

Doors

Every time we enter a church, a question is put to us. Why does a church have doors? It seems a foolish question. Naturally, to go in by. Yes, but doors are not necessary – only an entrance. But the door serves as a reminder.

When you step through the doorway of a church you are leaving the outer world behind and entering an inner world. The outside world abounds in life and activity, but also with the base and ugly. It is a sort of bazaar, crossed and recrossed by all walks of life. Perhaps unholy is not the word for it, yet there is something profane about the world. Behind the church doors is an inner place, separate from the city – a silent, consecrated, holy site. It is certain that the whole world is the work of God and his gift to us, that we may meet Him anywhere, that everything we receive is from God's hand, and, when received religiously, is holy. Nevertheless we have always felt that certain areas were in a special manner set apart and dedicated to God.

Between the outer and the inner world are the doors. They are the barriers between the city and the sanctuary, between what belongs to the world at large and what has become consecrated to God. And the door warns they who open it that they must now leave behind the thoughts, wishes and cares which are out of place, their curiosity, vanity, worldly interests, their secular selves. "Make yourself clean. The ground you tread is holy ground."

Do not rush through. Take time to open your heart to their meaning and pause a moment beforehand so as to make our entrance a fully intended and recollected act.

The doors have yet something else to say. Notice how as you cross the threshold you unconsciously lift your head and your eyes, and how as you survey the great interior space of the church there also takes place in you an inward expansion and enlargement. Its great width and height have an analogy to infinity and eternity. A church is a similitude of the heavenly dwelling place of God. Mountains indeed are higher, the wide blue sky outside stretches immeasurably further. But whereas outside space is unconfined and formless, the portion of space set aside for the church has been formed, fashioned, designed at every point with God in view. The long pillared aisles, the width and solidity of the walls, the high arched and vaulted roof, bring home to us that this is God's house and the seat of his hidden presence.

It is the doors that admit us to this mysterious place. Lay aside, they say, all that cramps and narrows, all that sinks the mind. Open your heart, lift up your eyes. Let your soul be free, for this is God's temple.

It is likewise the representation of you, yourself. For you, your soul and your body, are the living temple of God. Open up that temple, make it spacious, give it height.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.

Heed the cry of the doors. Of small use to you is a house of wood and stone unless you yourself are God's living dwelling. The high arched gates may be lifted up, and the portals parted wide, but unless the doors of your heart are open, how can the King of Glory enter in?