

## Homework: Sacred Space

This session focuses on the places that have deep meaning in our lives.

Sacred places are stopping places where men and women are given pause to wonder about what lies beyond the mundane rituals, the grief, trials, and boredom of our day-to-day life.

—*Mindie Burgoyne*

You must have a room or a certain hour of the day or so where you do not know what is in the morning paper. A place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. At first you may think nothing's happening. But if you have a sacred space and take advantage of it and use it every day, something will happen. Such a place does not need to be large. It can be an alcove off a bedroom, an unused corner of the basement, or an attic, as in my own home. Take time to make it beautiful, make it an expression of who you are, whether simple and unadorned, or filled with treasures collected over a lifetime. And make it a pattern of your daily routine to spend time there each day, in meditation, in contemplation, or in creative exploration. We are amazing creatures, every one of us, but we forget so easily, when we don't take the time to listen to our inner being.

—*Joseph Campbell*

The holy is nothing but the ordinary, held up to the light and profoundly seen. It is the awareness of creativity and a connection that we do not control, in a universe that is always larger, more intricate, and more astonishing than we imagine.

—*Kendyl Gibbons*

Sacred space is by definition a place that has been designated by someone as a focus outside our everyday experience. The Murrah Center in Oklahoma City memorializes that city's bombing victims, Muslims face Mecca when they pray, and Catholics make pilgrimages to El Santuario de Chimayo every Easter. Many people visit these places and others, sharing similar experiences as a result of their visit.

In his book, *The Sacred and the Profane*, Mircea Eliade explains that the sacred always manifests itself as a reality different from normal realities. We become aware of the sacred when it shows itself as something different from the profane.

For example, he writes about primitive peoples who establish sacred space by setting up a pole that gives them a feeling of safety, of being connected to the earth below and the sky above. If the pole is ever broken, the tribal group may scatter, lacking that vital connection.

In all cultures, sacred space reflects our response to the space where we reside, permanently or temporarily. When we go to the beach, we find a spot that we claim by putting down a blanket or folding chair, our towel, and our book. We establish this spot and return to it again and again.

We make our homes and our work place sacred by adding objects that give us a similar personal attachment. When we move to a new office or living place, they aren't quite ours until we have hung up our paintings, brought in a living plant, gotten rid of that awful green paint in the dining room.

While a building, a tree or pole, or a beach towel can become a center of our human need to establish and recognize sacred space, we need not limit ourselves to our culture's idea of sacred space. It can be anywhere and everywhere.

Because profane space gives man no orientation for his life, the Sacred must manifest itself in a hierophany [manifestation of the sacred], thereby establishing a sacred site around which man can orient himself. The site of a hierophany establishes a fixed point, a center.

—Mircea Eliade

### *Questions to Ponder*

- Think of a place or places that seem sacred to you—a place in a canyon, a room in your home, anything that gives you the feeling of sacred space. What makes it sacred to you? What things have happened there? What is the nature of the space itself? The intention of the space (such as a church)? What experiences have you or do you have in this sacred space?
- Please bring something to the meeting (such as an object or photo) that will help you claim our meeting room as sacred space.