

***Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them 'Peace be with you'.  
(an old essay from a long time ago - slightly revised)***

It's consoling to know that no matter how firmly we lock our doors, Jesus can still break in upon our privacy, bringing with him the radiance of a divine world we've long forgotten. There was a time, of course, when our doors and windows seemed to be wide open, when our senses of sight, hearing, touch, imagination were especially sharp to pick up the traces of God's Spirit all around us, be it in a rose arbor or blue jay or the sound and scent of a seascape. Or as Wordsworth put it: *There was a time when meadow, grove and stream, / The earth, and every common sight, / To me did seem / Appareled in celestial light.*

But driven by some radical anxiety, similar to that of the disciples in today's Gospel, we learned early to bridle our senses, to detect only the ominous instead of the wonderful in our environment. We learned to think survival, to lock our doors, shutter our windows - to dwell within a world of business gray.

Still, even as we grow older, Christ can intrude upon us as he did upon those mournful disciples. Now and again, by way of little incidents, he can appear among us to remind us that there's so much more to reality than our doubting minds will allow - as he did with Anne Porter, who tells of a wartime Sunday morning walk in 1940's Manhattan with the littlest of her sons. First Avenue was empty and gray. No one was up. The bridges over the East River stood silent *like great webs of stillness*. Returning home past locked-up shops, she paused to notice one window heaped with old lamps, guitars, radios, dusty furs - *And there among them a pawned christening dress / White as a waterfall* - so luminous in itself as to reveal the worth of everything else that we tend to treat as pawns in life - as a mere "chess game".

That's how Christ and the real world he represents can break in upon us - so that suddenly we realize how much we have let death constrict our minds and, if only for a brief moment, find ourselves longing to share in Christ's victory over death, to explore with him once more the brilliant, perpetual NOW that lies beyond our muted senses.

Marcel Proust in his masterpiece *In Search Of Lost Time* writes often of such moments when, for instance, the taste of a French pastry dipped in tea would lift his hero, Marcel, out of the boredom of his Parisian social life to taste again the sacramental quality of his childhood village of Combray - where the names of the village streets (Rue Saint-Jacques, Rue Sainte-Hildegarde, Rue du Saint-Esprit) made him feel he dwelt in nothing less than a suburb of God's celestial Jerusalem. And then there was the village church of St. Hilaire, whose sculptured facade and stained glass interior were but a revelation of the true worth of the shops around it and existence in general and particular. And its spire! - as if it were the very Finger of God tenderly touching the earth.

Moments of epiphany! Moments when Christ and the fullness of life he represents intrude upon our shuttered world! Stay alert! Their frequency may be only dependent upon how often we truly wish they would happen.

***Geoff Wood***