

	<p>Kathy Kuczka. <i>As Mama Used to Say: Life Lessons Learned from a Mother's Mottos.</i> New York: St. Pauls [Society of St. Paul], 2015.</p> <p>ISBN: 978-0-8189-1376-1. Prod. Code: 1376-1. Book: 164 pages. List: \$9.95.</p>
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Link: <http://www.stpauls.us/AS-MAMA-USED-TO-SAY-P11668.aspx>

From the publisher website:

As Mama Used to Say reveals the potential that is discovered when we hear our mother's old sayings in new ways. As the author explores, our mother's words can be transformed into pearls of wisdom with the power to guide the rest of our lives. Written with humor and heart, *As Mama Used to Say* proves that we're never too old to learn from our mothers. Kathy Kuczka, an award-winning journalist, spent years covering news for CNN. She lives and works in Atlanta.

Excerpt: 10. “And you just came from church!”

Mom was a devout Catholic. That meant going to church – a lot. She not only went to church every Sunday but on the weekdays as well. When my brother was an altar server, she would drag me out of bed and into the car for the early bird Mass at 7:00 a.m. I remember thinking, God isn't even awake, so why are we? My brother and I went to church at least in body, although not necessarily in mind or heart. Shortly after we left church, we would start fighting. My mother would angrily vent, “And you just came from church!” I didn't get it. I didn't understand the connection between what happened inside the church and what happened outside the church. Mom was reminding us that what happens inside the church – the act of worship – should change us. When we walk out of church or temple or mosque or synagogue, we should be different from when we went in. She was teaching us that faith should fill us up with love and joy and hope, so much so that when we walk out we are so filled up that we overflow with happiness. She was also giving voice to the critics who question the role of religion in contemporary society. Religion preaches peace but the world remains at war. Congregations talk about love yet there are too many acts of hate. Religious doctrines proclaim social justice, but society is rife with injustice. So what difference does religion make?

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Office for Worship and the Catechumenate Recommendation:

This is a delightful book of 35 short chapters. There is good mystagogical style in each compact saying/story, taking a phrase and unwrapping it or extending it or applying it to life today. Can't you just hear your mother say, for example: “Say your prayers.” “God willing.” “Stand up straight.” “Just taste it.” “Death disrupts everything.” “Whose fault is that?” “Are those socks clean or dirty?” “If I weren't here, would you know how to...?”

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A colleague helped me gain insight into this question. I used to produce the travel show at CNN, which was hosted by one of the network's meteorologists. I remember asking her how meteorologists forecast the weather. She talked to me about something called synoptic meteorology, a method of forecasting large-scale weather systems, which uses sophisticated satellite imagery, intricate weather plots, complex prognostic charts, and elaborate computer programs to determine things like pressure tendencies, precipitation, air masses, sky cover, and wind speed. But she cautioned that any good meteorologist will always remember the last and perhaps most important method of forecasting, "Don't forget to look out the window."

I think of this example whenever I think of the connection between faith and life. Denominations make a point of having elaborate liturgies, opulent buildings, lavish rituals, luscious symbols, and beautiful music. But if no one is looking out the window to connect to what is happening in the world, what's the point?

Sadly, I think many people are like my brother and I were – worshipping in body, but not necessarily with mind or heart, safe and content in our holy huddle, unaware that there is any connection between what happens inside and outside houses of worship. Perhaps this is why our Jewish ancestors wrote in the Talmud, "Never pray in a room without windows."

The last words we hear in the Mass are, "This Mass is ended." These words, translated from the Latin, literally mean "Go, you are sent!" That is, you have heard God's words of love, you have remembered God's justice, you have experienced God's peace. Now, go and do likewise!

The word *synoptic* means more than just a way to forecast the weather. It means to view together or to view at a common point. Faith unites believers so that they might view the world together through the eyes of love and compassion. If we took our worship to heart, then the world would proclaim with delight, "Ah, you just came from church!"