

Caol Ait: Thin Places

Celtic Christian Holy places

What are "thin places"? Places where two worlds meet. Since the beginning of recorded history, scholars, peasants, artists, slaves and kings have been fascinated and drawn to places where the veil between this world and the "other world" is thin. Legends have been created and tales passed down through generations that describe adventures and encounters when the two worlds met and time stood still.

The Western European landscape is dappled with such places. Hidden in fields, forests, mountain villages and remote islands are thin places with a more subtle glow, like tiny pearls resting safely in the bosom of their mother country ... waiting to be discovered again and again.

They are—for they still exist—places such as rocky islands like those to the north and north-east of the England, Ireland, or Scotland, and/or peaceful valleys— and that's one of the reasons why monasteries were built in such places—or leafy meadows, or where streams converged.

The ancient Celts believed in "thin places." These "thin places" were believed to be places (or times) where 'the veil between heaven and earth was especially thin, and where heaven could be experienced in part, and where peace and tranquility could be felt.

But, "thin places" can occur in time, temporarily, anywhere, and can be located not just in rocky, craggy places, forests, stone circles or lonely places, but also right within the city, anywhere for that matter. Do you know of a "thin place," a place where you feel particularly close to God, close to nature, at peace and where you can almost *feel* that this is the place where the extraordinary can happen? A place pregnant with possibility?

Of course what one person defines and experiences as a "thin place" may not be so for anyone else, but that's where one's individual spirituality comes into play. In essence, "thin places" may be hard-to-understand-events, mind-blowing and indescribable (like an awesome sunset); and they may be transient, in that they cannot be reproduced exactly in the same way; and they affect us totally, leaving us with a sense that we know something extraordinary and sacred has happened.

Finding "thin places" may require spiritual discipline, and in one sense you will know when a "thin place" opens up even without looking for it.

So, think about your "thin places." They can be found in the most surprising places, if only we take the time to find them, appreciate them and become *awake, aware, mindful!* Start looking for your "thin places." And let us know when you find one.