

Lux Center News

January 9, 2020

Remaining Hopeful Amidst Rising Antisemitism

If you are wondering how the Jewish communities in the U.S. are reacting to the fact that violent attacks in American localities continue to grow, I would say that there seems to be a combination of disbelief, horror, denial, fear, anger and great sadness. While the phenomenon of antisemitism has been ever present, it has not always been so visible in this country. Recent incidents in Charlottesville, Pittsburgh, Poway, Brooklyn, Jersey City and Monsey have many American Jews on edge.

Surprisingly, a 2018 FBI report revealed that 57.8 % of hate crimes in the United States were directed against Jewish individuals or the Jewish community—4 times more than against Muslims (14.5%). A study by the Anti-Defamation League reported that social media has played a significant role in spreading antisemitic hate, stating that 4.2 million antisemitic tweets were posted on Twitter over the course of just one year.

But there is a bright ray of hope amid all of this overt expression of hate. Unlike the silence that was evidenced when Nazi Germany's anti-Jewish policies resulted in the annihilation of two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population, leaders of many Christian institutions as well as national political leaders have openly voiced their solidarity with the Jewish communities while denouncing Jewish prejudice and hatred.

What is Antisemitism?

Sometimes called the world's oldest hatred, antisemitism is the term used to refer to prejudice or discrimination against Jews. It may include prejudiced or stereotyped views about Jews. It may take the form of religious teachings that promote the idea that Jews are inferior. It may be evident in political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. The term itself was coined in the 19th century by Wilhelm Marr, a 19th century German journalist who believed that Jews were racially distinct from Germans and could never be assimilated into German culture.

While hostility toward Jews may date to ancient times, the rise of Christianity greatly increased the hatred of Jews. Beginning in the first century, Jews were no longer seen as merely outsiders but as a people who were collectively guilty of rejecting and killing Jesus (despite the fact that the Roman authorities ordered and carried out the crucifixion)—a view that remained in Catholic doctrines until the Second Vatican Council in 1965. Anti-Jewish ideas found their way into the writings of some of history's most prominent and oft-quoted Christian thinkers such as St. Augustine, Martin Luther and Thomas Aquinas. In 1997, Pope Saint John Paul II noted that, "In the Christian world . . . erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people and their alleged

culpability [for the crucifixion of Jesus] have circulated for too long, engendering feelings of hostility towards this people.”

Anti-Jewish Stereotypes

During the Middle Ages, a number of stereotypes emerged. Some common misconceptions about Jews include: the Jews think of Law rather than Love, the Jews are hypocrites, the Jews still offer animal sacrifices, Jews are greedy and only care about money, Jews are Western imperialists, Jews use Christian blood to bake matzah [known as the “Blood Libel”]. When these are continually repeated, bigotry begins.

The Church and Antisemitism

Catholic Church leaders have already spent the last fifty-plus years reflecting on how their teaching in the past was responsible for Jewish persecution that eventually led to the Holocaust during World War II. At the Second Vatican Council, in *Nostra Aetate*, the Catholic Church articulated, “Mindful of the inheritance she shares with the Jews, the Church decries hatreds, persecutions, and manifestations of antisemitism directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.”

On November 13, Pope Francis stated, “In the last century we saw so many brutalities against the Jewish people, and we were all convinced that this was over. But today the habit of persecuting the Jews, brothers and sisters, is here reborn. This is neither human nor Christian.”

After the most recent violence, the Chairman of the U.S. Bishops on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs on Antisemitism also commented, “We offer our prayerful support for all victims of antisemitic violence and their families. It is our hope that through continued respectful collaboration and dialogue with our Jewish brothers and sisters Catholics will help build a culture that completely rejects antisemitism.”

Clergy can address the distressing upsurge in antisemitic prejudice and violence by preaching against antisemitism and by teaching positive and constructive ways of interpreting Gospel texts that have historically been misinterpreted as justifications for antisemitic attitudes and actions. Clergy can also encourage parishioners to learn about the Jewish roots of Christianity, to reach out to their Jewish neighbors, to talk to one another face to face, and to encourage friendships.

For more information, contact the Lux Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology or simply attend one of our programs.

You Won't Want to Miss These Lux Center Events!

CURIOUS ABOUT THE JEWISH ROOTS OF CHRISTIANITY?



2020 Jewish Studies Seminar for Christians

The Jewish People and the Church

Wednesday, Feb. 5
6:30-8:15 p.m.

What Every Christian
Needs to Know about the
Jewishness of Jesus

-Rabbi Evan Moffic

Wednesday, Feb. 12
6:30-8:15 p.m.

What Every Christian
Needs to Know about
Judaism and Israel Today

-Dr. Richard Lux and Bonnie Shafrin

Wednesday, Feb. 19
6:30-8:15 p.m.

Same Text Different Beliefs—
Christians and Jews
Reading the Bible Together

-Dr. Sherry Blumberg and Dr. Brian Lee

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ATTEND THREE GREAT CLASSES FOR THE
PRICE OF ONE: \$30.00 PER PERSON
This covers all THREE sessions! No pro-rations due to the discount.

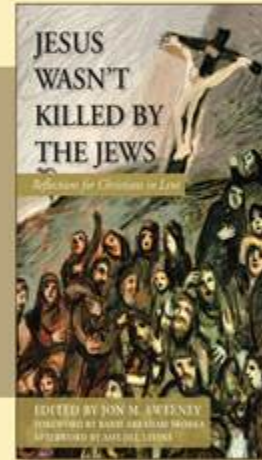
To register or for more information
shsst.edu/events-and-news-headlines
or call Bonnie Shafrin at 414-529-6966



BOOK EVENT

Wednesday, Jan. 29
7:00 p.m.

Boswell Book Company, 2559 N. Downer Ave.



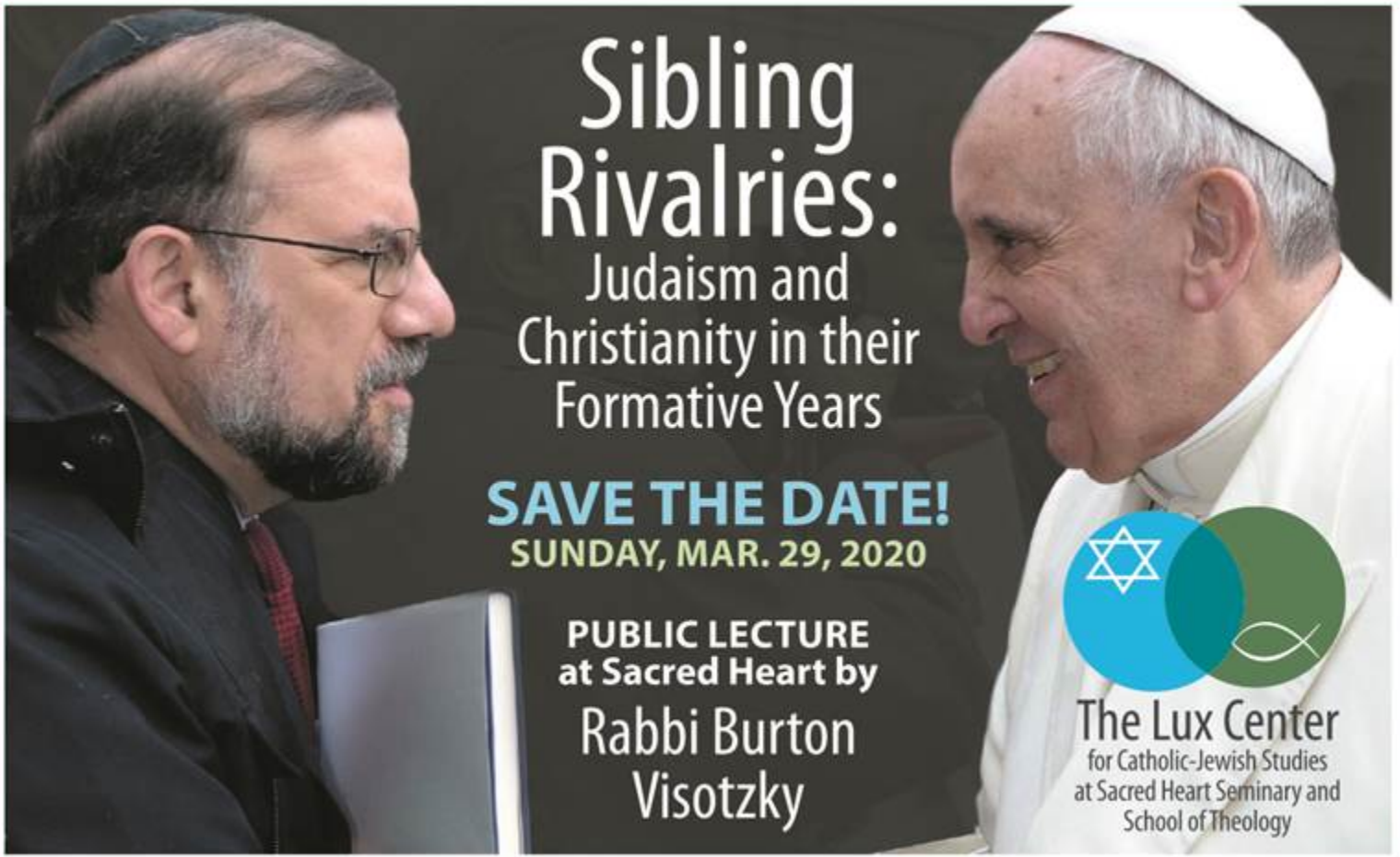
Editor **Jon M. Sweeney**
as well as contributing authors

Bishop Richard Sklba and
Dr. Richard Lux

will talk about their newly published book,

*Jesus Wasn't Killed
by the Jews.*

Cosponsored by the Milwaukee Catholic-Jewish Conference
and the Family of Four Milwaukee Parishes



Sibling Rivalries:

Judaism and Christianity in their Formative Years

SAVE THE DATE!
SUNDAY, MAR. 29, 2020

PUBLIC LECTURE
at Sacred Heart by
Rabbi Burton
Visotzky



Catholic-Jewish Book Dialogue **SAVE THE DATE**

The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus
by Amy-Jill Levine

Sunday, Apr. 26, 2020 at 2:30 p.m. | Congregation Sinai, 8223 N Port Washington Rd.

Discussion Leaders: Rabbi David Cohen, Bishop Richard J. Sklba, Dr. Patrick Russell



In the *The Misunderstood Jew*, scholar Amy-Jill Levine helps Christians and Jews understand the “Jewishness” of Jesus so that their appreciation of him deepens and a greater interfaith dialogue can take place. Levine’s humor and informed truth-telling provokes honest conversation and debate about how Christians and Jews should understand Jesus, the New Testament, and each other.

This book is available for purchase at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or [barnesandnoble.com](https://www.barnesandnoble.com)

