

Of doors and butterflies

Back in the autumn of 1956 an elderly cousin informed me that I had relatives living in Baltimore whom I never knew. So upon completing a Sunday pastoral assignment in South Jersey, I interrupted my trip back to the seminary in Washington to visit them. It turned out to be a family of eight children ranging from 16 to 5 (two sets of twins!). And their reception was overwhelming, so much youth. They were poor – the best dinner they could come up with was hot dogs and baked beans. But it was an exhilarating discovery. I finally had family within an hour's reach.

Nor was it long before – among them – I acquired a taste for rock n roll – a music I detested until hearing so much of it among these kids – myself being brought up on the swing style and ballads of earlier years. One piece that I retain in memory is the Jim Lowe performance of *Green Door*. As with such music the lyrics get lost in the bedlam and dialect of its rendition – but they do set up an intelligible episode in which a listener can participate.

In this case the vocalist speaks of being unable to sleep night after night because there's an old piano playing *hot behind a green door*. He'd like to know what's going on behind that green door: *wish they'd let me in . . . knocked once, tried to tell them I'd been there* [a lie] – *door slammed, hospitality's thin there – wonder just what's going on in there*. He hears laughing behind the green door . . . wants to *join the happy crowd*. *Midnight . . . watching till the morning comes creeping – Green door, what's that secret you're keeping*. [During Prohibition a green door signaled a speakeasy.]

Jesus says in today's Gospel: *I am the door*. The evangelist uses the Greek word *Θύρα*. Our Catholic text translates it "gate" but other translations of the Gospel prefer "door." So Jesus, too, like the Green Door of the song, presents himself to us as a portal that entices us to awake from that *midnight sleep* that too often leaves us bereft of all the rich, deep stuff we can get out of life – the experiences that amount to our birthing into ever new, gracious, caring, astonishing consciousness and vitality.

When do we experience Christ as a door? Possibly every day of our lives – as when a situation challenges us to say or do something generous; or as when we open up to a poem that catches not only our eye but our heart; or when events occur that make us think twice about the way we have been living. Doors open and a vista appears that makes life more meaningful or more curious - ourselves more energized than before.

As I mentioned last week, this is the anniversary of my son's death years ago. We used to remember him by climbing Corona Heights in the city, whose view he liked so much. Once upon climbing with Jane along a rough, steep path, Jane exclaimed: "Oh! Look: a butterfly!" I looked down and saw nothing – pebbles, a stick . . . "I don't see anything," I replied. And then the "stick" opened its wings – a monarch in all its glory.

Doors, butterfly wings - openings upon a world we have yet to discover – even at this late date in history.

Geoff Wood