

Reflection for the Sibyls Christmas Service 14 December 2021

On the 20th of November we marked the Transgender Day of Remembrance when we commemorated all transgender people who have been murdered or died because of who they are. 2021 is the deadliest year since records began. Discrimination arises in part because of a dispute about the nature of the conditions. One group, mainly the Professional Medical Institutions consider transgender identities to be natural personality variations within the normal range of development. Opposing groups consider them to be personality disruptions. The lived experiences and management methods are almost opposite to each other. Great harm can occur when incorrect diagnoses are made. Now it is Christmas time again: the holiday season. It is supposed to be a time of merriment and joining together of family, but for many it just winds up as a time of despair, dread, hangovers, fights, tears, and sadness. In such conflicts, how can we, and how can you, find ways to understand? Yet, as Jesus welcomed everyone, we need to acknowledge all the voices that are heard.

For there are other voices those of affirmation, welcome, and love. There are those for whom fear of rejection has been replaced by kindness, warmth, and truth. We are not alone. Many people do find discovering who we really are to be a liberating experience... What an amazing, diverse world we are creating for ourselves. The last few years have been pioneering years that have encouraged people to exercise their rights to really be whoever they want to be, without facing prejudice. The LGBT community are paving the way and bringing awareness through the media. We have positive role models who are reaching out and helping those who need first-hand support. There has been a new wave of retailers catering for gender neutral and variant individuals along with a large increase in unisex facilities. Celebrities have claimed to be raising their children gender neutral.

Yet not all is sweetness and light. Getting along and feeling accepted by family is one of the hardest things to do for many of us, which is ironic since family is supposed to be the one group of people where we should feel accepted and loved. The only way we can start to heal relationships is by addressing the hard stuff. If we stick with avoidance, then that is what we get back. Just like people who advocate for LGBTQ rights, we must advocate for love in our family and others. If we stay silent or allow them to walk all over us, we'll never be able to move forward. There are lessons to be learnt, constant debates, different viewpoints, and opinions. That means expressing our love to others, even when total rejection occurs. What really matters is that everybody has the right to be who they are without living in fear. Embrace who you are and don't let anyone make you feel inadequate, even when rejection seems overwhelming, for bringing love can find it, and life really is too short.

Above all we should celebrate who we are in this Gospel of Christian Love. Yes... we face sometimes horrendous rejection, slurs, and attacks, but these are from groups who keep telling us what they think we ought to be in their attempts to enforce their own gender-critical or religious agendas upon us, instead of the truth which we ourselves know, which others who know us can see, and that which each of us expects. We have all the ammunition and professional medical judgements we need to discredit these other theories, but we will not succeed in countering them if we just return their toxicity with our own toxic attacks. Words do not work in that context, nor will governments listen. Jesus said: *"by their fruits you should know them"* We are right to celebrate our identities and be confident in ourselves. When we do so through our own expressions of being truly who we are, and in our loving welcoming and outreaching communities then other people will discover the same truth of who we are. At this time of Christmas, a time of goodwill to all men, women, and non-binary people we should rejoice and celebrate the richness we can bring and the promises that are made in the coming of Christ.