

Opening the Doors of Mercy

Week 2– Doors as Thresholds

The “limen” is another way of describing the in between space of a doorway. The term “liminality” indicates the uncomfortable ambiguity that develops when we are standing in the middle of a juncture of significant change, which leads us to review the values and beliefs that give our life meaning.¹

Doors as Thresholds in the Life of Catherine²

For three years she watched by Catherine Callaghan’s bed in the front door chamber of Coolock, connected by a door to her room in the back. She smoothed the pillow and learned what one does for the sick by doing it. She often read her some book of moral or religious instruction by the light of a shaded lamp on the floor.

A young servant girl came to her door at Coolock seeking a place to live because her virtue was in danger. Not able to receive the girl at Coolock – where she had retained the servants, Mrs Harper and 3 or 4 adopted children– Catherine tried other possibilities. She asked established houses in Dublin to admit the girl but encountered rigid procedures against which she would be dead set for the rest of her life.

For Catherine as an older woman, accustomed to independence and freedom and well versed in the management of affairs, the novitiate experience had some very painful aspects. She confessed later that on the first night in George’s Hill she was sorely tempted, as she walked through the gates to the door, to order her carriage, drive back to the House of Mercy and call off the whole endeavour.

“The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you. Don’t go back to sleep...People are going back and forth across the doorsill where the two worlds touch. The door is round and open. Don’t go back to sleep.”

Jalaluddin Rumi.

Take a moment to reflect on some of the threshold moments in your life?

How did they help you to clarify your values, belief and purpose?

¹ Joyce Rupp, Open the Door, A Journey to the True Self

² Text adapted from Mary Sullivan RSM, The Path of Mercy

