

Reflection and Intercessions for the Transgender Day of Remembrance: 20 November 2019

Susan Gilchrist

SuL1023a

Matthew 28:19-20 (English Standard Version).

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age”.

If you are transgender you will be aware of the increasing difficulties you have faced. United Kingdom Home Office statistics have shown an 81% increase in hate crimes against transgender people rising from 1,073 in the financial year 2016-2017 to 1,944 for the year 2017-2018. There is a further 37% increase in the year 2018-2019 and this is rising faster than any other protected group. You will also be aware of the attacks on your gender identity by certain religious groups who decide that this is a God-Given feature, which must always align with biological sex, and who argue that any departure from that, regardless of purpose, is disordered behaviour and it is automatically a depraved act. You will also be aware of the views of certain radical feminist groups who from the opposite viewpoint argue that gender identity is entirely socially determined, and the reason why transgender people depart from social expectations is to exert power and domination over women. It is decreed that their failure to succeed in the male role means they try to do it in the female role instead. Others argue from chromosomes at birth and deny all other effects. Each side listens only to its own arguments and neither side is prepared to believe that they might not be correct.

If you are transgender you are likely to be very angry that your real experiences are never listened to. For transsexuals, (as a generalisation), this understanding is instead one of a lifetime being forced to live in a gender role which one cannot identify with, with all of the anguish distress, rejection and high suicide rates that are involved. The statistics speak for themselves. A 2017 report undertaken by Cambridge University on behalf of Stonewall into the experiences of over 3,700 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) pupils in Britain's schools shows that more than four in five transgender young people have self-harmed. More than two in five transgender young people have attempted to commit suicide. There is also great trauma which expresses itself in other ways. These figures are replicated in many other worldwide studies which almost universally report that around 40% of transgender people have attempted to take their own lives. Consistently it is shown that reasons for suicide relate to the guilt; the bullying; the rejection by families and communities; the made up allegations of sexual abuse; the violence; the persecution and the scapegoating of this minority group. These are the features that create the anguish, depression and the self-loathing which lead transgender people into such suffering and distress.

With these statistics surely the real experiences of transgender people should be listened to. Not those of religious organisation or feminist groups who are trying to impose their own doctrines and theologies on people who are often in such distress. Perhaps that means listening to the great majority of the professional medical institutions who on a worldwide basis regard both gender and sexually variant identities and behaviour as naturally expected variations of the human condition, which are intrinsic to the personality created, that arise very early in development and cannot be changed either by the individual concerned or by the predations of others in subsequent life. Furthermore it identifies these as identity driven features instead of characteristics driven by reward. It is the need to be true to yourself, and not the search for a sex. This means that the same full

range of moral expression must be found among transgender people who live lives in ways that are true to their own identities, as is found with other people in any walk of life.

That is far too often not the case. A major feature of gender complementarity comes from the way it separates the male from the female roles. In many societies gender discrimination is rife. It is built into the institutions of some of today's societies. It was also extreme in many parts of the first century world. Any form of gender and sexually variant behaviour which departs from the normal expectations of that society, for any purpose, challenges this distinction..... and the teaching of the Christian Church has traditionally declared that all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour are without exception disordered and depraved acts. It also recognises that this doctrine has developed from Church traditions and not from Jesus himself. But Jesus did not bring peace to the established institutions and the social order of his own society: instead he brought a sword. These transformations in Christian doctrine have brought the Church to collude with the secular demands of society rather than to challenge them. Not only has this collusion reinforced the secular prejudices of such discriminatory societies; it gave and it still gives religious legitimacy to them. One only has to look at the attitudes taken in many parts of the world to see the extremities this creates.

It is therefore important to note that discrimination against gender and sexually variant people is a socially led phenomenon and it would be a mistake to identify its cause entirely with religious belief. There is no doubt that there was a great deal of sexual abuse in first century society, where the blatant abuses of power gave permission for extreme abuses of sex, however to condemn all gender and sexually variant behaviour for the abuses of some, is akin to saying today that all members of a minority community are terrorists, because some engage in terrorist acts. Today we remember those transgender people who have been murdered simply because they have tried to live lives in ways that are true to their own identities. Others have taken their own lives. In the United States at the present time, senior members of certain mainstream churches have been colluding with conservative Christian approaches to condemn without exception all forms of gender and sexually variant behaviour as inappropriate acts. Taking note of the real experiences of transgender people is more than ever needed now. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus said *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"*.

As we listen to the names of those transgender people who have been murdered or committed suicide during the last year due to the increasing bullying, rejection by families and communities, made up allegations of sexual abuse, violence, persecution and the scapegoating which is being faced by this minority group, let us pray that we may all together find that true vision of a Christian Gospel that embraces everyone who lives in accordance with their true identities, in lives which fulfil the love of Christ. The fear that this is a condition which can be caught is not correct.

Today we remember:

List of names is read.

For lists of names of those who have been unlawfully killed see: <https://tdor.info/> also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_unlawfully_killed_transgender_people

Even if just one transgender person is murdered or commits suicide because of their identity is one too many. Now we remember all those other people whose names are not on this list.

Silence

Yet listening is not enough. Each of us, and all of us, must act and pray to create a better world.

(Intercessions follow)

Intercessions

Let us pray

The response to “Lord in Your Healing and Wholeness” is “Hear our Prayer”

Lord in your Healing and Wholeness

Hear our Prayer

For the World

Let us pray for a world of fulfilment, compassion, love and inclusion where all people regardless of race and culture, ability and disability, gender and gender identity, sex and sexual orientation can find their true places in society in the love of Christ. Let us pray for a world of inclusion full of love where those people whose experiences and encounters differ from others in society can be celebrated for the richness they bring instead of being rejected through the guilt, the bullying, the rejection by families and communities, the unfounded allegations of sexual abuse, the violence, the persecution and the scapegoating which are created simply because transgender people do not conform to what other people expect. *Lord in your Healing and Wholeness*

Hear our Prayer

For Openness and Understanding

Lord let us pray for openness and understanding where the true voices of transgender people can be fully heard: not those of religious institutions or radical movements who seek to impose their own theologies and diagnoses on transgender people because of fear and the political, religious or social environments they seek to create. We pray that people can break free from the misunderstandings and discriminations that are created through the propagation of these views, and that the true motives of transgender people are understood. *Lord in your Healing and Wholeness*

Hear our Prayer

For Religious Institutions

Let us pray for all religious institutions, churches, mosques, temples and others that they create a world of acceptance where gender and sexually variant people who express their true identities in ways that conform to the highest moral standards of their own societies are highly regarded. We pray that they are fully welcomed as members of their religious institutions, including the Christian Church. *Lord in your Healing and Wholeness*

Hear our Prayer

For Justice and Peace

Jesus said “Love God and Love your Neighbour as Yourself”. When that love departs, the gates are open to all forms of abuse. We pray for all people, including transgender people who are caught up in the web of abuse. We pray for those who for their own reasons choose to take this path. We pray for those for whom persecution and rejection by society gives them no choice. Let us pray that through our witness, our actions and our love, all people may be brought out of these webs and

prisons of abuse, and that they may find their true fulfilment in the Love of Christ. *Lord in your Healing and Wholeness*

Hear our Prayer

For Remembrance

We remember all transgender people, not just those who have been murdered or committed suicide in the previous years but all those currently alive. We pray for all those who have suffered years of persecution and abuse. Grant them the peace that comes from the knowledge that you are with them always and that they can find rest in the true Love of Christ. *Lord in your Healing and Wholeness*

Hear our Prayer

For Families and the Transgender Journey

Transgender people and their families cross a gender divide which breaches the boundaries of gender divided societies. Grant transgender people and their families the love, courage and understanding to together undertake these journeys. Help them to face the challenges that are made. Give them the understanding to know that love and relationships need never be lost in the journeys that are undertaken. *Lord in your Healing and Wholeness*

Hear our Prayer

For ourselves

In a time of silence we now bring our own concerns

(Silence is kept)

Lastly we pray for ourselves so that each of us can deal with the challenges we face. We pray that you will give us the strength and courage to seek to ensure that all people, including transgender people can be fully accepted in ways that are true to their own identities, without exception in churches, religious organisations, in society, in political and in social institutions, and in the true Love of Christ.

We also pray that you will grant us your peace and joy in the fulfilment of life.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Susan Gilchrist

17 October 2019

This document and liturgies for previous years are available on:

<http://www.tgdr.co.uk/liturgies/tdor/index.htm>

For further articles see: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/articles/bibliography.htm>

For some statistics on transgender discrimination see:

https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/trans_stats.pdf