

Quotes from Fran Francis' session: Sacred Door, He Tatau Pounamu, ACSD TE 2024

The *tatau pounamu* was a way of bringing peace between warring peoples. Each party in the pact would choose a hill to be the *tatau pounamu* or greenstone door indicating the way of peace. That "door" was closed to anyone who wanted to draw blood. Sometimes a high ranking daughter was offered in marriage as the *tatau pounamu* but it was, usually, a symbolic marriage.¹

¹ <https://teara.govt.nz/en/pounamu-jade-or-greenstone/page-7>

I wonder if we can think, then, of spiritual direction *as tatau pounamu*, a beautiful, enduring door to peace and life?

If spiritual direction practice is a sacred greenstone door, I think you'll agree we encounter other sacred doors in every session:

The Sacred Doorway of Beginning (and woundedness)

*"it's a great boon for these (awakening ones) to realise, to some extent the state of their souls, and to see that they will never reach the door by the road they are following. At length they enter the first rooms in the basement of the castle, accompanied by numerous reptiles which disturb their peace and prevent their seeing the beauty of the building. Still, it is a great gain that these persons should have found their way in at all."*²

"This probably sounds terribly abstract: prayer as mystical mind palace. But Teresa's account of the soul-as-diamond stays with me. This is what you, and your precious attention are worth. The question is how to save the latter – especially for the non-prayers among us." Justine Toh

"There is a secret place. A radiant sanctuary. As real as your own kitchen. More real than that. Constructed of the purest elements. Overflowing with ten thousand beautiful things. Worlds with worlds. Forests, rivers. Velvet coverlets thrown over feather beds. Fountains bubbling beneath a canopy of stars. Bountiful forests, universal libraries. A wine cellar offering an intoxication so sweet you will never be sober again. A clarity so complete you will never again forget. This magnificent refuge is inside you. Enter. Shatter the darkness that shrouds the doorway. Step around the poisonous vipers that slither at your feet, attempting to throw you off your course. Be bold. Be humble.

Put away the incense and forget the incantations they taught you. Ask no permission from the authorities. Slip away.

*Close your eyes and follow your breath to the still place that leads to the invisible path that leads you home... Believe the incredible truth that the Beloved has chosen for his dwelling place the core of your own being because that is the single most beautiful place in all of creation."*³

"It is a mysterious paradox that the place of our greatest pain, vulnerability and powerlessness is the door through which our heart can be so broken that it forces us to turn away from the outer world and trace the thread of our own darkness back to our source in God. We need to experience, acknowledge

¹ Reese, Alistair. *He Tatau Pounamu The Treaty of Waitangi: A Covenant of Reconciliation*. Karūwha Trust and Venn Foundation, 2024

² Toh, Justine, *Making Sense of It* section The Guardian, digital edition, 17/11/2024

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/nov/18/people-everywhere-are-head-down-lost-in-the-oblivion-of-infinite-scroll-just-stop-and-let-the-moment-breathe>

³ Starr, Mirabai. Introduction to *The Interior Castle* by St Teresa of Avila, translated by Starr. Riverhead Books, 2004.

and fully surrender our inner darkness and pain to the light and endless love of God. Then we can journey, from exile, further and further in the interior castle – to that innermost dwelling place ‘where the very secret exchanges between God and the soul take place.’ (IC 1:1:3).⁴

The Sacred Door into Difficult Terrain – AKA the Doors of Durin.

“Speak Friend And Enter.”

The Sacred Door of Self-Protection (and the threshold of resistance)

“This dynamic of fear of and flight from intimacy with God – the holiness of God, the unpredictability of God, and even the tenderness of God – occurs because our small, conditioned sense of self is threatened in both obvious and subtle ways by such encounters.”⁵

The Sacred Door of Messiness and Chaos (and the threshold of confession)

“Activate the imagination to transform resignation.”⁶

“Confession is the antidote to shame.”⁷

“Most of us would never go to new places in any other way. The mystics use many words to describe this chaos: fire, darkness, death, emptiness, abandonment, trial, the Evil One. Whatever it is, it does not feel good, and it does not feel like God. You will do anything to keep the old thing from falling apart. This is when you need patience and guidance, and the freedom to let go instead of tightening your controls and certitudes.”⁸

The Sacred Door of Transparency

Transparency also offers the gift of deepening friendship with God, the glasshouse as a return to Eden-like communion with God in friendship. This fragile house is marvellous place.

I AM – our Sacred Door to freedom. Jesus. John 10:10.

“Come in and go out and find pasture” is a Hebrew idiom for freedom. Freedom from fear. Freedom from anxiety. Freedom from the worry that you don’t really belong or that if you leave and come back your place will be gone. Come in and go out — it’s freedom from your need to optimize yourself. If you enter the Door, you’re free to be.⁹

⁴ *Psychology and Carmelite Spirituality for Today. God enters through our wounds :St Teresa and the Shadow.* <https://makeheaven.com/a-psychological-view-julienne-mclean.html>

⁵ Ruffing Janet, *Spiritual Direction Beyond the Beginnings*, ch 2, p[34, Paulist Press, Mahwah, 2000.

⁶ Lingo, Kaira Jewel *Meeting the Global Dark Night with Clarity and Tenderness in Presence*, Vol 30, No 3, Sept 2024, p29

⁷ Cermak, Timmen. M.D. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/nz/blog/healing-from-addiction/202309/aas-step-five-confession-as-the-antidote-for-shame>

⁸ <https://sacredise.substack.com/p/the-gift-of-chaos#footnote-8-150060061> quoting Richard Rohr

⁹ <https://mbird.com/bible/the-narrow-door-of-the-cross/>