



Washington Post, March 18, 2021

Greetings!



Richardson, Jan. Ash Wednesday Cross

*Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, to be like us. Let them be stewards of the fish in the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, the wild animals, and everything that crawls on the ground."*

*"Humankind was created as God's reflection: In the divine image God created them...."*

~ Genesis 1: 26-27 The Inclusive Bible

I was reminded in my devotions ([Loving the "True You"](#) - Fr. Richard Rohr) about this Jewish proverb that I have heard and read before - "Before every person there marches an angel proclaiming, 'Behold, the image of God.'" Just hang on to that for a moment.

**"Behold the image of God."**

In these days where we continue to spend the currency – life is cheap and that some people matter, and others don't -

**"Behold the image of God."**

I spent some important formative years in Atlanta - worked in a homeless shelter, was engaged in Clinical Pastoral Education at Emory University, St. Joseph and Northside Hospitals and had numerous multicultural experiences.

Patti and I used to grocery shop at the Dekalb Farmers Market. The employees had name tags with the languages that they could speak and the flags of their country so customers could find someone to talk with as they were shopping. The DeKalb

Farmers Market was the intersection of Southern hospitality y'all to the multicultural "all y'all"! At the Dekalb Farmers Market you could -

### "Behold the image of God"

Like you, I was shocked at the recent carnage in metro Atlanta against mostly Asian women. This terrible shooting spree is an intersection for us to cross both personally and corporately. Corporately social scientists, theologians, social workers and others have for years been writing about human trafficking and its particular interest in the Asian community. The media has been widely reporting that the perpetrator of the crime has been identified as having a sex addiction. This opens a dark path and an uncomfortable reality of the currency we are culturally spending. Some lives matter and others don't. We are going to need to get in touch with that and learn to see in others –



NY Times March 18, 2021

### "Behold the image of God"



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Personally, the brokenness within needs to be addressed. This is why we need to create life structures to keep ourselves healthy and focused; this is the brilliance of the Wesleyan Revival Movement. Disciplines like Bible study, worship, service for others and witnessing are tenants of self-care as well as the crux of lifestyle. ***They are not add-ons for free time, but rather how time is to be spent!*** This is our DNA! Our world needs us right now. Could you and your church speak up and speak out? Part of the brilliance of Wesley and other spiritual leaders within Methodism is that personal relationship with Jesus is not meant to be a possession, but to be a gift to all in our expression of *Works of Piety* and *Works of Mercy*. The social holiness we proclaim comes from the reservoir from within. We cannot be engaged in the world if we have not been first engaged in our soul. We simply will have nothing to share with the world if the reservoir from within is empty! It is impossible to see the image of God in others if we cannot first see this in ourselves. I am not talking in some narcissistic way, but rather as a healthy understating that you and I are needed in the community, part of the created order that is called GOOD! This is the Wesleyan Way!

### "Behold the image of God"

Years ago when I was pastor at Hilliard UMC, I had the privilege to accompany many of our youth and adults on a trip to Manila, The Philippines. While there, I spoke one day with a sex worker and learned that many children are sold into this business. That was her experience. She was sold by her parents and her life was forever changed. That memory flooded back when the story from Atlanta

began to unfold.

### **“Behold the image of God”**

The season of Lent offers us the opportunity to embrace our brokenness to “Behold the image of God” for ourselves and to see in others.

As you journey to Jerusalem with Jesus could you leave along the roadside:

- Your fear of seeing the Image of God in you?
- Your fear of seeing the Image of God in people different than you?
- Your fear of experiencing the Image of God in emotions you repress?
- Your fear of seeing the Image of God in relationships that need restoration?



Anca Stefanescu. Homo Deus, Imago Dei, 2020

The angel is marching in proclamation in front of all of us, “Behold the Image of God.”

May it be so-

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Ohio River Valley District, United Methodist Church

