

**A while back, Frank Sanders asked me to reflect upon this letter from the Regional newspaper...**

**He considered Virginia Richards a spokesperson for lots of people who questioned things just like she did,**

**but who were either afraid or unable to voice their own doubts and their concerns...**

**Frank asked me to address these questions, because they were his questions ...**

**I took up his invitation, because they have been my questions too!**

**To pretend that I could possibly address these deep issues in a total and complete way in 5 minutes is silly yet...I would like to offer you a few thoughts**

**so that you could continue your own pondering in your own time and place....**

**which, by the way, would be a very worthwhile thing to do...**

**But I must offer a caveat here:**

**Hundreds of years ago, St. Thomas Aquinas once said:**

**and I paraphrase him now:**

**The minute we think we know who God is...we have just missed God.**

**So, I—we-- had better be careful here!**

**The biggest mistake any one of us could make, any institution could make, is to think that any ONE way of speaking about God is the complete and only way to speak about God. If we find ourselves believing that our image and our name for God is the only one... we have just lost our way....**

**So while all words and images will fall short,**

**we do need to have *some* way to speak about God, however limited it may be...**

**The ancient peoples whose images we have inherited...**

**that image of an older man in the sky sitting on a throne in a city with streets paved of gold was the product of a very, very ancient understanding of the universe.**

**We can't blame them! The ancient peoples literally believed that the world was flat, the heavens were supported by pillars where the god or gods sat on thrones,**

**and the evil ones lived under the earth...**

**They had no idea that they were living on a beautifully round planet who orbited the sun in a Galaxy of stupendous beauty...**

**They had no idea of the enormity of the cosmos...**

**They had not a clue of the molten center of the Earth**

**They knew nothing of bacteria or mental illness...**

**They only could speak of God from their own experience of life....**

**When they stood in the dark of the desert**

**and watched the stars and planets journey across a night sky  
untouched by electricity....**

**When they found themselves powerless over sickness and disease,**

**When they understood that the forces of Nature held over them  
the power of life and death....**

**they formulated beliefs and teachings that gave them a way  
to navigate through it all....**

**But we know the world differently in this 21<sup>st</sup> century...**

**So how are we to navigate through the  
uncertainties and fragilities of life...**

**How are we to speak of God when we have the Hubble Telescope  
and electron microscopes and space stations and nuclear submarines?**

**How do we answer these questions.**

**Who is God...Where is God....and what is God for us...  
from our life experiences??**

**There is an old saying: “God created mankind in God’s image and likeness...  
and then we returned the favor”**

**It seems to me that the most significant role of God in the psyche of the Human person**

**from ancient times to this day has most often been described in one of two ways:  
God has either been a super policeman or Santa Clause.**

**If you are a good person: honest, kind, considerate of others, law abiding,  
God will reward you with a good life now and heaven to follow when you die.**

**But if you are a bad person: dishonest, cruel, selfish, and ignorant of the law,  
God will sometimes punish you in this life...  
but most certainly in the next....**

**For most of human history the image of God as an old man on a throne up  
in heaven has been successful in bolstering this job description...  
And while many people today have rejected the image of an old man on a throne,  
most people on some level still hang on to this job description for God...  
Unfortunately, they have yet to discover a Holy Presence  
that is so much more generous than the richest Santa Clause  
so much more powerful than the toughest cop,  
so much more loving than the perfect parent....**

**The primary message of Jesus was the in breaking  
of the Reign of Heaven on Earth...  
Jesus willingly died because he so deeply believed  
in the unboundaried compassion,  
unlimited mercy  
and unconditional Love  
of Yahweh....**

**He went to the Cross rather than the deny  
the truth of what he believed...**

**The God of Jesus is still one not commonly accepted.**

**The Abba God of Jesus in no way contradicts the ongoing scientific understanding of the cosmos...**

**Do you remember when Jesus said he has come to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free?**

**His life, his teachings his healings were all about that...**

**He tried to teach us that we no longer have to be imprisoned by fear...**

**He tried to show us that letting go of fear will catapult us into lives filled with a deep trusting of the goodness of God...**

**and it is there that we will find the peace the world cannot give....**

**So, if I had the opportunity to speak to Virginia Richards today,**

**I would congratulate her on challenging those ancient teachings and images of God...**

**You go girl!**

**Forget making God into Santa Clause and/or some tough police cop....**

**You go girl for having the courage to voice our doubts and disbeliefs!**

**You go girl for being willing to look for new answers to old questions....**

**And here is what I would tell her today...**

**Who is God, you ask Virginia? I would say that God is a mysterious power or Presence or Energy or Grace. I am not sure of the 'right word' because God**

**cannot be reduced to a singular word... ...**

**But God is that mysterious presence and experience of authentic Love.**

**Where is God, you ask Virginia? I would say that there is no where God is not...**

**God is in all things, all beings, all peoples, whether or not those things or beings or peoples are aware of this Holy Mysterious presence...**

**What is God, you ask Virginia?**

**My answer,  
at this point in my life,  
would be that God is the Power to live with, in, through and for Love...  
and that means to live with the awareness of the beauty, the wonder, the joy, the power, the  
peace, the astonishment, the abundance, the magnificence of life  
even in the midst of the struggles of life...**

**God is that Mystery which empowers all, from within,  
to live lives of compassion and forgiveness,  
lives are marked with joy and gratitude.**

**I believe that God is that Mysterious Presence and Power  
that is not only within us but far, far beyond us...  
It has... he has...she has....  
been present from the beginning and continues beyond the future....**

**I believe that this Mysterious Presence and Power  
is the most magnificent Love, beyond our comprehension,  
that loves us when we are at our worse,  
that empowers us to become more than we think we are...  
and offers us the strength, the wisdom and the courage to be this kind of  
Magnanimous Love in this life for all of life....**

**Do I think these thoughts that I have expressed this day  
are my final answer?  
No way...I believe that as we live and experience Love and Life  
our ideas and thoughts about God must change and will change...  
my only question for this moment is...  
How would you answer Virginia? Amen....**

