

2.1 A Fulfilled Life. God Dreamed Me LGBTQI+

Victoria, Spain

My name is Victoria, and I am a bisexual trans woman, a practising Catholic and a mother of three children. I have testified and written about my transsexuality and various trans issues¹ and I have even dared to write about religion and transsexuality.² But the truth is, I have never written about my bisexuality, as it is somewhat overshadowed by my trans identity, although that does not make me any less bi.

And the trans issue, being a matter of identity, is always inseparably linked to my person. However, bisexuality, being a matter of attraction, was something more easily ignored. For, if we are only attracted to men and we are gay, we cannot ignore it, because, try as we might, there is no woman we are attracted to. But if we are bisexual and are attracted to both men and women, we can choose to ignore some crushes, leave them as platonic or very heartfelt friendships, but never go beyond that. This way we focus on the attractions that are socially acceptable and avoid complications. And at the end of the day we all want to avoid as many problems as possible.

1 Victoria: la Buena Noticia del evangelio para una madre trans con tres hijos <<https://crismhom.org/victoria-la-buena-noticia-del-evangelio-para-una-madre-trans-con-tres-hijos/>>. *Derecho a ser*, edited by Juan Ramón Barbancho, Algorfa: 96–105. *A diversidad como riqueza*, edited by Victoria Rodríguez, Encrucillada 234: 64–73.

2 Todos somos uno en Cristo, mujeres, hombres y eunucos de todo tipo y condición <https://www.religiondigital.org/teologia_para_una_iglesia_en_salida/Cristo-mujeres-hombres-condicion-imagenespages_o_2655034490.html>

Nobody becomes LGBTQI+ to attract attention, or to live life in a different way, or to look for complications because they are single and bored, although there are still people who accuse us of this. On the contrary, what we seek is to try to live our life in the simplest way possible, with the least problems, but obviously looking to be happy and authentic with ourselves, because otherwise happiness is impossible. And if we only like women and we are lesbians, either we resign ourselves to live single and alone or we dare to live our reality. But if we like women and we are bi, we can afford to ignore those crushes that are not socially acceptable, that can get us into trouble—those feelings which will most likely not be reciprocated by the other person, being straight. And in the end, we often don't go for it; we leave it as a special friendship, something platonic and there it stays, just a nice and different kind of crush, because to make it reality would only bring problems.

And that's what mostly happened to me. I already had enough problems with my own trans identity, which I kept completely secret. Trying to go out with some guy I found interesting (who was probably straight) was something I didn't even consider, because that would only serve to expose my trans secret as well. So although my orientation was bi and as a teenager I had a few crushes with girls and boys, the truth is that I focused only on girls. It's also true that I had more crushes on girls than boys, because bisexuality doesn't mean that we are attracted to all men and women, in the same way that straight people are not attracted to all people of the opposite gender. I felt that the way to avoid any problems was to stay in the closet as a straight guy. In addition, I also had a very strong maternal instinct; I wanted to have children and I knew that even if some crush with some guy worked out, the issue of children would be impossible. That's why I preferred to focus on women. It should be remembered that at that time, there was still no equal marriage in Spain, and it was certainly not possible for gay couples to adopt. And for this reason, even when I had the chance to have a relationship aged 18 with a friend of mine whom I suspected was gay (and in fact was), I chose not to take the step.

I dated a few girls and even married a woman and had my three children with her. In this way, I tried to minimize the problems of having

both a diverse sexuality and identity. I decided to focus only on relationships that were more socially acceptable in terms of my external identity as a man, which also allowed me have children, something that was very important to me. And the truth is that once I fell in love and had a steady partner, the fact that I hadn't fully explored my bisexuality was something that didn't keep me awake at night. It's like a straight man worrying that he hasn't slept with enough women. Once we find the right person, all other potential partners, regardless of gender, become irrelevant, at least to me. I had already found the right person, or so I told myself, and the possible "what ifs" were not important. Besides, with her, I had managed to satisfy my maternal instinct with three children. I had thus avoided one of the greatest fears of my youth—that having a diverse sexuality and identity would make it very difficult or even impossible for me to find a partner and have children.

So if I had just been a cis bisexual person (male or female), I don't think I would have ever written this text. Because I would have focused only on socially acceptable crushes. I would have married and had children and I would have never left the closet of my false heterosexuality to complicate my life unnecessarily. Because "half bisexuality" is already more than enough to lead a full and happy life. But I was not cis, but trans and although I also tried to ignore that, in the end I found it completely impossible. Inevitably, if you try to be what you are not, if you deny yourself by living the life that society tells you to live, but not the life you feel is your own, you cannot be happy and in the end even your own body rebels. I began to suffer blackouts and fainting, whose cause the doctors could only attribute to stress. And once I came out of the closet, the fainting and blackouts disappeared as if by magic. One thing that is very clear to me, is that closets kill. They kill slowly, taking away your will to live, to accept yourself as you are. And once you lose that interest in life, you may start to suffer from suicidal ideation, depression and even—as in my case—physical deterioration, due to the mental stress of having to endure all of those feelings.

When I finally came out of the closet as a trans woman, I wanted to get rid of that little thorn of bisexuality, since I had never been with men. The truth is that straight men still gave me a lot of qualms and even with

those who encouraged me to go a little further, I only had bad experiences. Some of them ended up offering me money or making references that indicated that they only saw in me a fetish to be fulfilled and not a person, much less a woman. And obviously, it was a total deal breaker when I went to sleep with someone for free and suddenly he would offer me money—amongst other things. In summary, it never went very well with straight men, but I felt far more comfortable and respected with gay men; without a doubt, I was much better treated. But when I was the one who came on to them, they told me that they were no longer attracted to me. And I guess that was actually affirming and showed that they saw me as a woman—but it was also frustrating. So, with men, nothing was happening.

Finally, I met a trans girl like me, and we started a t4t relationship (that's the name given to relationships between two trans people). It has lasted more than six years and we are thinking of getting married soon. And that has added one more letter to my person (as if I only had a few and was looking for more!) since t4t relationships are Queer (Q) relationships, where strictly speaking we can't be considered lesbians, since our story goes way beyond that. When we first met, we were still making our transition and from a legal standpoint we were two gay men. After that, we were a straight couple for a few months, since our legal status did not change simultaneously. Currently, we have been "lesbians" from a legal point of view for several years now, but in reality ours is a Queer relationship and not a lesbian one for many reasons.

As a conclusion to this first part, and before moving on to talk about my spirituality and its relationship with my sexuality, I would like to say that I believe many bisexual people in general experience "impostor syndrome." This syndrome consists of feeling that they are not bisexual enough, to the point that they may not even define themselves as such—even though they truly are. It happened to me. To avoid problems, I focused only on one gender, and in the end I didn't feel that I was "bisexual enough," even though I was. I am completely convinced that there are many "officially straight" people who are actually bisexual. But to avoid trouble, they did what I did: they didn't explore that part of their sexuality and left it as platonic feelings, "special friendships," and so on.

The fact that they had those “forbidden crushes”—even if they pushed them aside—is proof that they are really bisexual, not straight.

I want to tell you: it's okay. Don't feel guilty. I, and many other bi people, did the same thing, and it's okay. You are not more or less bi for having more or less experience—just as you are not less straight for being a virgin, for example. What matters is the kind of people we are attracted to, not whether we act on it. A 14-year-old boy is straight if he is attracted to girls, even if he is a virgin. In the same way, a person is bisexual if they are attracted to more than one gender, even if they have experience with only one—or none.

I would also like to clarify the difference between bisexuality and pansexuality, which are often confused. Bisexuality is the attraction to more than one gender. I am bisexual because I am attracted to both men and women—I find them beautiful, attractive, and desirable, each in their own way. In pansexuality, however, the important thing is not so much the gender but the person. Someone who is pansexual is attracted to another regardless of their gender, simply because of the way they are or act. My partner, for example, is pansexual and is attracted to me regardless of my gender—simply because I am me, whether I identify as a man, woman, or non-binary person. So, although the end result can look similar—and that's why the two are often confused—it is actually quite a different orientation. For a pansexual person, the focus is on the person as they are, beyond genders and labels. For a bisexual person, we are attracted to both male and female bodies, and of course also to non-binary people—why not? Personally, I would prefer to be pansexual, like my partner, because it seems to me a more rational and logical orientation. But some things are not chosen; they are simply felt. And I happen to be bisexual—not pansexual, and not straight.

And now, dear reader, comes the most important part of my story—the part I find most meaningful to share, and the one I believe can help the most those who read this chapter. It is the story of my faith: of how God was helping me and accompanying me at every step, even when I didn't see it that way, and even when I was angry with Him for having made me diverse, different from the rest—in short,

LGBTQI+. I often wished I could have been “just one more,” like everyone else. Man or woman, it didn’t matter to me—just “normal.”

So I spent much of my adolescence and youth angry with God, thinking that somehow He had “punished” me for being LGBT, as if to balance out other gifts He had given me. I believed it was a burden I had to carry simply because of how I was born, like someone born with a handicap. And although I told myself I accepted who I was—a person with a diverse sexuality and identity—in truth I would have preferred not to be. Deep down, I wasn’t really accepting of myself, nor was I happy or proud of who I was. And yet, even in those dark years when my faith was weak and I felt distant from God, He never failed to protect me through it. I had many suicidal thoughts, but I never carried them out—because deep in my soul I knew that was no way out. I told myself: if God had made me this way, He must have some plan for me, even if I didn’t understand it (or even want it) at the time. If I had not been a believer—if I had thought that after death there was nothing, as many non-believing LGBTQI+ people understandably think—I would not be writing these lines today. I would have ended my life long ago.

I’m sorry to stray a little from the bi topic, because I don’t think many bi people suffer suicidal thoughts, but it is something quite common among trans people, who endure much more pressure and criticism from society. I always felt sorry for people without faith, because faith is a gift—some of us have it and others don’t—and it is not due to our efforts at all. And as usual, I found myself complaining to God for not giving faith to all LGBTQI+ people, especially to trans people. Because faith would help them so much, just as it helped me, and many lives would surely be saved. But who can understand God’s will?

Over time, however, as I talked with many trans people my age, I realized that most of them were believers, at least to some extent. Maybe it was partly because of the circles I moved in, obviously, but I can’t help thinking it was also because to survive being trans, you need some faith—something that gives you strength and encouragement when everything else goes against you. Without that, sometimes you simply cease to exist, and that is a tragedy.

So I can say with certainty that even in my darkest times, faith kept me alive. And once those times finally ended, it was through faith that I began to blossom. I didn't understand God's plans for me, but little by little they took shape. As I said, I met a woman, fell in love, got married, and had children—real blessings from the Lord, who was slowly putting His plan into motion. But it was not His will that I live in the closet forever, even though in my cowardice I sought that path for myself. Eventually, a deep crisis in my marriage, combined with the fainting spells I was experiencing more and more often, forced me to a crossroads.

I had to decide what to do with my life—whether to continue as I had been, or to change and dare to face my fears, outing myself in public as a person with a diverse sexuality and identity. And to make that decision, I turned to God. Strange as it may seem when I look back now, I prayed and asked Him what He wanted me to do—whether to keep carrying my transsexuality as a hidden cross, or to come out of the closet and live authentically as I was, with all the consequences, good and bad. After praying, I opened the Bible at random, hoping somehow to receive an answer from God, like in some movie. I don't know where the idea came from; I had never done it before, and I've never done it again.

The truth is, opening the Bible at random can lead anywhere—often to passages with little or nothing to do with your question. In reality, it is usually better to rely on the discernment of the heart, the nudging or insights we feel in prayer, or the conclusions we reach when sharing life within our communities. But at that time, I knew nothing of that, and the Bible was the only resource I had. And somehow, the Lord smiled on me, because He granted me a miracle. Despite being far from Him, despite using such a clumsy method, despite feeling undeserving in a thousand ways, He had mercy on me. Out of all the countless pages, my Bible opened to the parable of the talents.

For those who don't know it, the parable of the talents tells of a master who gives ten denarii to one servant, five to another, and only one to the last. When he returns, he asks what they have done with them. The one with ten produces ten more, the one with five produces five more. But the one with only one, out of fear of losing it, buries it in the ground. This angers the master, who describes him as one who “reaps where he

did not sow and gathers where he did not scatter.” He takes away the one talent and punishes that servant, sending him “to the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Reading that passage, I suddenly understood where all my problems had been coming from. Being diverse—being bi and trans—was a talent God had given me. And in my fear and foolishness, I had buried it instead of using it. That was the source of all my struggles. I felt God speaking to me clearly: “Unearth your talents. Show yourself as you are. Put them to use.” That was what He wanted from me, and that was what I did from that day on. That’s what I’m doing right now, for example, in telling this story. So I can say with joy that it was God who brought me out of the closet—or, less dramatically, that it was my faith that did it. Because the truth is, I didn’t see myself as capable. I was overwhelmed by the fear of losing my job as a high school teacher, of complaints from parents, of rejection from my family, especially my children, of losing everything—simply for daring to live as I really was.

My faith protected me in my darkest moments but also gave me the strength to come out. Once I read that parable and felt God calling me to unearth my talents—my sexual and gender diversity that I had tried so hard to hide—I also understood that He was with me in this, and that He would protect me from all harm. And indeed, although some minor bad things took place, they were nothing compared to what I had feared would happen. On the whole, I felt very protected and deeply loved by God throughout my transition and coming out. I was denied communion in my parish, but I soon found a group of LGBTQI+ believers in my city, called *Ichthys*, where I was warmly welcomed and could continue to live out my faith in community with others.

Once I came out, my faith grew and flourished—fuelled not only by my unshakable gratitude for that day of grace when God let me open the Bible to that very passage, but also by the Spirit-filled people I was meeting in LGBTQI+ believing communities and among allies. I began attending mass regularly, praying daily, and thanking God for making me the way I am. The Lord also began to change me, moulding me little by little, softening my heart, drawing me closer, and shaping me into a better version of myself—the one He had always intended me to be.

All this began seven years ago, and in that time I have changed so much, felt so much, grown so much, done so much—all thanks to Him—that I can only sum it up by saying I am madly in love with God. I love Him for all He has given me, for all He has changed in me, for all the wonderful things He dreamed for me, which I foolishly failed to understand or was too afraid to embrace. And yet it was such a beautiful dream...

To the believing LGBTQI+ people reading these lines, I can only repeat what Scripture says 365 times: do not be afraid. Don't be afraid—God is with you. God made you gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, transsexual, whatever you are. He did so because He had a precious dream for each of us, just as He had for me. But we must dare to live that talent, not bury it, as per the parable (Matthew 25:29). We must let our identity shine—because it is a gift from God. If we bury it, we lose it, and even the one who has it will have less. And then we live in “darkness and gnashing of teeth”—which is not hell, but the closet. Believe me, I was there for many years, and I know that place well.

It is impossible to capture in these lines all the precious things I have lived and done in these seven years, but I will attempt to briefly summarise. I was able to change my baptismal certificate to my real name, Victoria, while keeping a record of my previous name—an official recognition of my trans identity within the Church. I have shared my testimony in many places, even internationally, bringing joy and the Good News wherever I could. I met my partner and added another letter to my diversity—the Q—living a relationship like never before. I took part in World Youth Day in Lisbon, where we were warmly received by some and harshly rejected by others. I joined several spiritual retreats, each one filled with grace. I wrote articles on faith and diversity, including one sent to the Synod. I embraced Ignatian spirituality and joined the Christian Life Community (CLC). Through the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC), I have met and supported people from as far as India, the Philippines, Ghana, and El Salvador. I am already preparing to attend the Jubilee in Rome in 2025 and to help organize a GNRC assembly in Spain.

But above all, I treasure the profound sense of peace and fulfilment that comes from knowing I am loved by God, from knowing I am where I need to be, carried by His wonderful plans for me. How could I not be deeply in love with God, after all He has done and continues to do for me? And if I share all this, dear reader, it is not to boast—because the most valuable thing of all is indescribable, my relationship with the Lord. Everything else is simply fruit that appears when one draws close to the good tree. The credit is not mine to take; the only credit I take is letting myself be loved by Him. I tell you all this only so that you may see that when we say God has dreamed and planned a wonderful life for each of us, we are speaking of something completely different—truly, and at another level, because He is divine and limitless. And the only thing He asks of us is not to be afraid, to let Him carry us, to let Him love us, just as I did. Everything else follows. All glory is His, and I know that.

Even so, if you are someone returning to the Church after being away, keep in mind that there are groups calling themselves Christian where very little of Christ remains—groups filled with abuse, machismo and a thirst for power. Their problem is not only lgbtphobia; scratch the surface and you see that the divine left long ago. But Jesus gave us an easy way to recognize them—by how they love (or fail to) and by their fruits. Just as I have spoken of the countless fruits of the spirit I have received, beware of communities where the fruits are bitter and not freely given. Even if they tell you, “Persevere, keep going, don’t leave—good things will come soon,” do not be deceived. The Lord is not there. That is not His dream for you. Grace is a gift, not something earned by suffering bitter fruit. That is the bad tree, the one Jesus asked us to avoid. For evil tries to disguise itself as good, but it cannot, because it does not know how to love. And we are bisexual—we know how to love. Don’t be fooled.

I would like to close with the words of saints—good trees we can safely approach—whose wisdom has been a source of inspiration and consolation to me over the years:

St. Catherine of Siena: “Be who God wants you to be, and you will set the whole world on fire.”³

St. John Berchmans: “Our true value does not consist in what human beings think of us. What we really are consists in what God knows us to be.”⁴

With this chapter, I only hope to return at least a little to the One who has given me so much—to sow where I had not sown, and to reap where I had not scattered. And if, dear reader, I can encourage you to set aside your fears and dare to live your life fully, just as God has dreamed it for you, then trust that the abundance He has given me will also be yours.

This chapter reflects the personal experiences, memories and interpretations of the author. Names and identifying details have been changed or omitted for privacy.

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- 3 Paraphrase of Catherine of Siena, Letter 368, in *The Letters of Catherine of Siena*, trans. Suzanne Noffke, O.P.
 - 4 Paraphrase reflecting the spirituality of St. John Berchmans, S.J., as recorded in early Jesuit testimonies.