

Lux Center News



May 20, 2020

The Holy Act of Counting

Human beings are preoccupied with counting. Historians keep count of the years passed. We count the hours, the days, the weeks into the future. We are told to make every moment count and remind ourselves that it's the thought that counts. We count calories and our blessings but don't count our chickens before they hatch. We tell people that they can count on us, to count us in and to not count us out. But who's counting?

This year the three Abrahamic religions –Christianity, Judaism and Islam--are in periods of counting right now. This counting within the theological year serves several purposes. Organizationally, the counting of days brings order to the chaos of unlimited time. Spiritually, periods of time are set aside for specific purposes such as for self-reflection and prayer. Counting gives us time to anticipate and prepare for special holy days or celebrations. Counting can be tied to particular historical or theological events, and it can also serve a symbolic purpose.

Pentecost-Who Counts?

Pentecost is the next important date in both the Jewish and Christian calendars. Pentecost literally means fiftieth as it is celebrated in Judaism on the 50th day or seven weeks after Passover. Pentecost began with roots deep in Judaism after the Jewish people were freed from slavery in Egypt and had settled in the land God had promised Abraham. The biblical text instructs "you shall count 50 days" or 7 weeks after Passover (Leviticus 23:15-16). Pentecost (Shavuot in Hebrew, meaning "weeks") was celebrated in ancient times when Jews would bring the first sheaves of the grain harvest to the Temple in Jerusalem as a means of thanking God. The 50 days that are counted are known as the "*counting of the Omer*", a time of self-scrutiny and spiritual self-improvement. After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in the year 70, the holiday became associated with the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai and the *omer* began to symbolize the thematic link between

Passover and counting up to Shavuot. It is a reminder of the process of moving from a slave mentality to a liberated one. This year Shavuot (Jewish Pentecost—Festival of Weeks) will be celebrated beginning on the evening of May 28th.

For Christians, Pentecost is celebrated 50 days or on the seventh Sunday after Easter Sunday. Before Jesus left his disciples for the last time, he told them to wait in Jerusalem for “the promise of the Father.” And so, the Apostles and the other followers of Jesus stayed in Jerusalem and as they celebrated Shavuot (Pentecost—Festival of Weeks) on the fiftieth day, the Holy Spirit descended upon them. According to Acts 2 in the New Testament, each person heard God’s message in his own tongue. Modern Christians observe Pentecost not only to commemorate the descent of the Holy Spirit but also believe that the Pentecost laid the foundation for Christianity and, as such, celebrates the birth of the early church. This year Pentecost will be celebrated on May 31st.

Ramadan—Another Time of Counting

Ramadan is celebrated on the 9th month of the Islamic calendar. Considered one of the holiest months of the year, Ramadan is observed by Muslims worldwide as 30 days of fasting, prayer, reflection and community. It commemorates the revelation of the Islamic holy book, the Qur’an.

When Muslims fast from food and drink during the sunlit hours during Ramadan, it is a means of learning self-restraint, showing gratitude to God and compassion for those less fortunate. It is a month of intense spiritual rejuvenation with heightened focus on prayer and reading the Qur’an. Each day, a large feast known as “iftar” brings together family and friends after sunset prayer. At the end of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate a major holiday called *Eid al-Fitr* or the “Festival of the Breaking of the Fast.” This year *Eid al-Fitr* will begin on May 24th.

In God’s eyes—Jew, Christian, Muslim—all count as people of God, sometimes even together and at the same time.

At SHSST—We Count on Our Graduates to Heal the World

The Lux Center congratulates all of the 26 members of the class of 2020 who have earned degrees from Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology. We are proud of your hard work and accomplishments and have been honored to have been able to contribute to your learning during your years at SHSST.

The following 14 men have completed all the requirements necessary to receive their Master of Divinity (MDIV) degree and will be joining their dioceses or religious communities to serve as priests upon ordination:

David Walter Beagles	MDIV
Wesley Evan Beal	MDIV
Michael Peter Johnson	MDIV and MA Systematic Theology
Carlos Alberto Londoño Álvarez	MDIV and MA Systematic Theology
Patrick Joseph Magnor	MDIV
José Carlos Miquel López	MDIV
Edward Joseph Sanchez	MDIV and MA Systematic Theology
Levi J.M. Schmitt	MDIV
Carl Schrage	MDIV
Joel L. Seipp	MDIV
Joseph Frank Stefancin	MDIV
Oscar Alexander Sutachan Benavides	MDIV
Paul Timothy Wilkin, SDS	MDIV
Daniel R. Williams III	MDIV and MA Systematic Theology

The following 12 people are completing the Cor Unum Master's Degree program and will receive a Master of Arts (MA) degree in Systematic Theology:

Reine M. Assana
Taylor James Baar
Kimberley Bayer
Carla Angela Dal Santo
Therease Engsberg
Steve Fluor
Jennifer Frank
Sharon K Hanson
Shanendra Elizabeth Johnson
Monica A. Misy
Cynthia Petre
Leah Claassen Sealey

There is Hope in Counting

In these days of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, we count the days and hours until we can return to life as it once was. We pray for the good health of those we care about. We wear our masks, keep our distance, and do what we need to do to stay healthy and protect the health of others. And we continue to pray to God that sooner rather than later, some person's God given ability will help him/her/them to create that vaccine or cure for this plague, so that this too shall pass.

The Lux Center thanks you for your interest in its work and for your support. We look forward to sharing informative, engaging and creative programs that bring us

together (even if it is in a virtual way) and strive to help us to better understand and love our neighbor so that we are able to count on one another.