Love and Justice: Islamic Tradition and the Prophetic Voices of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Rabbi Heschel to Heal Today’s World

MADISON, Conn., (Sept. 9, 2019) – A leading Muslim public intellectual and Director of the Duke Islamic Studies Center, Omid Safi, Ph.D., has been invited back to Mercy by the Sea Retreat and Conference Center in Madison, Conn., to lead a weekend retreat on “Radical Love: The Legacy of the Prophetic Traditions,” Oct. 25 to 27, 2019. The program will explore radical love through the teachings of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel and Malcolm X, whose lessons, Safi believes, can encourage not just “common ground, but higher ground.”

Dr. Safi believes that Islam has a tradition that could help change the divisiveness and polarization we are now experiencing. This tradition, known as Sufism, celebrates a path of “radical love.”

In his newest book, Radical Love: Teachings from the Islamic Mystical Tradition (Yale University Press, 2018), Dr. Safi explains that, “Nowadays when we speak about love, we almost exclusively refer to romantic love.” For Sufi mystics, however, he says, “love is a … purifying fire that burns away selfishness, greed, anger, and leaves behind nothing but God.”

“The program, both for commuters and overnight guests, will aim to put love into daily practice and is for seekers of all faith backgrounds,” said Mercy by the Sea Program Associate Karin Nobile.

The weekend program begins on Friday, Oct. 25, at 7 p.m. and runs through early afternoon Sunday, including a book signing with the author. For more information about the retreat, including overnight and commuter fees, visit www.mercybythesea.org or call Rosemary Jones at (203) 245-0401, ext. 114. Radical Love: Teachings from the Islamic Mystical Tradition is sold at the Mercy by the Sea bookstore with other titles by Dr. Safi.

Omid Safi, Ph.D. is a professor of Islamic Studies at Duke University in Durham, N.C., specializing in contemporary Islamic thought and spirituality. As a leading Muslim public intellectual, he is committed to the intersection of spirituality and social justice. He has been invited by the family of Dr. King to speak at Ebenezer Church on the relevance of Dr.
King for today’s America, and offered the keynote lecture on Dr. King in Lorraine Motel’s National Civil Rights Museum this year. Dr. Safi is Chair for the Islamic Mysticism group at the American Academy of Religion, the largest international organization devoted to the academic study of religion. Dr. Safi is the editor of the volume Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism, in which he inaugurated a new understanding of Islam that is rooted in social justice, gender equality and religious/ethnic pluralism. Dr. Safi has been among the most frequently sought experts on Islam in popular media, including the New York Times, Newsweek, the Washington Post and on PBS, NPR, NBC, BBC, CNN. He has been a regular blogger for On Being. He also leads a spirituality oriented adult tour to Turkey and Morocco, “Illuminated Tours,” http://www.illuminatedtours.com for people of all faiths.

Mercy by the Sea Conference and Retreat Center in Madison, Conn., is located on the shores of Long Island Sound. For 45 years, as a sponsored work of the Sisters of Mercy Northeast, Mercy by the Sea has welcomed individuals and groups of diverse faiths and backgrounds to a peaceful place of natural beauty. The Center’s programming is contemplative and experiential; grounded in the community’s tradition of discerning and serving unmet needs of its particular time and place. Today, that commitment is focused on the five “critical concerns:” Earth, Immigration, Nonviolence, Racism and Women’s education, health and spirituality.

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