

IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

A Homily for LGBTQ Reaffirmation of Faith

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On June 8, 2016, LGBTQ-friendly churches in the Binghamton area gathered for the first time at FCC for their 20th annual People of Blessing service. The service included four brief homilies. Dr. Treiman's homily is reprinted here.

Borrowing from Genesis 1:27 and 31: “So God created humankind in God’s image, in the image of God, they were created, male and female, and all other persons, God created them. God saw everything that had been made, and indeed, it was very good.”

You and I, all of us, were *created* in the image of God. Yet we look at each other, and we cannot help noticing that we are not clones of each other; our physical appearances differ.

And so this *image* of God that we all possess is not the *surface* image, but the *inner* image. Our *souls* are the image of God.

I am of an age to recall when the Hare Krishna movement blossomed for a while in American culture, and like many, I could not help noticing that, on the cover of the Bagavad Gita, Lord Krishna, a god, was depicted with blue skin. As I became increasingly aware of Hindu art, I realized that Lord Krishna is *always* depicted with blue skin. It puzzled me at first, but as the years progressed, I realized the profound wisdom in a religious tradition that had seized hold of the idea that, as creatures of God, we tend to create images of God that reflect *ourselves*. But by making Lord Krishna *blue*, traditional Indian art escaped the intrinsic racism in making God look like this kind of person or that kind of person; by looking like *no* particular kind of person, this art form proclaimed a God that encompasses *every* kind of person.

So here we are gathered, LGBTQ persons of faith and our allies of faith.

Like so many LGBTQ persons growing up in the middle of the last century, I was taught to internalize the hatred directed at us. If we had allies in those days, I certainly didn’t know of any. All I knew was that I was a very lonely boy being called very ugly names.

If I have *nothing* to thank God for, I certainly thank our gracious God that I can stare out at this assembly and see straight people who *celebrate* who we LGBTQ people are — LGBTQ people and non-LGBTQ people who worship a God who is so inclusive as to include *all* of us in the image of God.

But this battle is not over, my friends, colleagues, and allies.

The sad fact is that there are some 1,500 LGBTQ teenage suicides in the course of a year over this country.

And what causes this immense sin?

It is, I suggest to you, the sin of the haters, the haters who make LGBTQ persons internalize that hatred and hate themselves. That is, they are being brainwashed into hating the image of God that is their soul.

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And that, my friends, colleagues, and allies, that is blasphemy.

And I am sorry to admit that we of the movement are hardly less guilty than those who oppose us. I have seen the various groups of L-G-B-T-Q beating on each other with nearly the level of hysteria the homophobes have beaten on us. Especial recipients of abuse, I must observe, have been our trans brothers and sisters and others, who struggle not only with a society that is out of step with the image of God that they hold, but their own *bodies* out of step with the image of God that they hold. And those of us not so suffering are all-too-willing, if not to participate in the abuse, to look the other way when the abuse happens.

We too, my friends, colleagues, and allies, we too are sinners in this regard.

But we are here as people of faith. We are here as people who *want* to love God. But loving God is not a stasis; it is a process.

How do we love God? In many ways of course! But I suggest to you that we must *start* by loving God, by loving ourselves, and by *encouraging* our LGBTQ brothers, sisters, and others to love the image of God that they are as well.

Amen.