

“Jesus Queen of Heaven” not only shows that trans people are human but that they CREATE humanity.

“We confused people, and I loved that in us most of all.” Jesus, Queen of Nazareth

When I came across an advert for a play depicting Jesus as a transwoman I was thrilled, mostly because anything remotely controversial being shown within Northern Ireland delights me ridiculous amounts. It’s so vital to challenge the conservatism here after all. And what better way than to depict Jesus as a wonderful woman?

But this play isn’t about controversiality, nor is it offensive or shocking – it is beautiful. It is warm and funny and so very, very human.

Jo Clifford, the amazing transwoman who wrote and starred in the play, is full of nothing but love and acceptance and a deeply entrenched will to resist the shame and guilt projected onto the trans community of the modern era.

The play consists of Jesus talking to us, the audience, imploring us to listen to her, to her scripture as it was intended to be portrayed. She describes how the 12 disciples were so far removed from the 12 men with beards we often see decorating religious places; she tells us that, alongside John who baptised the eunuch, was Mary Martha and Salome. And alongside these men and women were women who were men and men who were women and some who were both all at once.

Jesus Queen of Nazareth asks us not to beware the homosexual, nor the transgendered, nor the queer but the self-righteous and the hypocrite, those who, on the outside seem so sleek and smooth, and on the inside are a mass of filth and corruption!

And I couldn't help but think about the Catholic Evangelists protesting outside with their poster "Family, Tradition and Property" and their banner "Stop Blaspheming, Enough is Enough." Because for them, enough is never enough; they will always be standing judging others as though they were qualified to do so. Jesus could stand before these people asking for those without sin to throw the first stone and they'd rain boulders on any poor person seeking forgiveness for their sins. For these protestors religion isn't the love Jesus Queen of Nazareth preaches but the hatred and judgement they're so keen to pour upon others. Beware those whose "lips are full of goodness but their hearts full of hatred" the Queen of Nazareth warns, "beware those who imagine themselves virtuous and pass judgement, those who condemn others and think themselves good". It seems as though, those who protested the play were those who may have benefitted from it the most.

On the way into the venue, I felt uncomfortable and angry and so very bitter when walking past these protestors. I felt the full force of everything that is wrong with religion. I felt judged by people I felt were unfit to tie their own shoelaces. And yet on leaving the play, having broken bread with other people watching Jo, and having listened to the moving comments from those who resonated with the play, I felt a softening. Religion will never appeal to me, but it hurt less to look upon. Because Jesus Queen of Nazareth took us back to basics, back to what matters.

I am a 21 year old, atheist female living in, oh-so conservative, Northern Ireland. But I would follow Jesus Queen of Nazareth. Because, to me, she does not represent religion, she is human, she is humanity.