

Prayers

From the both of Me

Jan Goddard

PART 1

To accept and be reconciled with an aspect of one's personality that is contrary to the established mores of Western society is difficult enough.

Accepting and reconciling that same aspect within mainstream Christian teaching and tradition is often an additional hurdle that some often find difficult to surmount.

“What is this strange compulsion,” writes Jan, “that drives me to assume the clothing and identity of a woman?”

The prayers in this part were written around 1976 and reflect Jan's attempts at the time to reconcile the very difficult and sensitive problem of gender dysphoria with personal faith, concern for family and friends, and relationships with other people.

A BARRIER, LORD.

I've struggled to know You
for
a long time, Lord.

I accepted You
long years ago
with my head
but,
somehow.....
because of
a kind of barrier.....
never with my heart.

Could that barrier, Lord,
be
the part of me
that
I've kept exclusively
to myself?

To be absolutely honest,
my choice must be
all.....
or nothing.
And so
I'm moving the barrier, Lord,
slowly.....
hesitantly.....
moving the barrier.

FACING FACTS

I've known what I am
for
a long time, Lord.
It's frightened me at times,
and
I've also felt
very lonely.

I can't tell other people, Lord.
They wouldn't understand
and
I've kept You
at a safe distance too.

It can't go on for ever
like this,
bottled up inside me.

If.....
if I can admit to myself
what I am
and
come to terms with it,
can You accept
the both of me, Lord,
for starters...?

SOCIALLY UNACCEPTABLE

There are many times
when
I wish my problem
would
go away.

Because its manifestation
is not
socially acceptable,
folk are always ready
to think
the wrong thing,
for prejudice
knows many subtle forms.

Then
its not only me
that gets hurt, Lord,
but
those that I love.
That
makes the hurt
even harder
to bear.

QUESTIONS NOT FAVOURS

Lord,
is it asking too much
that
the both of me
might be
acceptable in Your sight?

Can I cross
the
bounds of gender,
and still live
to
Your Glory?

I'm asking questions,
Lord,
not favours.

ACCEPTING FACTS

I am what I am, Lord.

There's the both of me,
and sometimes
it's no joke!

I don't seem to be able
to do anything about it, least of all
cure it.

Accept me
as I am now, Lord,
and,
maybe in the fullness
of time,
and
with Your help,
I can become
what You want me to be....

MY DARKEST SECRET

What is this
strange compulsion, Lord,
that
drives me to assume
the clothing
and
identity of a woman?

It is my darkest secret
and
I fear discovery.

I can't understand myself –
so how can anyone else
begin to understand?
Does anyone
want
to understand?

Can I ever
understand myself?
Come to terms
with myself?
Or
even with You, Lord?

IT'S LONELY BEING DIFFERENT

It's lonely
being different, Lord.

It was a surprise
to discover
that
there were others
like myself.

I mean,
I thought that only I
was different
in this way.

Do they feel lonely,
or guilty,
or despairing, Lord?

Is there
anyone out there....
who understands,
or cares?

CHRIST ONLY KNOWS

Why I'm like I am
Christ only knows!

If
I take that sentence, Lord,
as a declaration of faith
rather than
a cry of despair,
then –
what new possibilities
open up,
for I know, Lord,
that somewhere,
within the scheme of things,
You have a work
for the both of me
to do.

RESPONSIBILITIES

I'm understanding myself
a little better, Lord,
and
I'm becoming aware
of my responsibilities.
I've got an identity problem,
a gender confusion.
A trapped femme self
as well as maleness

In learning to cope with it, Lord,
I must remember
that
it's not fair
to burden
family or friends
with my duality.
This duality is a fact
they are free to accept –
or reject.

As I seek full expression
of the both of me,
may I be mindful
of my responsibilities,
and
not burden them
with
my confusion.

HELP ME, LORD

I'm nervous, Lord,
and
that yellow streak
is getting wider
by the minute.

You see, Lord,
I want to tell her about me,
about the both of me,
but....
I don't how to start.

I keep putting it off -
hoping
for a better moment
that never comes.
I've kept my secret for so long
because
I love her,
and
I don't want to cause hurt
or distress.

Help me, Lord.
The time has come
for the truth,
not excuses.

AM I PREPARED ?

So,
all of a sudden, Lord,
I've decided
to tell all!
I mean
I've decided what to say
and
I shall try and pick
the right moment
to say it.

I am prepared.

But am I really prepared, Lord?
After all,
I can't control another's
reactions.
Am I prepared for disgust
or rejection?

Am I so sure that
our relationship
possesses
the love and resilience
for
such a disclosure?

I must think about that one,
Lord.

SHE'LL BE HURT, LORD

In the moment
that
I tell her, Lord,
she'll be hurt.
Why her partner, Lord,
and not someone else's?
And after the hurt
there will be
the terrible loneliness.

Will she be able to love me
after she's found out?
Can she accept it, Lord?

I'm so sorry
that
I should be the one
to bring her world
crashing
about her shoulders.

I need her to know, Lord.
I need her love
and understanding.

Can You help her, Lord?

WE TALKED

I finally got round
to doing it.

We talked, Lord,
into the early hours.
Truthfully, unemotionally.
We talked about this problem
because
it affects both our lives, Lord,
and
there's no escaping that.

I didn't expect understanding,
and I didn't want pity,
but
as we talked,
our love reached
a kind of crossroads.

You must have guided our steps,
Lord,
because we are walking
together....
in love
and
understanding.

SINCE WE TALKED

Since I told her, Lord,
and since
we have talked together
about my problem,
there are so many ways
in which
she has expressed
her love,
her compassion,
and her understanding
for me.

Forgive me, Lord,
for ever doubting
her love.
Thank-you Lord,
for
a wonderful partner
with whom
to share my life.

FOR PATIENCE

It's alright for me, Lord,
I mean,
I'm the one
who
wants to be accepted
by others.
But
how would I feel
if I was in their shoes?
Could I accept this problem
so easily....
or unquestioningly?

Forgive me when I become
impatient, Lord.

New relationships with
this "other me"
can only be built slowly
and lovingly,
if others are to accept me
as I wish
to be accepted.

Help me then
to be patient,
Lord.

THANKS FOR THE MEMORY

I want to thank You, Lord,
for the memory of friends
who
have accepted me
as I am.
Some who share the same
burden,
and some who
whilst not carrying
this burden,
are able to understand it.
Wonderful people, who probably
aren't aware of
the gift beyond price
that they have,
and which
it has been my privilege
to receive.

Thanks Lord.
Thanks for the memory!

NO BOUNDS

Lord,
how little
have I really known You,
much less
have I known, or understood
myself.

Your Love,
knowing no barriers
or bounds
has patiently waited
to work its miracle
within
this heart.

Take the both of me
and use
as a channel of Your Love
to others
who may need
Your help.

A WOBBLY PLANK

Lord,
between wanting
to be accepted
and
being accepted
is a deep chasm –
spanned
by a wobbly plank.

Help me
not to pull too hard
at
helping hands reaching out
to me
and
to realise
that
crossing that wobbly bridge
needs
two firm footholds
and
mutual support.

A GRAIN OF WHEAT

Lord, there are times
when
I would like to shout
from the roof-tops
what I am,
and what I represent.
But
people are always ready
to
misconstrue such behaviour,
hurting my family
and
my loved ones.

Rather
may I, by quiet example,
help people to understand,
spreading the word
gradually
until, Lord,
like a grain of wheat
in a field
a whole crop will sprout.

HE'S ENDED IT, LORD

He cross-dressed, Lord,
but got found out.
And those newspapers, Lord,
that
dispense advice
in their agony columns,
crucified him
with their reporting.

His family,
his friends,
his employer
found out ,
and,
in turn,
crucified him again.

He knew despair
and
had nowhere to turn.
And so
he ended it.

Now,
with You Lord,
he can be himself,
for Eternity.....

BEFORE I TAKE OFF MY DRESS

I want to pause, Lord,
before I take off my dress,
to remember those
who
still suffer the silent agonies
of shame
and solitude,
the fear of discovery
and ridicule,
the un-acceptance of their family.

I commend them
to You, Lord,
especially those
who
because of their problem
in desperation feel that life
is no longer worth living
and
seek to end it.

Accept this prayer, Lord,
in the honesty
with which it is offered,
and
out of Your great love
meet their need.

BECAUSE OF WHAT I AM

It's strange, Lord,
but
I never thought that
I should finish up
being thankful
for
what I am.

I am thankful Lord,
because
I realise that
rather than not being able
to serve You because
of what I am,
because of what I am,
I can serve You
in
a unique way!

AMEN.

PART TWO

“The journey of a soul” is how Jan once described the collection of prayers gathered together in Part One.

Now, Jan continues to prayerfully explore gender dysphoria, faith and religious experience, and relationships. Some twenty or more years have passed, the problems haven't. Set against Jan's own experiences – befriending on a gender help-line, dealing with the emotional turmoil and crises of gender dysphoria, the spiritual joy found in being able at long last to worship openly 'en femme' – the collection of prayers that follow continues the journey of a soul.

“You never said that it was going to be easy” writes Jan, adding “embrace me in the protecting arms of Your Love and we'll tackle this ride together!”

AND NOW ?

It's been some years, Lord,
since
I first poured out my thoughts.

Those first, tentative steps
concerning You,
my gender identity,
my relationships,
my concerns.

Yes Lord,
then
I thought I had it sussed,
satisfactory,
no more probs.

And now?

The truth is
I need You, Lord,
the both of me
need You,
as much now
as then.....
maybe
even more now
than then.
Be with me Lord.
Please.

THE TRUTH IS.....

So,
what have I been trying
to prove?
That I can sort out my life
very nicely,
thank you?

The truth is, Lord,
I can do
no such thing.

Forgive me
for
the blindness of arrogance,
the selfishness
of 'self-sufficiency'.

The truth is, Lord,
I need You
and
I need those
who,
in spite of everything,
continue to love me
and
care about me.

STILL HANGING IN THERE

I'm still
hanging in there, Lord,
on this great, crazy
roller-coaster
of Life.

It gets a bit
white knuckle at times
but then –
You never said
it was going
to
be easy.

Embrace me
in the protecting arms
of
Your Love,
and we'll tackle
this ride
together!

TORN APART

Lord,
this gender thing
is
causing me some grief.
And
there are times
when
I don't know for
how much longer
I can stand being torn apart
by it.

Dear Lord,
one hope I have
and
to one hope I cling.
In You,
and only in You,
can I find myself,
can the both of me
become whole.

WHEN SOBBING RACKS MY BODY

When
sobbing racks my body
and
the anguish of my gender
overwhelms me,
I feel alone,
so utterly alone.

My heart cries out
“My God,
my God....”

And
when the tears
have long been spent,
in the silence
comes
the still, small voice of calm.
“My Peace I give to you....
you are not alone.
Remember
that I am with you always,
and
there is nothing
that can ever separate you
from
My Love.”

THAT DEEP, DESPAIRING PIT

We're talking serious depression
here, Lord.

You know....
that deep, despairing pit.
That abyss of helplessness.
Of abandonment.
That deep-down gnawing
ache.....
Endless.
Interminable.
That complete and utter
loneliness
and blackness.....

But You know
what it's like
don't You, Lord?

Oh maybe not the depression.
But
You do know what it's like
to feel hopeless,
helpless,
lonely,
and abandoned....

When You
were
in that Garden.....
on that hill.

SO DEATH'S AN OPTION ?

In that one dark,
despairing moment, Lord,
when claimed
by the depression
that banishes
all rational thought,
I ran through
my options.

Death was one of them.

In bitter life....
death looked sweet.

Lord,
bear me through those times
of
distorted self-indulgence,
and
give to me
Your peace and forgiveness
in fuller measure
than
I ever dare to hope for,
or deserve.

REMIND ME

How sudden, Lord,
is the descent
into despair.
How treacherous the sides.

How deep this time?
And for how long?

Remind me again, Lord,
that
however sudden,
however treacherous,
however deep
and for however long....
You
will be with me.
To love.
To comfort.
To sustain.

YOU CAN BECOME WHOLE

Lord,
I'm vulnerable.
I rush headlong
and headstrong
like a fool
on the path to their own
destruction,
wanting to cry
for all the world
to hear
"Look,
For Goodness sake!
This
is the real 'me'....
I'm a woman, not a man!"

I'm torn
between the 'me'
that the world expects
and
the 'me' that I feel
myself to be.

And You, Lord,
You say to me....
"Peace.
Be still.
In you I see just 'you'....
I can make you whole."

I'M SORRY

I just want to say
"I'm sorry", Lord,
to those
who have been hurt
or felt excluded
when
my despair over my gender
has overwhelmed me,
and
I've acted without
regard
or rationality.
Those who
could only watch
helplessly....
Afraid to speak to me
for fear
of the outcome.

Saying "sorry"
doesn't heal the hurt
does it Lord?
But I am,
and
I need them to go on caring
even though I know
I don't deserve it.

FOR MOMENTS OF CALM

Lord,
when moments of calm
prevail,
I realise how pre-occupied,
I have become
with
this gender thing.

Forgive me
for my insensitivity,
my selfishness,
my disregard
when,
in my preoccupation,
I hurt so many,
and jeopardise
so much.

Lord,
when moments
of calm
prevail....
let me hear
Your voice.

YOU KNOW

You know,
don't You, Lord?
You know
that
to be this "other me"
is
to be at peace
with
myself....
whole,
complete,
uncomplicated,
and calm.

Help me then,
dear Lord,
through the times
when
because I "cannot be" –
my world
goes
awful pear-shaped!

WHY AM I LIKE I AM ?

Again I scream it, Lord.....
“Why am I like I am?”

In my moments
of
loneliness and need,
I cry out.....
again
and again.

Remind me, Lord,
that
it is my declaration
of faith.

It must be.
It has to be,
for
without it
my life has
no meaning,
no purpose,
no hope of fulfilment.

WHAT A JOKE !

Me?
Help others
when
I can get so screwed up
myself?

That’s just got
to be the sickest joke yet
hasn’t it, Lord?

But is it.....?

You’re there,
aren’t You Lord?
You’re there,
to help me?

Lord,
You, and You alone
can take
frail vessels
to use
for Your Glory.

Lord, in You
this frail vessel rests
and for Your Glory
waits
to be used.

A HELP-LINE CALLER

The phone rings
but
the line is silent.

Out there, Lord,
is a burdened soul.
Someone
with problems of gender,
a confused sense
of identity.

Will they have the courage
to speak this time?
To make
the first tentative move?
To pour out their heart?
Or
will they remain silent,
not wanting to speak
for either fear
or shame?

Take their silence, Lord,
and in it begin
Your
healing work.

TRIVIAL PURSUIT

Lord,
that call seemed trivial
and
I resented it.
I mean,
does it actually matter to the
caller
what I’m wearing?

But,
perhaps it does matter to them,
for them
to be able to identify
with me.
For communication to start.

Yes, Lord.
The dialogue has to start
somewhere,
and sometimes
the “somewhere”
is just like that.

MAKE ME A CHANNEL

The voice
on the Help-line, Lord,
belonged to someone
who
was desperately unhappy
and easily hurt.
Confused by gender
and
sexuality.

And mine is the other voice.
Befriending.
Caring.
Listening.

In those moments, Lord,
speak through me.
Make me
a channel
of
Your Peace.

WHAT HAD HE DONE ?

Lord,
he was stressed,
tense
and agitated.
Cross-dressing
seemed like the only way
he knew
to ease the tension.

But....
after the cross-dressing
came
the awful revulsion.
What had he done –
and why?

Sure....
it had eased his stress,
his tension,
his agitation,
but
he was consumed
with guilt.

Now,
he can't get his head
around that one.

Help him, Lord, Help him.

BECAUSE OF WHAT I AM

It's strange, Lord,
but
I never thought that
I'd be thankful
for what I am....

I remember saying that
for the first time.

There are times now, though,
when
I'm not so sure.
Times when self-doubt,
conflict and despair
threaten
to engulf me.
Moments of emotional frailty.

And then, Lord,
in those special moments
when
You enable me,
because of what I am,
to serve You
in a unique way,
then Lord,
yes,
I am thankful!

FOR WHAT ?

Do I really think
that
it would be any easier
living full time
in
this other gender role?
That my problems
would
miraculously disappear?

Have I thought it through?
Have I counted the cost?

Yes, Lord,
the cost.

To forfeit so much,
for what?

For what....?

GRANT ME WISDOM

Lord,
remind me once more
of that prayer.
You know....
the one about
courage –
to change what can be changed,
grace –
to accept what cannot be
changed,
and wisdom –
to know the difference.

Yes Lord,
it sounds so simple
but in the turmoil
of a gender crisis
my perception of
what can,
and cannot,
is not always clear.

In such times of crisis
when so much can be at stake -
grant to me Lord,
the courage.....
the grace.....
and, most importantly,
the wisdom.

IF.....

If....
our love for each other
had died,
if....
our relationship had turned sour,
if....
we had grown apart or had
irreconcilable differences,
then, Lord,
it would be
so easy
to walk away....
to do my own thing -
hang the consequences.

But
it hasn't,
and I couldn't.

It's that continuing love, Lord,
that
gives order to my life,
that
prevents me from
succumbing
to the folly
of
my imagination.

I THANK YOU

Lord,
I thank You
that
the love of my life
is,
after all these years,
still part of my life.
That
her love, and support,
and companionship,
has remained faithful
and constant.

Dear Lord,
guard me
against seeking to advance,
out of self interest,
any of the frontiers
concerning
the expression of
this "other me"
that
would harm our relationship
or
destroy that love.

Thank you Lord
for the wonderful companion
with whom I share my life.

NOT AN ESCAPE

Lord....
may the expression
of
the woman in me
be
the fulfilment
of
my person-hood,
the sum total
of my being
and not
an escape
from
the realities
of the man
that
I was born
to
be.

I DARED

I dared, Lord.
This
“other me”
dared
to worship You
in Church
today....
not out of bravado,
or
to shock,
but
out of a very real
and deep need
to feel whole
and
to worship You
wholly.
To know
that Your love
encompasses me
completely.

THAT I MAY BECOME WHOLE

I rise
from
Your table, Lord,
refreshed
and renewed.
Thankful
for the opportunity
for
this “other me”
to share
Your holy meal.
That
through the symbols
of
Your body....
broken,
Your blood....
spilt,
the both of me
might become whole
and experience
Your saving Grace,
Your redeeming power.

IT'S LIKE....

It's a fantastic
description, Lord.

“The Peace that
passes all understanding”.

It's like....

It's as if....

So, why am I trying to do
the impossible?

What hope have I got
of describing it?
Except that....

Well,
it's the most
fantastic feeling
that
I've ever had,
and I'll tell you what, Lord,
you sure know
when
you've felt it!

It's like....

It's as if....

....and it's there for the asking!

YOU MAKE ALL THINGS NEW

Each morning, Dear Lord,
before the rush
of the day,
the imperatives
of my routine,
I pause....
to share with You
the quietness
of that early hour.
To read Your Word.
To give You praise.
To offer to You in prayer –
this day
and
all that it might bring.

So....
as each day
You make all things anew,
fill me with Your Spirit,
and renew me
by
Your Grace.

SURPRISE

At the start
of this day, Lord,
I asked
for
Your help.

Why then,
as I look back,
am I so Surprised
to have
received it?

Now,
at the end
of this day, Lord,
I'm remembering
to give You
thanks.

How's about that
for
a surprise!

CREATE IN ME...

“Your beauty should reside
not
in outward ornament –
the braiding of the hair,
or jewellery,
or dress –
but in the inmost centre
of
your being,
with its imperishable ornament,
a gentle
quiet spirit.

(1 peter 3, vs. 3&4)

Lord,
as I struggle
with
the perplexities of my gender,
it is good
that
I should meditate
upon those words.

Now.....
create in me
a new heart, dear Lord,
and
renew a right spirit
within me.
AMEN.

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