

# Imaging God, Imago Dei & *Thursdays in Black*

Presented by Rev Nicqi Ashwood

Programme Executive Just Community of Women and Men

World Council of Churches

As theologians, our task is to help others 'see' God; which, for most of humanity requires that we make God in our image: because encountering God in the abstract creates a being that is not in touch with our own realities and contexts - Ashwood

Greek ontological categories are no longer the most appropriate vehicles to bear the burden of representing God to humanity. They are too restricted to do justice to the VASTNESS and MYSTERIOUSNESS of the being they attempt to describe and define.

– Robert Dunlop 'Imaging God in Christian Thought'

Giving something a name makes it real, as well as something that can be communicated about ... But everything has a shadow (i.e. another less favourable aspect implicit in name) - Susan Rako 'The Power of Naming'

How we image and name God speaks to our own fundamental understanding of God

# Consider the following quotes

God as lover suffers with those who suffer: 'God participates in the pain of the beloved as only a lover can. God as lover takes the suffering into her own being; God feels the pain in his own body in immediate and total way' (p.142) - *Sally McFague, in her book Models of God: Theology for Ecological, Nuclear Age*

The mother can give her child to suck of her milk, but our precious Mother Jesus feed us with himself, and does, most courteously and most tenderly, with the Blessed Sacrament, which is the precious food of true life. (Johnson, p.34)

- *Julian of Norwich (15<sup>th</sup> century) in Showings*

Mollenkott quotes Chrysostom and Clement of Alexandria

- By his loving, the father become a woman's nature. And "The Word (Christ) is everything to his little ones, both father and mother..." (*Clement of Alexandria in Paidagogos; Mollenkott, p.8*)
- Thou art me father, thou my mother, thou my brother, thou art my friend, thou my bondsman, thou my steward; thou art the All and the All is in thee; and thou art , and there is naught else that is, save thee only.' (*Clement of Alexandria in Paidagogos; Mollenkott, p.9*)
- Just as a woman nurtures her offspring with her own blood and milk, so also Christ continuously nurture with His own blood those whom He has begotten. (*John Chrysostom (347-407 AD); Mollenkott, P.9*)

And if you were to name God?

<https://youtu.be/pa3KMKDi3R8>

# What was your first experience of God

Story, it is argued, was a traditional source of theology, which seemed to have been superseded by analytical and deductive forms

Consider the following texts

- Genesis 1:1
- Genesis 16: 7-16; Genesis 32:22-32

How would you introduce/explain God to someone who had never met God before?

- Acts 17:23

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In arguing that humanity is made in God's likeness, it then follows that we are made to bear God's image in the world. Consider now the purpose of Genesis 1; encapsulated in verses 26 – 28.

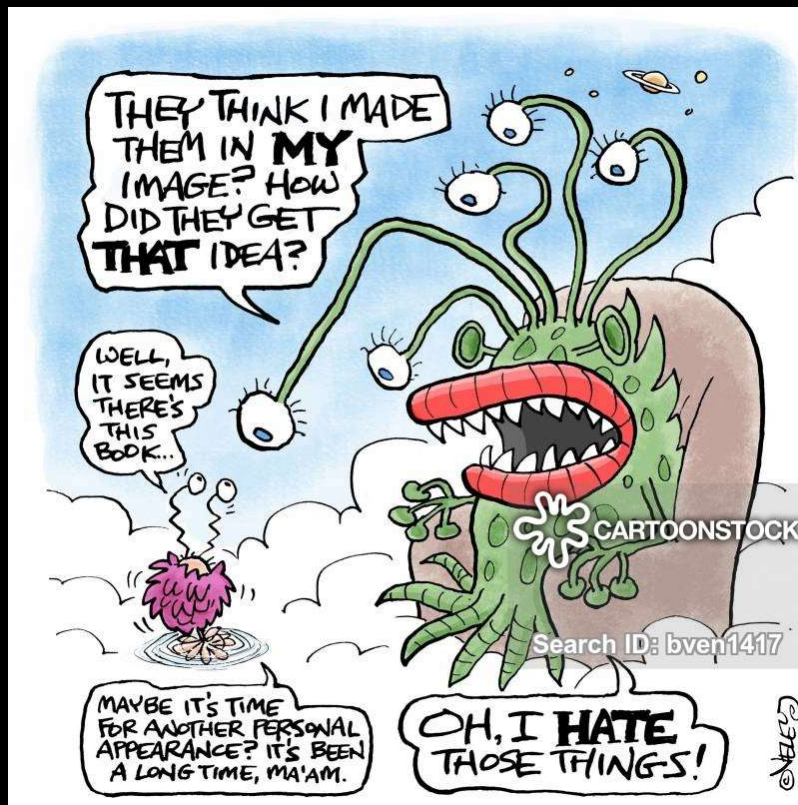
26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind[a] in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." 27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth

If you were to draw a picture of God what would God look like?

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# Consider the following cartoons



The image of God both defines what we are (copiers) and our calling in God's world (to copy). The image constitutes both our constitution and our function, our being and our doing. A copier exists to make copies; that is both what it is and what it does. As image bearers of God, human beings are copying, reflecting, imaging creatures. It tells us both what kind of creatures we are and why we exist in God's world. The analogy of the copier allows us to see both the structural and the functional reality of our being made after the image of God. – Michael D Williams 'First Calling: Imago Dei and the Order of Creation'

God to most Africans is beyond morality, that is, capable of good and evil, and can wreak vengeance on both the guilty humans and spirits –  
Margaret Umeagudosu  
(Quote here please)

How then do we relate to a God who is solely masculine, which then renders man as God?

Interestingly, when God is depicted as feminine outside of the biblical narrative, there are sexual connotations (another quote)

Phyllis Trible speaks of Texts of Terror, stories in the Bible that are oppressive and portray God and faith in harsh, abusive ways.

What are the troubling images of God presented in the Bible, and how are they connected to 'patriarchy'? What feminine images do you have of God, and how does it change your understanding of, and willingness to worship God?

If we see God in each other, how should we treat each other?

Within the World Council of Churches, these are some of the issues with which we wrestle on a regular basis. We have found that many persons who have experienced abuse, usually from males, are challenged by the notion of God as male. In addressing Sexual and Gender Based Violence from a theological perspective, one must be careful that our depiction of God, in both word and action, communicates God's love and grace in positive ways.

## *Thursdays in Black*

- The WCC Thursdays in Black campaign is one way that this can be realized as the campaign seeks to advocate for a world without rape or violence.

Through this campaign, we assert that not only are we ALL created in God's image, but with this in mind, we pledge to affirm the rights, agency and dignity of the other.

Born in wake the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, the campaign is an amalgamation of other grassroots campaigns/protests occurring in Latin America, Europe, Israel-Palestine and Africa. In each of those campaigns, women were demanding change from oppressive structures (often tied to patriarchy) and seeking to offer support and solidarity for women at risk.

## *What we do?*

- Solidarity – wearing Black to affirm the worth and dignity of those who have been victimized (1 in 3 women)
- Resilience – wearing Black to recognize the resilience of those who withstood their oppressors, and continue to fight
- Resistance – wearing Black to insist that we stand against violence in any form, and that we actively advocate for a different way of being; of living life in fullness as true reflections of God's love

## *Methodology*

- Using Bible studies, liturgies, pilgrimages, webinars, ambassadors, game changers, social media posts, training seminars, collaboration for intervention, support, etc.;

# The Campaign - Thursdays in Black

- Pause – in recognition of those who have been victimized by rape and gender based violence
- Pray – for victimized, survivors, perpetrators and those impacted by SGBV
- Post – pictures of yourself in Black on Thursday
- Pledge – to be the difference our world needs at this time
- Participate – in activities or prepare your own Bible Studies, liturgies, workshops etc to end SGBV



Junto con la campaña Out of the Shadows (Fuera de las Sombras), hemos desarrollado varios recursos para ayudar a las personas, iglesias y comunidades a tomar acción contra la violencia y el abuso y para hacer que la preocupación por dichos temas sea más visible y efectiva.

## Jueves de Negro



Jueves de Negro nació del Decenio de Solidaridad de las iglesias con las Mujeres del CMI (1988-1998), en el que las historias de violación como arma de guerra, injusticia de género, abuso, violencia y muchas otras relacionadas se hicieron mucho más visibles. La campaña es simple, pero profunda: Vístase de negro los jueves. Use una insignia para declarar que forma parte del movimiento global de resistencia contra actitudes y prácticas que permiten la violación y la violencia. Muestre su respeto por quienes son resilientes de cara a la injusticia y a la violencia. Invite a otros a unirse a usted.

Puede encontrar más información y recursos en [www.oikoumene.org/thursdays-in-black](http://www.oikoumene.org/thursdays-in-black)

## Compromiso de las Iglesias con la Niñez

Desde el 2017, el CMI ha coordinado el programa del compromiso de las iglesias con la niñez desarrollado con iglesias miembro, UNICEF y otros colaboradores importantes para promover acciones concretas que las iglesias pueden

## Niños, adolescentes y VIH

Los niños y los adolescentes son vulnerables a la infección por VIH y en muchos lugares todavía no hay tratamiento adecuado.

Es esencial preocuparse por la salud infantil, por evitar el abuso y facilitar el