

Lux Center News



September 13, 2018

A Unique Opportunity to “Discover Pope Francis”

On October 8-11, Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology will be hosting scholars from across the globe. This will be the first time that these leaders and great thinkers will gather together to delve into the vision and ideologies of His Holiness, Pope Francis. The “Discover Pope Francis” Symposium is open to the public and all are welcome. For more information about this amazing opportunity, access this link

<http://www.shsst.edu/pdf/FrancisSymposium2.pdf>

Pope Francis: A Brief Overview of a Great Man

Pope Francis has been embraced by and has kindled a spiritual spark among not only Catholics but also other Christians, those of other faiths, and even non-believers. A particularly captivating figure, Pope Francis has been said to be one of the most remarkable people of this century.

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio in Argentina, Pope Francis was elected to the papacy five years ago on March 13, 2013. He was the first Latin American pope, the first Jesuit pope, the first pope to have been born outside of Europe, and the first pope to take the name Francis after St. Francis of Assisi who was known to be a champion of the poor. He was the son of an accountant whose family emigrated from the Piedmont region of northwestern Italy, and he rose to be the most powerful Argentine in the Catholic Church.

He is known for his rejecting the trappings of papal power (choosing to live in a more modest apartment instead of in the Apostolic Palace) and as a proponent of change. Pope Francis continues to promote efforts to reduce world poverty, and to solve problems of social inequality and the environment. He is a strong proponent of world peace, reconciliation, and respect for human rights

Pope Francis often speaks about his belief that the clergy need to be involved in vigorous engagement with the community. He calls this “the encounter,” “*el encuentro*”, which must reach out to the margins of society where people are hurting. He has said that he is dedicated to returning the Catholic Church to its true doctrine, one that puts the suffering of humankind and the relationship to God back in the center. Perhaps the most astonishing words he has uttered were the simple ones, “Who am I to judge?” in response to a question about gay priests.

This pope's inspiring vision of a more compassionate and just world demonstrates Francis' warm, humble, pastoral spirit. It resonates with people throughout the world in a powerful way.

The Papacy: A History

The history of the papacy is long. The pope has been the head of the Catholic chain of command extending from the Vatican all the way to the local parish for over two thousand years. As a transnational religious leader, the pope is the spiritual head of the Roman Catholic Church with its 400 million adherents. He is unique among religious leaders in that most major religions do not have a hierarchical structure that clearly acknowledges one leader who embodies the tradition like the pope does for Catholicism.

The pope's authority goes back to the man who is considered to be the first pope, Saint Peter, a disciple of Jesus. There have been 266 popes in an unbroken succession (209 from Italy, 16 from France, 41 from other countries or unknown origin). The pope influences the Catholics understanding of what is holy, including the process of declaring saints and shrines. The inspirational influence of the pope guides his people in how to live moral and meaningful lives. Also, by appointing bishops, archbishops and cardinals who are responsible to him, the pope has great influence over local parishes.

In addition to the role of international spiritual leader, the pope is a head of state as the leader of the Vatican. The Vatican is an independent city-state that has diplomatic relations with over 90 countries. It is capable of transmitting information, ideology and material goods throughout the world.

The Papacy and Catholic-Jewish Relations

For a majority of the past 2000 years of religious history, the relationship between the Jewish people and the Catholic Church led by the papacy has often been a troubling one. While sharing a firm foundation in the teachings of Judaism from the outset, Judaism and Christianity journeyed forward through an innocent parting of the ways during the first century.

The Apostle Paul, a Hellenistic Jew to whom 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament are attributed, felt called to fulfill a particular mission, that being, to bring the knowledge of the one God, the God of Israel, to the Gentiles. Paul's belief in the resurrection of Jesus and his ways of reconciling the idea that Gentiles could believe in the one God without having to follow all the traditions of Judaism, created a divergence of the two groups.

As Christianity developed during the first centuries, early Christians made great efforts to distinguish their religious practices from Judaism. Unfortunately, through the ages, this led to the development of an ideology often referred to as "the teaching of contempt." As time went on, the message of the Catholic Church to its people was that the Jews presented a threat to society and were a demonic people.

The popes and the Vatican worked to keep Jews separate from Christians and in a subservient role. For over 600 years, as late as the 1850's, Jews who lived in the Papal States in Italy, specifically, were barred from owning property, from practicing professions, from attending university and from traveling freely. This status of the Jews among them was upheld according to canon law.

In 1965, there was a profound turning point in relations between the Catholic Church and other religions, notably Judaism and Islam. This came about with the publication of the Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate*, which called for “mutual understanding and respect.”

Two Popes Who Revolutionized Catholic-Jewish Relations

On April 27, 2016, Pope Francis presided at a ceremony at which Popes John XXIII and John Paul II were declared saints of the Roman Catholic Church. These two post-Holocaust pontiffs transformed relations between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people by fostering interfaith dialogue and embedding respect for Jews and Judaism into official Catholic dogma.

Pope John XXIII, who reigned as pope from 1958 until his death in 1963, initiated policies that changed nearly 2,000 years of church teaching. His efforts included canceling the words “perfidious Jews” from the Good Friday prayers. He convened the Second Vatican Council in 1962 at which the *Nostra Aetate* declaration was issued. This document called for Jewish-Catholic dialogue and rejected the ancient Christian ideology of the Jews as killers of Jesus. As Cardinal Angelo Roncalli twenty years earlier, he actively worked to save Jews during WWII using his position as papal nuncio.

Born Karol Wojtyla in Wadowice, Poland in 1920, Pope John Paul II grew up with Jewish friends and was an eyewitness to the Holocaust and totalitarian communism. His papal reign was from 1978-2005 during which he initiated several public gestures that had impact across the globe. He repeatedly condemned anti-Semitism, commemorated the Holocaust, and met with Jewish leaders. In 1979, on his first trip back to Poland, he prayed at the Auschwitz concentration camp. In 1986, he made history by becoming the first pope to visit a synagogue, the Great Temple in Rome. Pope John Paul also established diplomatic relations with Israel and made an emotional pilgrimage to Israel in 2000 where he prayed for forgiveness for Catholic persecutions of the Jews in the past.

These two popes brought ground-breaking changes within Church doctrine affecting Catholic-Jewish relations. They laid the groundwork for future popes to follow in their footsteps.

Pope Francis: A Proponent of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue

Pope Francis has shown a deep commitment to pursuing interreligious dialogue with all religious denominations, including with the Jewish community. In 2014, he made his first trip to Israel and was photographed embracing an imam, Omar Abboud, and a rabbi from Buenos Aires, his friend Abraham Skorka, after praying with them at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. He has paid a visit to the synagogue in Rome and has also walked through the concentration camp in Auschwitz.

Referring to the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate*, Pope Francis said that it “represented the Magna Carta of the Church’s dialogue with the Jewish world.” In a 2015 address to the *International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ)*, he said that “This document represents a definitive “yes” to the Jewish roots of Christianity and an irrevocable “no” to anti-Semitism.”

Continuing to address the members of the *ICCJ*, Pope Francis stated, “Our fragmented humanity, mistrust and pride have been overcome thanks to the Spirit of Almighty God, in

such a way that trust and fraternity between us have continued to grow. We are strangers no more, but friends, and brothers and sisters. Even with our different perspectives, we confess one God, Creator of the Universe and Lord of history. And he, in his infinite goodness and wisdom, always blesses our commitment to dialogue.”

A New Year

A new semester at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology is in its third week as students and faculty continue the holy work of educating future Catholic priests and laity, and all of the English as a Second Language students who come to SHSST to improve their English speaking and writing skills to better serve the global ministry. The Lux Center welcomes all new students and looks forward to getting to know each of them.

This week is also the beginning of the Jewish New Year 5779. Jewish people around the world celebrated the holiday of Rosh Hashanah. The Lux Center brought Mr. Harvey Padek to demonstrate the blowing of the shofar for SHSST students, faculty and staff. Visit the Lux Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies **Facebook page** to watch a video of this unique event. The Lux Center wishes all of our Jewish friends a very happy and healthy New Year.

The Jewish Fall holidays continue next week with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, a day of fasting and prayer. For a **calendar** with the dates and descriptions of all of the Jewish holidays throughout the year and a list of major Islamic holidays, check out the attachment to this newsletter e-mail.

Welcome to Bishop Jeffrey Haines

The Lux Center is pleased to announce that Bishop Jeffrey Haines, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, is the new Co-Chair of the Lux Center Advisory Board. He will be serving with Rabbi Ronald Shapiro, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Shalom. We thank Bishop Richard Sklba for his service as Co-Chair to the Advisory Board for the past three years and we are pleased that Bishop Sklba will continue to participate as a member of the Advisory Board. We also welcome Danielle Merrill Yakich to the Advisory Board.

The Lux Center Governing Board also proudly welcomes new members Sheryl Primakow, Dr. Chris McAtee, and Dr. Steven Shippee.

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