

Reflections and Intercessions or Meditation for the 2017 Transgender Day of Remembrance¹

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This resource contains a Reflection, a Commentary, Intercessions and a Meditation for the Transgender Day of Remembrance: November 20th 2017. These four documents are also available separately. A liturgy for a Transgender Day of Remembrance service is also available

Service: Gilchrist, Susan. (2017): "*Reflection and Intercessions or Meditation the 2017 Transgender Day of Remembrance*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuH1108m-ReflectionsAndMeditationTransgenderDayOfRemembrance.pdf>

Liturgy: Gilchrist, Susan. (2016): "*Liturgy for a Transgender Day of Remembrance*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuH1108g-TransgenderDayOfRemembranceLiturgy.pdf>

Reflection: Gilchrist, Susan. (2017): "*Let us be Our Selves*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuH1108a-Reflection-LetUsbeOurSelves.pdf>

Commentary: Gilchrist, Susan. (2017): "*Hearing without Listening: The Eunuch and the Christian Church*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/013B-HearingWithoutListening.pdf>

Meditation: Gilchrist, Susan. (2017): "*Meditation: On the Prayer of St Francis*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuH1108d-MeditationTransgenderDayofRemembrance.pdf>

Intercessions: Gilchrist, Susan. (2017): "*Intercessions for a Transgender Day of Remembrance*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuH1108e-IntercessionsForATransgenderDayOfRemembrance.pdf>

Gilchrist, Susan. (2017): "*Resources for the Transgender Day of Remembrance: November 20th 2017*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuH1108k-ResourcesForTransgenderDayOfRemembrance.pdf>

Reflection: Let us be Our Selves

In the United Kingdom, between 2016 and 2017 reports of transphobic hate crime have risen by 180 percent. There were only 19 prosecutions for transphobic hate crimes during this period, despite this huge rise to 582 incidents. Two transgender people have committed suicide while in custody in United Kingdom prisons. One transgender person is leaving for New Zealand because this is considered a safer place to live. Concern about the widespread nature of persecution and discrimination of transgender people has already been raised in the United Kingdom Parliament. These are just some of the incidents that have been reported: Joanna Jamel, senior lecturer in criminology at London's Kingston University, told the Independent: "*There's a dark figure of unreported and unrecorded crimes and we'll never know what that true figure is*". The nature of this secular scapegoating and persecution is not helped by those doctrines of the Christian Church which decree that sexuality and gender identity are God-given attributes and that

¹ Available online at: Gilchrist, Susan. (2017): "*Reflection and Intercessions or Meditation the 2017 Transgender Day of Remembrance*": <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuH1108m-ReflectionsAndMeditationTransgenderDayOfRemembrance.pdf>

any departure, for any purpose, from their divinely created male and female stereotypes is always a falling from grace, which pursues inappropriate sexual desires and is a grievous sin. In various States of the United States the legitimacy of the identities of all transgender people is being denied by the passing of legislation which demands that all transgender people use facilities according to the gender identity assigned to them at birth, regardless of the gender identity they possess, and any physical transformations they have made. Not only is this being supported by groups of protestant evangelical Christians, it is also being supported by senior Prelates in the Roman Catholic Church. President Trump is trying to reinstate the ban on transgender people serving in the military. With the support of various Christian and Church groups, and under his watch, other legal protections are being rescinded. Providing appropriate care for transgender children is also being rejected for the same reasons.

The ideas behind the Christian doctrine that transgender and sexual identities are the result of lifestyle choices which are promoted by the pursuit of inappropriate desires are rejected by a worldwide consensus of modern science. In the Western world, the great majority of professional medical and psychological institutions currently 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. That is supported by the lived experience of transgender people. The reasons behind their overriding compulsions to seek gender reassignment are usually not to become a man or a woman, instead it is to be able to be true to their own selves in their everyday lives. Some may willingly engage in sex work, others can be forced into it because their economic circumstances give them no alternative. Because it fulfils a search for identity and not behaviour, as wide a range of moral attitudes, loyalties and commitments are found amongst the transgender community as in the population at large. Some of the people beside you may be transgender, yet you could never tell from the away they live their lives. After transition many merge invisibly into society in their new roles, but that still does not stop them from being rejected, discriminated against or condemned by society for being who they are, or from being made victims of harassment and guilt by the traditional doctrines of Christian Church. For transsexuals the suicide rate is 8 to 10 times higher than that of the general population. A recent report, which studied 3700 people, shows that more than four in five transgender young people have self-harmed and more than two in five transgender young people have attempted to take their own lives. There is a fundamental contradiction between science and theology, but up to now major religious traditions have put an absolute embargo on even considering the possibility of change to the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church.

Each year on the Transgender Day of Remembrance we commemorate all transgender people who have been murdered by others for being who they are, or who have taken their own lives because of the persecution they have endured. If this remembering is to be genuine we must also accept and recognise our own contributions to their harassment, and that must include a reassessment of the traditional doctrines of the Christian Church. A commentary, where these doctrines are examined has been prepared. This commentary is available at: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/013B-HearingWithoutListening.pdf>. A meditation, which is based on the Prayer of St Francis, and suggested Intercessions are also provided. In the role of Jesus as the suffering servant the true message of the Gospel is revealed. As we reflect on these and as we hear the list of names of those who transgender people who have been murdered or who have taken their own lives because of the harassment of others, as Jesus died on the cross for us, he also died for these people too.

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Meditation or Intercession: On the Prayer of St Francis

It is suggested that one person reads the prayer and another reads the meditation

*Lord make us
instruments of
your peace*

On this day of remembrance for all transgender people who have died, help us build peace and understanding between all of us, so all may rejoice and be enfolded in your love.

*Where there is
hatred let us sow
love*

Help us to calm the fear and hate that drives us to condemn and scapegoat all transgender people, for simply trying to be who they are

*Where there is
injury, pardon*

Forgive us for all the hurt and injury we have caused, for the presumptions we have made, and the guilt we have created

*Where there is
doubt, faith*

For all transgender people who are harassed and discriminated against by the Christian Church and society help us bring to them the assurance of faith that enfolds everybody, who tries to live their lives in ways that are true to their own identities and in the fullness of God's love

*Where there is
despair, hope*

Forgive us for the guilt, the self-disgust, the self-blaming and the loss of hope we have caused, for the harm that has been done by our medical misdiagnoses, and for pursuing a doctrine which condemns every form of transgender expression as a depraved act in pursuit of inappropriate sex.

*Where there is
darkness, light*

Help us lord to move Christian Churches from their self-imposed darkness by refusing to consider even the possibility of change to their traditional doctrines on gender and sexual variation into one which helps them to find the Light of Christ

*And where there
is sadness, joy*

Lord God we are all wonderfully made in Your image: help all of us, heterosexual, transgender, transsexual, lesbian, gay, intersex and bisexual, to find and build on the richness that exists in every person, so that with true veneration, sharing and understanding for each other, our lives may be lived in the Joy of Christ

*O divine master
grant that we may
not so much seek
to be consoled as
to console*

Each year on the Transgender Day of Remembrance we commemorate all transgender people who have been murdered for being who they are, or who have taken their own lives because of the persecution they have endured. We remember in particular the following people, who also stand for the many others who are unknown or un-named: (list of names: see endnoteⁱ). Grant your peace and consolation to all those who have been harmed by these actions, give courage, comfort and support to the friends, relatives, partners and companions who have been left behind.

So that their deaths have not been in vain, give us also the resolve to transform our lives in ways that that help us to help others who continue to face the same difficulties in their everyday lives.

*To be understood
as to understand*

To listen in humility to the voices of all transgender and gender and sexually variant people, to hear and to respect their concerns and to act in sympathy and esteem for what they say.

To be loved as to love St Paul said, “*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of us are one in Christ Jesus*”. As Jesus loved us, so we must love each other: This is the Gospel message we are asked to share with transgender and all other people in our lives.

For it is in giving that we receive In his role as the suffering servant the true message of the Gospel is revealed. It was Jesus who made the supreme sacrifice for us. Grant us that we too may give of ourselves without restraint in our lives.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned Calm our angers. Give us Lord the ability to forgive ourselves and each other: And not to harbour the hurt of past injustice. There is much more to Christianity than just these issues of gender and sex. Let us build a world together which can truly fulfil the Love of God in Jesus Christ.

And it's in dying that we are born to eternal life The early Christian Church set out to be a beacon of light, shining out to the discriminatory society around it. That beacon should shine most strongly in places where discriminatory societies exist. Whatever the social cost to the organisation may be, surely the mission of every Church today must be to rekindle that beacon of light. We pray that this new light of the Gospel Message will be lit to shine equally in all parts of the world and for all people, including transgender and transsexual people, who seek to live their lives in ways that are true to their own identities, in the Love of Christ

Amen © Susan Gilchrist 2017

ⁱ For a list of names of people who have died, go to: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/documents/SuH1108w-TransgenderDeaths2017.pdf>
 See also the Transgender Day of Remembrance Website <https://www.glaad.org/tdor>