

A Time to Pause

I know many people who have stopped listening to or watching the news. Understandably, there are too many things going on that try one's soul—pandemic, wildfires, hurricanes, incidents of police brutality, incidents of attacks on the police, peaceful protests intermingled with violence and destruction, divisive political rhetoric, racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia and the list keeps growing. Many cry out to the Almighty and ask “Why?”

Instead of crying out to God, it may be more fruitful to examine our own behavior. None of us are blameless or removed from causing turmoil in the world. I imagine an exhausted God watching us stray from what God asks us to do. Every religion has some form of commandment that beseeches us to “Love Your Neighbor.”

The first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures mention how we are to treat the stranger no fewer than 36 times. Why is it so difficult for human beings to at a minimum show empathy, respect, acceptance, or even tolerance to others who are different from ourselves? For thousands of years we have been implored to reach past the discomfort and boundaries of self—boundaries of ethnicity, religion, skin color, language, culture, and economics that separate us. As I examine today's world, I am wondering whether our religions are failing us. Knowing that the struggle persists after thousands of years without much letup causes me to experience religious disappointment.

Here is the paradox. The world and all of its religions are filled with secrets and mysteries that we assume only God can know. These mysteries, these unanswerable questions, are the very reasons why human beings seek religion and an unknowable power some call God.

So, despite all else, I continue to pray for peace in our world. Maybe, just maybe, we can make a difference. Perhaps, all we can do is demonstrate understanding and caring to one person at a time and hope that others around us will do the same.

Lux Center Governing Board member, author and editor Jon M. Sweeney expresses related thoughts through the lens of Psalm 22 in this article <https://ifyc.org/article/ps-22-feeling-god-forsaken>

A Call to Prayer Around the World

Religions have used some type of “call to worship” since ancient times. In Christianity, the church bells chime to let worshippers know that it is time to gather for prayer. In predominantly Moslem countries, the *Adhan*—the Islamic call to prayer summoning the faithful to enter the prayer space and turn one’s mind, body and spirit to God—is recited over speakers five times a day from the minaret of each local mosque. In the United States, the *Adhan* is recited inside of the mosque. For Jews, daily and Sabbath communal prayer begins with a prayer known as the *barekhu* which is known as the call to worship.

However, when Jews around the world are in the midst of the Jewish High Holy Days, the holiest days of the Jewish calendar that consist of the holidays of Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), a special call to prayer is used. An instrument made from a ram’s horn has been used to sound alarm, to announce a royal, or to call faithful to worship since ancient times. This instrument is known as a *shofar*.

This past weekend, although most holiday prayer services could not be held in the synagogue due to COVID-19, Jews in one way or another heard the traditional blasts of the shofar. The shofar is mentioned several times in the Hebrew Scriptures that Christians sometimes refer to as the Old Testament. At this time of year, the shofar beckons Jews to spiritually awaken, to examine their own minds and hearts and turn their thoughts and prayers to God. To hear the sound of the *shofar* and learn more, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaqUW3nDrYU>.

These months of the pandemic have also served as a cruel wake-up call. Daily life as we know it has been forcibly paused. If humanity is truly wise, it will be a time to re-examine how we live our lives, how we treat and care for others, and how we can do better.

Jewish Holy Days--Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

This year Rosh Hashanah was celebrated and observed this past weekend (beginning at sundown on September 18-20). While it began the new year of 5781 on the Hebrew calendar, it is also a deeply spiritual time for self-reflection, repentance, forgiveness and remembering God. During the next ten “Days of Awe”, Jews are

required to focus on repentance and atonement in order to amend their behavior and seek forgiveness for wrongs done during the past year.

Yom Kippur is the holiest day in the Jewish year. Adults who are physically able are supposed to fast for the entire day and to abstain from other forms of pleasure. The focus of the holiday is on repentance and atonement before God. It is a time to inspect and confront deeds of wrongdoing, ask forgiveness from those who may have been harmed, and pray to God as one regrets past shortcomings and pledges to not repeat past mistakes. At the end of Yom Kippur, Jews who have atoned consider themselves absolved of their sins from the previous year, thus beginning the new year with a clean slate in God's eyes and a renewed sense of purpose to live a more moral and just life in the year to come. Yom Kippur will be celebrated beginning at sundown on Sunday, September 27th and end at sunset on Monday, September 28th.

The Lux Center wishes its Jewish friends a New Year filled with good health and peace.

Dr. Richard Lux: Teacher, Activist, Hero

Milwaukee, Wisconsin has been a better place to live during the past 47 years that Dr. Richard Lux has been living here. He and his wife Mary moved here to begin his career as a beloved Professor of Scripture Studies at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology (SHSST). Hundreds of seminarians studying for the Catholic priesthood learned not only about the Catholic Scriptures, but also about the Hebrew Scriptures from Dr. Lux. In an artful way, he taught his students to understand the relationship between the Scriptures, to appreciate the Hebrew Scriptures, and most importantly to understand the factual historical context in which they were both written.

Some may not be aware of Dr. Lux's scholarly studies of the Holocaust. His curiosity about this tragic event in recent history and the Catholic Church's relationship with the Jewish people before, during and after WWII stirred within him a call to action. He was immediately supportive of the work of the Second Vatican Council and its important document *Nostra Aetate* that transformed Catholic-Jewish relationships by plainly stating that old teachings blaming the Jews for the death of Jesus, that expressed the view that God's covenant with the Jews was no longer valid, and that encouraged antisemitic attitudes leading to hatred and violence were no longer supported by the Church. In response to the long history of anti-Judaism, Richard became a peaceful warrior—teaching about *Nostra Aetate* and Judaism to his

students, taking students to prayer services at synagogues and on trips to Israel, becoming engaged in Catholic-Jewish dialogues, and working with scholars around the world to research, write and publish, and speak in interreligious settings. For Richard Lux, exposing Christian theology that supported and justified antisemitism and prejudice of any kind became a moral responsibility.

Dr. Lux joined countless committees and organizations in order to further build bridges between the Catholic and the Jewish communities. He has worked tirelessly to plan and participate in programs with the Catholic-Jewish Conference, a joint endeavor of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, and the Wisconsin Council of Rabbis. He has been a member of the board of the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center for decades.

Richard Lux is one of those unusual human beings who exhibit the courage to put one's own personal needs and desires behind the needs of other people. Strongly guided by his Catholic faith and his own conscience, he also developed an understanding and respect for Judaism and the Jewish people with an unwavering commitment to social justice for all of humanity. He is an inspiration and a role model for many.

As of October 1st, Richard and Mary Lux will relocate to the Minneapolis area to be nearer to children and grandchildren. We thank them for all they have done. They will be missed. May God who rules over all bless them with good health, gladness and peace in their new home.

In Memory of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg

The Lux Center mourns the passing of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Whether you agreed with her legal opinions during her 27-year tenure or not, Justice Ginsberg has been honored as a feminist icon, a tireless juror, a champion of truth and a person of integrity. Her moral compass served as her guide and led her to passionately fight against injustice. May the memory of Ruth Bader Ginsberg always be a blessing.

Lux Center Events—A Quick Preview

Jewish Studies Seminar for Christians—November 11, 18, December 2

Catholic-Jewish Book Dialogue—Date to be determined

Jewish Studies Seminar for Christians—TBD February/March

Lux Center Spring Lectures—March 21-22, 2021, Rabbi Burton Visotzky

Sister Rose Thering Award Dinner—Fall, 2021