son, and when it came time for the Holy Ghost, poor little Melvin's safety pin broke and he dropped in the bottom of the rain barrel, and everybody ran, and nobody would help me, and I had to turn the rain barrel over to get him out, and then I galloped him on his stomach on my pony to get the water out of him, and then I sat him inside his house, and then I went out to Mrs. Harris' house and got under her bed, and when she looked under there and saw me, all soaking wet, Mrs. Harris said, she said, "Rain and hail in Beulah land, what has happened now?" And when I told her what had happened she just patted her foot and sat, and sat, and then she said, "You know what?" and I said, "What?" and Mrs. Harris said, "The Bishop sure needs just such a barrel in the church yard to give some members I know just what little Melvin got." And then Mrs. Harris said, "Let's talk about fishing." And we did.

Thank God for fishing. Thank God for Mrs. Harris and God bless poor little Melvin. Amen.