

The Portal in Louisville: A Reflection by Chris Hyde



There's a portal at Fourth and Walnut,
around the corner from the CVS and Starbucks,
where a cool breeze brushes the concrete sidewalk.

On this side of the portal:
many people all around, but no one's special;
you close your heart, dim and aloof.

But, in the blink of an eye,
you can slip through a portal to an entirely different world:
the same people still around, but now stunningly beautiful;
you open your heart, now ablaze with awe and love.

One blink, your eyes close, your small world disappears;
then, not your eyes, but God's eyes open and a new world appears:
each person, everyone, shining like sun, connected like sibs.

This intersection was always a thin place,
every time Merton crossed it before.

But perhaps such a long trip seems too much for your schedule today.
Don't worry; instead, trust:
the thin places for this portal don't require GPS coordinates.

You just might slip through the portal
during an act of kindness that no one earned
(maybe the portal opens easier for the givers).

You might slip through

when a child smiles, radiating delight in life,
telegraphing trust in the goodness of you.

You might slip through

when you share the red brocade pillow,
when a homeless child gives away a candy.

You just might slip through the portal

when you connect with someone who has been rejected,
when you welcome another with deep and gentle listening.

Kindness for people—especially the “difficult” ones—
may be a thin place for this portal.

But perhaps such people seem too impossible to love,
that they are beyond redemption.

Don't doubt; instead, trust:

the grace in the portal erases any boundaries to your compassion.

You just might slip through the portal

when you are submerged under an ocean of pain,
when hope abandoned you long ago.

You might slip through

when all that you treasured has left you starving,
your loneliness a raging hunger.

You just might slip through the portal

when you can't bear one more day without meaning,
when you're too tired to stand up to the fear another time.

Terrible times in your heart may be a thin place for this portal.

But perhaps such hard times seem too devastating to ever heal,
too much damage already done.

Don't cave; instead, trust:

the balm in the portal is strong enough for even the worst wounds.

You just might slip through the portal

when the beauty of God's creation bowls you over,
when the sweetness of God's personality melts your heart.

You might slip through

in silent intention, passionate for connection,
your heart overflowing with desire to know God.

You just might slip through the portal

when you grow very small and your Beloved grows large,
when you are tenderly and surely embraced.

A humble heart and a reverent mind may be a thin place for this portal.

But perhaps such surrender seems a price too steep,
a step too far for your ego to take just now.

Don't waffle; instead, trust: the transformed you on the other side of the portal
is far more precious than whatever you must leave behind.

Yes, there's a portal at Fourth and Walnut.

But perhaps such a long trip seems too much for your schedule today.

Don't give up; instead, trust:

there's a portal in the particulars of every moment in any place.

Just slip through the portal with your noticing:

pause and experience life deeply, fully;
with a thankful heart, give praise for it all.

Just slip through with your choosing:

again and again, "Yes" to your Beloved;
in times hard and easy, ever more loyal.

Just slip through with your receiving:

lean into your Divine Companion's arms,
let Her love and wisdom seep in deep.

Just slip through with your giving:

gladly consent to God with a whole heart, hold nothing back,
follow wherever God leads, wash anyone's feet.

Just slip through the portal with your Beloved:

dialog together, I and Thou, in your Shekinah,
create the sacred something that only you two can make.

Your noticing and choosing, your receiving and giving,
your connecting and co-creating:
your cooperation, in any moment and place,
is the path to this portal.

The portal doesn't require special coordinates,
but it does require two to open.

Don't fret; instead, trust: you are never alone.

Your Beloved is always with you, inviting you,
awaiting your RSVP: your total trust in living together.

But perhaps such trust seems foolish
when you don't know what that life requires.
Don't hesitate; instead, trust:
the other side of the portal is more beautiful than you ever imagined.

The other side of the portal—life joined with your Beloved—
is as close as this moment in this place.

Remember, the gate of heaven is everywhere.

*This piece was written to remember the different portals people
experienced, portals that mirrored Thomas Merton's experience at the
corner of Fourth and Walnut in Louisville.*

**Practice: Each day dwell in communion with the Beloved, the
Divine indwelling within your own embodied presence. Coincide
with this Sacred Presence frequently during the day.**

**Slip through the portal 1000 times a day. Your Beloved is always
available.**

BUT ...

Don't doubt, instead trust.