

Coming out of violence

Namaste

The experiencing of coming to know that I am a lesbian woman opened me to the world of oppression and violence.

I became aware of how my own beloved church can follow and impose doctrines of exclusivity and oppression on people who happen to have the ability to love and become attracted to persons of their own gender. I also saw how society can deny the right of mutually loving, committed couples to the basic human right of marriage because they happen to fall out of the social category of "man and woman," or because they cannot be "fruitful and multiply." When the Vatican Church condemned the marriage of same gendered couples and ousted a minister who provided pastoral care to gays and lesbians in the United States, I asked myself, how is the Church exemplifying the Christian value of hospitality and inclusiveness? So we are still learning how to accept the "Samaritans" in our community, people who are different from the rest of the population- the gays and lesbians, the mentally ill, the migrant workers from Southeast Asia, the immigrants from Mainland China, the physically handicapped, and the Filipinos.

Coming out to myself and to others suddenly means dropping into a lower social class. I became "a minority," a social category in society that can be discriminated. What does it mean to be discriminated? It means that I could potentially lose my job if I come out at work, especially working in a highly respected profession like in the fields of teaching, counseling, or medicine. It means that I can't get married to another woman whom we share a mutual love and respect. That means I have to pay more taxes because there is no tax deduction for gay couples. It also means that love can also be denied when the person of my affection choose not to be with me because she doesn't want to deal with the social pressure and discrimination of being a lesbian. Discrimination and prejudice also express themselves in myriad of subtle ways. They show their oppressive claws when people make jokes about how "abnormal" or "Strange" gays and lesbians are, all out of their own ignorance of this population (actually, we are all around.) It is there when people ask you on New Year's Day or a wedding banquet, "When are you going to get married?" As if they are asking, "When are you going to be like us? Like the rest of us? Marry someone and create babies." The worst is when you try to deal with such social pressure by hiding, not coming out, trying to look straight, trying to look like the rest of the population, or accept people's assumption that you are straight. The cost of hiding behind the mask is not being



How can the church be like Christ to this group of people?
How can the Church be Jesus who opens his arms and
welcomes to the rich and the poor, the sick and the outcasts,
the loyalist and the betrayer, the tax-collector and the
fisherman, the Jews and the Samaritans, men and women?
How can the Church stop the violence that is penetrating all
around us and within the Church?

Coming out as a lesbian woman opened me to understand and experience the impact of oppression and violence. I became socially "classified" as a minority (Gee! Aren't we all, after all, human beings?) The good news is that I belong to the same group as the outcasts- the Samaritans in our community. It is an honour to be able to have such an experience, for it sows the seeds of compassion and understanding within me. It also calls me closer to the heart of Jesus. I want to follow the footsteps of Christ and commit my life to non-violence. I want to come out of violence. Can the Church come out of violence?

And this I share with you.

A Prayer for Non-Violence

May I be Your instrument of non-violence,
 May my eyes be opened to see the violence in this world and
 the grace of Your presence,
 May my ears be Your ears to listen and understand the cries
 of the oppressed,
 May my tongue refrain from the use of violent language,
 May my hands be Your hands to empower the outcasts,
 May I speak up against the injustices experienced by the
 marginalized,



May my actions bear witness to Your compassion as I work towards non-violence and reconciliation.

May I be Your instrument of non-violence,
May my mind be free from dualistic thinking which is the seed of violence,
May my heart be wise to know how to implement change and accept what I cannot change,
May my spirit be humble and patient,
May I trust in Your presence in the midst of violence, injustices, and absurdity,
May the meditations and prayers of my heart be an incense to You.

May I be Your instrument of non-violence,
May I recognize the oppressor that is within me,
May You heal me from the oppressor inside of me,
May You forgive me for the violence that I have committed,
May I have the grace to forgive the oppressors in my life.

May I be Your instrument of non-violence,
May Your Spirit pray within me when I grow weary and lonely in this struggle for peace and justice,
May my life be a prayer to You as You walk with us on this path of reconciliation and compassion.