

# A Re-Membering Ritual

## *Blessing on a transgender female journey before genital surgery*

### Acknowledgment of Country

*We gather on the traditional lands of the N people: giving thanks for their stewardship of this country;  
acknowledging their elders past, present and emerging;  
and recommitting ourselves to walking in healing pathways of reconciliation with justice*

"In traditional Aboriginal medicine, which is entirely holistic and preventive, 'spirit' is the ultimate wisdom.  
If the spirit is well, the body will be well. So we heal the spirit through the body."

(Anne Warren, Aboriginal elder & medicine woman:  
'Ancient healing', Sunday Telegraph 16/11/08, Body + Soul p.16)

### *just a step on the journey...*

All that you ever need to know about genitals  
is that they are made up of flesh, blood, and millions of tiny, restless nerve endings  
- anything else that you read into them is mere hallucination, a product of your own overactive imagination.

A woman is not someone with a vagina, but they may have one.  
Someone with a vagina is not a woman, but they may be.

(Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*)

If overthrowing some five thousand years of patriarchy seems like a big order,  
just focus on celebrating each self-respect step along the way

(Eve Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues*)

### CALL TO RENEWAL

We meet this day to share in a ritual of re-membering.

***We acknowledge the dis-membering of our hearts, bodies and world by the powers of destruction.***

We pray for re-making and renewal, asking in particular for *N* as she prepares for surgery.

***We do so in the strength of that divine power through whose re-membering we are reborn.***

Dear God, thank you for all that is good,  
for our creation and our humanity,  
for the stewardship you have given us of this planet earth,  
for the gifts of life and one another, for your love which is unbounded and eternal.  
O thou, most holy and beloved,  
our Companion, our Light upon the way,  
our bright guiding star.  
We repent of the wrongs we have done.

*Silence*

We have wounded your love

***O God, heal us.***

We stumble in darkness,

***Light of the world, transfigure us.***

We forget we are your home,

***Spirit of God, dwell in us.***

*(Everyone lights a candle from the central flame)*

Holy Spirit, living God,  
in whom we live and move and have our being,  
all that we are, have been and shall be is known to you,  
to the very secret of our hearts and all that rises to trouble us.  
Living flame, burn into us,  
cleansing wind, blow through us,

fountain of water, well up within us,  
that we may love and praise in deed and in truth.

***Holy Spirit, flow through our being and open our lips,  
that our mouths may proclaim your praise.***

Let us worship the God of love.

(Jim Cotter, slightly adapted)

## **Words of Reflection**

We come to bless *N*, for blessing is part of re-membering, mindfully crossing life's thresholds:

*For 'A threshold is not a simple boundary; it is... a real frontier that cannot be crossed without the heart being passionately engaged and woken up. At this threshold a great complexity of emotions comes alive: confusion, fear, excitement, sadness, hope. This is one of the reasons such vital crossings were always clothed in ritual. It is wise in your own life to be able to recognise and acknowledge the key thresholds; to take your time; to feel all the varieties of presence that accrue there; to listen inward with complete attention until you hear the inner voice calling you forward. The time has come to cross. To acknowledge and cross a new threshold is always a challenge. It demands courage and also a sense of trust in whatever is emerging... To sense and trust this primeval acceptance can open a vast spring of trust within the heart. It can free us into a natural courage that casts out fear... No threshold need be a threat, but rather an invitation and a promise. Whatever comes, the great sacrament of life will remain faithful to us, blessing us always with visible signs of invisible grace.*

(from John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us*)

## **RECOGNITION OF THE PAST**

### **Words of acknowledgement**

As we come to bless *N*, in silence we hold together the memories she, and those close to her, have of her past life. We acknowledge all that has been: the pain and the joy, the shame and the achievements, the hurt and the grace. And we give thanks especially for all that has been good in her intimate pleasures and procreative love. We ask God to help *N* in honouring her past and letting go of all that has been, that she may be re-membered and renewed in love.

### **Reflections**

*in contradiction to the rules against eunuchs in Deuteronomy stand these passages:*

For thus says God: to the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast to my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument better than sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

(Isaiah 56.4-5)

For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

Let anyone accept this who can."

(Matthew 19.12)

*My friend, still seemingly perplexed, asked me "So if it's not about genitals, what is it about trans women's bodies that you find so attractive?" I paused for a second to consider the question. Then I replied that it is almost always their eyes. When I look into them, I see both endless strength and inconsolable sadness. I see someone who has overcome humiliation and abuses that would flatten the average person. I see a woman who was made to feel shame for her desires and yet had the courage to pursue them anyway. I see a woman who was forced against her will into boyhood, who held on to a dream that everybody in her life desperately tried to beat out of her, who refused to listen to the endless stream of people who told her that who she was and what she wanted was impossible.*

(Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*)

## **Washing of hands for the first time**

## ATTENTIVENESS TO THE PRESENT

### Words of acknowledgement

As we come to bless *N*, in silence we hold together the feelings she, and those close to her, now experience. We acknowledge all that they go through: achievement and anxiety, freedom and fear, support and concern. And we give thanks especially for all that they are at this moment. We ask God to help *N* in recognising the holiness of the present, and being mindful at this time, that she may be re-membered and renewed in faith.

### Reflections

*Many of us reject all of the inferior meanings and connotations that others project onto femininity  
- that it is weak, artificial, frivolous, demure, and passive -  
because for us, there has been no act more bold and daring than embracing our own femininity.  
In a world that is awash in antifeminine sentiment, we understand that embracing and empowering  
femininity can potentially be one of the most transformative and revolutionary acts imaginable.  
(Julia Serano, Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity)*

*a passage with Jesus speaking directly about altering one's body:*

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.

It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter God's commonwealth with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell.

(Mark 9.43-47)

*I finally know the difference between pleasing and loving, obeying and respecting.  
It has taken me so many years to be okay with being different, and with being this alive, this intense.  
(Eve Ensler, I am an Emotional Creature)*

### Washing of hands for the second time

## OPENING TO THE FUTURE

### Words of acknowledgement

As *N* prepares to move into a new stage of her life, in silence we hold together the anticipations she and those close to her, have for the future. We acknowledge all that they will journey through: expectations and disillusion, fresh beginnings and endings, enhanced life and change. And we pray especially for all that they will travel through in the next few weeks and months. We ask God to help *N* in opening to her longing, and deepening her trust, that she may be re-membered and revived in hope.

*Once the soul awakens, the search begins and you can never go back. From then on, you are inflamed with a special longing that will never again let you linger in the lowlands of complacency and partial fulfillment.  
The eternal makes you urgent. (John O'Donohue)*

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;  
that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written  
all the days that were formed for me,  
when none of them as yet existed.

(Psalm 139: 14-16)

*My heart is bubbling over with joy;  
with God it is good to be a woman.  
From now on let all peoples proclaim:  
it is a wonderful gift to be.  
The one in whom power truly rests has lifted us up to praise;  
God's goodness shall fall like a shower on the trusting of every age.  
The disregarded have been raised up:  
The pompous and powerful shall fall.  
God has feasted the empty-bellied,  
and the rich have discovered their void.  
God has made good the Word  
given at the dawn of time.  
(Phoebe Willetts version, Luke 1.46-55)*

### **Washing of hands for the third time**

#### **BLESSING**

I anoint you *N*,  
in the Name of the Creator, the Life-Giver,  
in the Name of the Word & Wisdom of God, the Pain-Bearer,  
and in the Name of the Holy Spirit, the Love-Maker

*May your body be blessed.  
May you realise that your body is a faithful  
and beautiful friend of your soul.  
And may you be peaceful and joyful  
and recognise that your senses are sacred thresholds.  
May you realize that holiness is  
mindful, gazing, feeling, hearing, and touching.  
May your senses gather you and bring you home.  
May your senses always enable you to  
celebrate the universe and the mystery  
and possibilities in your presence here.  
May the Eros of the Earth bless you.  
(Blessings for the Senses, by John O'Donohue)*

*(the eucharist or other prayers may follow...)*

#### **CONCLUDING BLESSING & SENDING OUT**

*- to help re-member our world as well as our own bodies and souls*

*"No-one pours new wine into used wineskins, because the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will pour out and the skins will be ruined. Instead, new wine must be poured into fresh wineskins." (Lk. 5: 37-38)*

May the wine of the Divine Feminine be created in you, as it was in Christa,  
as it was in Mary of Magdala.  
Her beloved died. Her desire for them, and her newly healed self, descended to ferment.  
May the wine of the Divine Feminine flow through you, as it flowed through Christa,  
as it flowed through Mary of Magdala.  
She knew them still, in her own separateness, and from her depths new wine rose.  
May the wine of the Divine Feminine send you forth, as it sent Christa,  
as it helped send Mary of Magdala.  
They touched for a moment, companion lovers, and she is free to tell: 'Love is risen.'  
(Mary Robins (slightly adapted))

***Let us go in Peace, Amen.***