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Buddhism is the world's fourth largest religion with, perhaps, 6 million followers. Roman Catholicism claims over 1.5 billion followers.

Buddhism is assumed to have been founded by Siddhartha Gautama, the "awakened one"-The Buddha, about 500 years before Christ. Lacking the humility of the founder, Christians restarted "time" with the Gregorian calendar with the year 0 being the supposed birth year of the Christ.

Both Buddhism and Christianity were founded by non-conformist males with similar concerns of finding peace and harmony in the midst of real worlds of conflict, suffering, and unhappiness.

Christianity had its origin in the Jewish world of a Roman occupied Palestine and Buddhism in the Asian world of what today we call India.

Most of us have little experience with Asian thinking, literature, or people and the strong Anglo/European biases inherent in the obsessions of Roman Catholicism as to being the "correct" religion possessing all of the truth, has in no small part contributed to our ignorance of Asian culture and people and the plurality of possibilities in seeking and finding meaning in life.

Many people in all places have found that Buddhism offers either a real or imagined alternative to the doctrinal battles waged by Christians down through the ages but in our time, I would wager, that legions of young people, especially, will emerge from the pandemic into a world far more welcome to the contents of Buddhist thinking than to the ideological clashes with the culture that is the public face of much of Christianity and Catholicism today in this country.

But, Buddhism, as Christianity and Catholicism, has at times been manipulated to engage in wars with the culture and been used to enforce conformity to social and cultural pseudo values and mores.

Buddhism is expressed in many forms but central to Buddhism is the practice of meditation based on paying attention to your breathing, just your breathing, ideas, moral teachings, creeds, or rituals, are subordinate to your breathing, just your breathing in a pose of meditation.

Historical Buddhism has some common basis on what are termed, Four Noble Truths, that all revolve around the experience of all human beings and that is that nothing is permanent, everything is in flux and all things pass and that whether we admit it or not we suffer because of that and that we try to escape our suffering in the pursuit of something or someone that is permanent which only increases our suffering.

I am no expert on Buddhism, believe me, but I can see the attraction it will have as we find ourselves more and more impatient, angry, resentful, and anxious in our time of plague. The longer we go with our uncertainties the more susceptible we will be to quick fixes and denials

I believe very much that mature Catholicism is equally concerned with the reality of suffering, the pursuit of happiness, and the reign of peace in both individuals and the cosmos and I believe that Jesus Christ taught with serious concern for the student far more than a concern for what was taught.

No matter Buddhism or Catholicism dealing with suffering and finding peace and happiness is hard work, there are no short cuts and living the life of a disciple is a task that requires a prayer for a daily bread.