

JO CLIFFORD: For the Tea Ceremony

From: "The Gospel According to Jesus, Queen Of Heaven".

I had intended this show to be a fairly simple act of devotion and a simple affirmation of pride.

The show opened in Changing House of the Tron Theatre in Glasgow in November 2009.

When I opened on the Tuesday, there were several hundred protesters in the street outside. That was all over the news on the Wednesday.

By the Thursday, there were several hundred thousand responses to this all over the world wide web.

By the Friday, I had been denounced by the Archbishop of Glasgow, Mario Conti, who affirmed, without reading the play, that "it was hard to imagine a greater affront to the Christian faith".

Which all goes to show, as Sister Jewel reminded us this morning, that things don't always turn out the way we intend....

"There was once a father who had two sons.

And the younger son came to know she was his daughter and didn't know what to do.

In the end, she went to her father saying

"Forgive me, for I can no longer be called your son."

But the father did not forgive her, but called the whole household together and said:

"This can no longer be called my son. This creature has brought disgrace on all of us"

And he cast her out. But the poor man was only doing what he thought he should; and in spite of everything he still loved his child. So he slipped her a bit of money on the side.

And the daughter who had once been a son went off to a far country and then, not being very inclined to be prudent, spent all the money her father had given her on gorgeous dresses and shoes and soon found herself out on the street without a euro to her name.

And all her friends who loved her when she wore Prada and Versace now called her a chav and would have nothing to do with her.

And there she was in a far country where there was no-one to help her, and there was much poverty in this place and she had to take work where she could find it.

So she worked in a hotel kitchen cleaning pots and pans and it was dirty work and the hours were long and the pay was wretched and she often went hungry.

And in the kitchen they threw out much food that in her father's house would have made very good food for the pigs.

But they had to throw it away, for they were not allowed to touch it, and she said to herself:

"In my father's house they treat the animals better than they treat the workers in this place. I will go back to my father than say forgive me, I really can no longer be called your son and if you cannot accept me as your daughter then at least employ me as your cleaning maid."

So she went back to her father's house, hitching rides and hiding in goods wagons and her father saw her coming from a long way off and shouted out for joy and ran out to meet her. And she fell at his feet and said, "Father I can no longer be called your son" but the father would not let her finish. He helped her onto her feet and he embraced her and said to his household "Run her a scented bath and fetch her a gorgeous dress and crack open the champagne and let's have a party! For she that was gone has returned and she that was dead has come back to life and she that was lost has been found".

And when the party was in full swing the elder son came home from the office. And he asked, "What is this?" for their house tended to be a very serious kind of place and when he heard he was furious.

And he said to his father, "I have been such a good son! I have done everything I was supposed to and you haven't so much as bought me a decent suit! But when this pervert comes home it gets everything!"

And the father said, "It's true you've always done your best and tried to be a good son to me but the fact is you're rather dull. And you have never loved me! And you have lost yourself..."

...Whereas this new daughter of mine was dead and is now alive.

She was lost, and is now found. I have found her and she has found herself.

And so of course we must celebrate."

And so they did. Because the queendom is like that.

The queendom is like a grain of mustard seed, tiny tiny tiny

And you can try to hide it if you like

But if you do it will grow inside you big big big

Until it feels like there is no room for anything beside it.

For I tell you that what was hid shall come to light.

For inside us we all have a light, and it's maybe the very thing that we have been taught to be most ashamed of

And when you have a light, do you hide it in a closet?

No! you bring it out into the open where everyone can see it

And be glad it exists to shine in the world. "

POEM FOR THE PERFORMANCE IN THE GARDEN:

This is the Garden.

This is where we are in paradise.

This is the Tree of Life.

This is the beating heart of the world.

This is where are gathered

All the treasures of earth, air and sea.

The ocean has brought her shells

The earth has brought her potatoes

The air has brought her blossoms and her birds.

And we...

We have brought ourselves.

Jo Clifford. For further details, visit www.teatrodomundo.com