

Reflection for the Transgender Day of Remembrance. 20 November 2022

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Each year, on the 20th. November, which is the international Transgender Day of Remembrance we remember those transgender people who have been murdered or committed suicide because of who they are. Current lists show that there are more than 400 of these, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. There are no complete lists. In 2021/2022 in England and Wales alone 4355 hate crimes against transgender people were reported to the police. This is an increase of 56% from the previous year. Surveys show that over 88% of transgender people in the United Kingdom do not report serious incidents to the police and 44% were unhappy with the action taken by the police. In the present circumstances in the United Kingdom these figures are only likely to increase.

Today, transgender people are mostly well accepted in the United Kingdom, but it only takes a minority to create the persecution and discrimination that occurs. That is not the case in many other parts of the world where transgender people, along with other gender and sexually variant people can face severe imprisonment for expressing their identities and in some cases even death. Any government action which aims to reduce the present protections for transgender people by allowing discrimination to be based on identity, instead of abuse, must be a matter for concern. All the professional institutions recognise transgender conditions are about the search for identity where no threats to others, or disruptions to society are involved. All the major Churches and religious organisations emphasise their pastoral care for transgender people, and totally condemn the violence that occurs. Yet because of ignorance and fears generated by others, violence against transgender people continues to increase.

Any group which disturbs the normal expectations of society can create fear and uncertainty. Today the need for acceptance and understanding is even greater. What transgender people are seeking is often misunderstood. Instead of adopting approaches which increase ignorance and fears we must listen to their voice. That same listening occurs in the Gospel Message. It was Jesus who took his message to the outcasts in society. It was Jesus who condemned the institutions and authorities who discriminated against anyone who disrupted the "good order" of society on the grounds of who they are, and not what they do.

Today, we remember all those transgender people who have been murdered by others or have taken their own lives in the last year because of the persecution and abuse heaped upon them, solely because of who they are. Let us take these tragedies as a warning of the harm that ignorance and prejudice can create. Let it remind us that when any dispute occurs all sides of the argument must be considered, not just the preferred one which supports the prejudice and abuse. Let this inspire us to work for society in which all people, not just transgender, people but heterosexual, lesbian, gay and bisexual who seek to fulfil the gospel message in ways that are true to their own identities, are not just fully welcomed without prejudice in society, but also find full and complete inclusion in the Christian Church.

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