

Courteous Christ

He held the door for me as I went into his office today. *'Thank you.'* I said.

'Thanks!'

Me! Saying thanks to the Lord of all universes and beyond!

Again he has shown me something more of the nature of God – the Father who holds the door open for his children.

I could go deeper in my thinking and spend time considering that Jesus who called himself 'the door' holds the door open, and how he is ever available as the way in to heaven, eternal life and the presence of the father. He is the door to the house of many rooms. (*John 10 John 14*)

I stood by the window from the past and saw inside the Jerusalem Temple. A vast dimness, suddenly alight. A great heavy curtain which had imprisoned God in the minds and practices of people's religion, now torn apart as the earth shook the Temple foundations. (*Matthew 27.51*) I saw robed priests shielding their eyes and running away from the growing light, while ordinary faithful worshippers ran in to see and feel the warm welcome of their gracious, courteous God and Father. Jesus is the torn-down curtain giving us entry to all of God! All we can say is 'thanks'!

But for now my thoughts were taken up with a sense of amazement that I should be saying 'thank you' to God. Isn't that what we have been taught from the beginning – remember to say give thank you? However this was a new consciousness of gratitude to God rising out of my awareness of his gracious courtesy to me – as to all people.

In that moment 'thanks' seemed too small a word to express my relationship with him. How can that simple word encompass the gratitude I feel just to be here – in his presence – the Saviour who sacrificed his life to make it possible – the Lord who has made the most fantastic promise to go on caring about me – to go on holding the door open - without end!

Yes, it was gratitude which made me aware of his grace in a simple act of courtesy.

In the window he directed my thoughts to pictures of Mother Julian of Norwich and Francis of Assisi - kindred spirits in their knowledge of the courtesy of Christ.

Mother Julian saw Jesus as a window on to God, and then more than that – as the door to God. She said that far better than understanding God is to enter in and feel and know him – to live in him. She referred to God as *courteous*, or *homely*. His real courtesy is that he does not see our lives as bound up with sin, but rather, sees our sin as bound up in his love!

It was Francis' overwhelming sense of gratitude – his discovery of the 'infinite debt' he owed to God which made him want to treat everyone else as a 'king'. He always showed respect to the least because this was the courteous nature of Christ in him. It was his understanding of God's grace which made him kind, considerate, compassionate to the least and most excluded of people. He must have made an outstanding witness to Christ in what was considered a harsh and cruel society. His Christ-like courtesy is a challenge for today.