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In the first book of the Bible, in the very first chapter of Genesis, we hear “Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness [So] God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gn 1:26-27). Since the dawn of creation, humankind has been so overwhelmed by the sheer gratuity of this gift; we have been trying to return the favor by making God into our own image and in our own likeness.

The unfortunate consequence of this is that we end up with a distorted image of God. Because God is infinite and we are finite, any attempt to define God, to describe God, to say that God is like this and not like that is problematic. Even our feeble effort to draw analogies between the infinite God and our finite experience is grossly and woefully inadequate. St. Augustine, 1600 years ago, fully aware of just how distorted our view of God can become writes “We are talking about God. What wonder is it that you do not understand? If you do understand, then it is not God.”

Rather than be disconcerted by this reality, it should help us to realize that God cannot be made to fit into our limited concepts of him. Throughout these days of Lent, as we are reading and praying with the Scriptures if we find something challenging or disconcerting, I invite you to: first, realize that we may be trying to fit God into our image and likeness. Second, realize that no matter how hard we try, we are never going to fully understand the infinite and almighty God. And third, be open to the new insights that God is offering us. He continuously encourages us to discover new ways of knowing him, new ways of seeing his love unfold in our midst.