



"Global Unity" from Stockcake

Holiday Message From President Gerry Grudzen and Marita Grudzen

Marita and I wish you a blessed holiday season and New Year. Each of you has contributed to the success of GMU over the past year as we begin the 24th year of GMU's existence as an innovator in the field of theological education in the US, India, and Africa.

Our interfaith mission continues to grow as we prepare for our third global, online conference on Migrants, Refugees, and Displaced People during the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week from February 6 to 8, 2025. This will be our third global conference in collaboration with Tangaza University Institute for Interreligious Dialogue and Islamic Studies. We also wish to thank Father Augustine Pamplany, Dean of the Science and Religion Institute in Kerala, India for the partnership GMU has formed with this institute connected to Little Flower Seminary in Kerala. This program has grown to over 40 students from Africa and India pursuing graduate degrees.

Several of us from GMU will attend a major conference on Science and Religion in Kerela from February 1 to February 3, 2025.

We remember fondly our departed brother and board member, Frank Pisciotta.

Peace to ALL!

GMU Classroom and Office News



GMU Classroom is now in the latest updated version with expanded capabilities in the text editor as well as support for emojis like ☺☺. Thank you all for your patience, and enjoy the new classroom!

~Ricardo Silvestri

The Registrar's office will be closed from December 24 to January 1. The Business Office will remain open to receive tuition payments, application fees, and donations, and website communications will continue to be monitored.

Empowering Women



There are things that only women understand and theology needs their contribution. An all-male theology is an incomplete theology. We still have a long way to go in this direction.

POPE FRANCIS

NATIONAL
CATHOLIC

REPORTER

THE INDEPENDENT NEWS SOURCE



Bishop Bridget Mary Meehan, Dean of GMU's D.Min. and M.Div. Programs, and Rev. Mary Theresa Streck

Now more than ever, we need women's leadership! Bishop Mary recommends seeing a new documentary about the women priests movement. [The Forbidden Call: Women Priests.](#)

FutureChurch hosted a [special screening](#) with AnaMichele, the film's director, and Diane Whalen, the film's subject, for conversation and questions and answers following the screening.

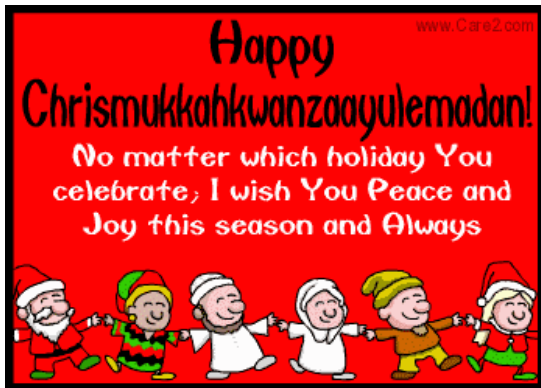


Visit Bridget Mary's
Blog.

GMU is a leader in feminist theology and graduate degrees and supports all areas of women's studies.

View the curriculum
here.

Librarian's Corner



December Festivities!

At GMU we study, research, honor and compare many of the world's faith traditions. Honoring and understanding them all are major missions of our institution. Recently I was reflecting on the month of December, when nearly all the world religions celebrate at least one major festival. These have their roots

historically, of course, in the ancient observance of the winter solstice, the event that celebrates the gradual emergence of light after darkness, rebirth after death, community after a period of isolation. Here's a summary of December holidays we acknowledge today:

Judaism

- **Hanukkah (Dates vary; in 2024, December 25–January 1):** An eight-day festival commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem during the Maccabean Revolt. It involves the lighting of the menorah, prayers, and eating foods fried in oil (such as latkes).

Islam

- **Mawlid al-Nabi (Dates vary; in 2024, December 14):** The observance of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. While not universally celebrated in all Muslim traditions, it is observed with prayers, feasts, and gatherings in many communities.

Hinduism

- **Gita Jayanti (December 25, 2024):** Celebrates the day Lord Krishna imparted the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

- **Kalpataru Day (December 25):** Celebrates the day when Ramakrishna Paramahansa gave his disciples spiritual blessings and teachings.

Buddhism

- **Bodhi Day (December 8):** Commemorates the day when Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. It is celebrated by many Buddhist communities with meditation, reflection, and rituals.

Paganism / Neopaganism

- **Winter Solstice / Yule (Around December 21–22):** A celebration of the rebirth of the sun and the longest night of the year. It is part of the Pagan Wheel of the Year and is observed by many Wicca and Neo-pagan traditions with rituals celebrating light, rebirth, and nature.

Bahá'í Faith

- **The Birth of Bahá'u'lláh (December 2):** A celebration marking the birth of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'ís gather for prayers and festive meals.
- **The Birth of the Báb (December 25):** Celebrates the birth of the Báb, the forerunner to Bahá'u'lláh, considered a significant figure in the Bahá'í Faith.

Sikhism

- **Gurpurab (Dates vary; in 2024, December 25):** A Sikh holiday celebrating the birth of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and final Guru of Sikhism. It involves prayers, singing of hymns, and processions.

Christianity

- **Advent (Starts in late November and lasts until Christmas Eve):** A season of expectant waiting and preparation for the birth of Jesus Christ. It begins on the Sunday closest to November 30th and lasts for four Sundays, leading up to Christmas.
- **Christmas (December 25):** Celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. It is one of the most widely celebrated holidays in the Christian world.

In a spirit of ecumenism, let's gather with family and friends to light the menorah, eat latkes, prayerfully wish Jesus Christ and the Prophet Mohammed happy birthday, read a bit of the Bhagavad Gita, meditate on the life of the Buddha, hug a tree, sing hymns and carols, and celebrate the return of the Light! Happy December to all!

Questions? Comments? Need help with research? Contact me:

Judy Clarence, M.L.I.S., GMU Librarian
librarian@globalministriesuniversity.org

GMU Courses and Programs

Religion and Science

GMU partners with the Institute of Science and Religion program in Kerala, India. You can view lectures on their [YouTube channel](#).

Some people mistakenly believe that trusting in God requires them to distrust science, history, art, philosophy, and other forms of education, information, and truth. But intelligence is a friend of faith, and ignorance its enemy. God loves knowledge and truth, and any faith that objects to either is terribly misguided.

STEPHEN MATTSON

Theology for the 21st Century

A new cohort in the GMU's Religion and Science Program will begin in January 2025. Discover the compatibility of science, spirituality, and faith. Asian and African applications will soon be made directly on Fr. Augustine Pamplany's website. The applications will then be sent to GMU for follow-up and enrollment. [Email Fr. Augustine](#) for information on when the applications will be available.

Present Grudzen has reported that women religious from Africa and India will be receiving scholarships to join the January cohort.

We had 25 students attend the final class for the second cohort of our Science and Religion Master's program. Most of the students are in Africa and will spend the next six months working on a supervised research project in Science and Religion. The students are located in diverse parts of Africa and expressed great appreciation for the academic content of our program and that it is very helpful in combating various forms of fundamentalism, whether it is religious, political, or tribal. Look for a video coming soon on the GMU's YouTube channel.

Explore GMU's Religion and Science Program.

Apply
here.

Confirmed Speakers

1. Dr Miguel Farias (Oxford University)
2. Dr Louis Oviedo (Pontifical University Antonianum, Rome)
3. Dr Martha Helena Ferita (Catholic University of Brasilia)
4. Dr David Leech (Bristol University)
5. Dr Gerald Grudzen (Global Ministries University, California)
6. Dr Job Kozhamthadam (Indian Institute of Science and Religion, New Delhi)
7. Dr Kuruvilla Pandikattu (O.L.R.I, Jamshedpur)
8. Dr Shamsur Rahman (Dhaka University, Bangladesh)
9. Dr Reginald Nalugala (Tangaza University, Kenya)
10. Dr Robert Graf (Global Ministries University, California)
11. Dr Johnson Thomas (KE College, Mannanam)
12. Dr Plus Vazhappilly (Assam University, Silchar)
13. Dr Saji Varghese (North East Hill University, Shillong)
14. Dr Augustine Pamplany (Institute of Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies, Kochi)
15. Dr Sangeetha Menon (Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore)



Emotions, Beliefs, and Mental Health

President Grudzen, Robert Graf, and Thomas James will present papers at the international Religion and Science symposium in Kerala, India, from February 1 to February 3, 2025. Father Augustine Pamplany is the director of this conference in collaboration with GMU.

Read the brochure.

Spring into Spirituality!



Make New Year's Resolution to Connect with Creation! Dr. Margie Schneider is offering three courses at a discount. TH580 Creation Spirituality, TH Eco-Art & Creation Spirituality, and TH517 Spiritual Ecology are available individually for half the price of the traditional tuition, \$235 per course. You don't want to miss this opportunity to expand your awareness of the Divine in Creation and in You!

Collaboration with People's Catholic Seminary

GMU seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of those who wish to start Intentional Eucharistic Communities. Together with PCS, GMU is now offering:

Creating Inclusive Eucharistic



Communities in an Emerging Synodal Church

5 sessions \$475 + \$25 App Fee

Women in the Bible and Christian Tradition

5 sessions \$475 + \$25 App Fee

Credit for these courses can be applied towards a GMU graduate degree or certificate.

Apply Today.

GMU Partners



I wish you all the blessings of the upcoming holidays. Thank you for bringing light and love to sacred journeys of people's lives.

~Michael Conley, D.Min.

Visit the Center for Celebrant Training.



You are most welcome to gather with other Celtic Spirits on a journey around the Celtic Wheel of the Year. The Celtic Wheel offers a framework to explore Celtic Spirituality, the cyclical nature of the seasons and the eight festivals of the year, observed throughout the Celtic lands.



PCA 721-Gathering of Celtic Spirit

Instructor: Mary Coffey

I'm a creative soul, laughing.

I'm also a mixed-media artist, teacher, a certified spiritual director, and a priest ordained in the independent Catholic movement. I'm curious to see how the Divine shows up in and through creative expression both on the canvas and in real life.

[Learn More.](#)

**Retreat/Independent
Course: Celebrating the
Sacred Feminine in Your**

Life with Dr. Bridget Mary Meehan



"Celebrating the Sacred Feminine in Your Life" invites you to explore the beautiful mosaic of names and images that depict God's all-embracing, inclusive love for us. Each section provides imagery of the sacred feminine in Scripture, in Christian mystics, and in contemporary life. Open yourself to your *belovedness* as an image of the Divine Feminine in prayer and action, and explore new paths to spiritual healing, nourishment, and transformation in our world.

Celebrating the Sacred Feminine in Your Life is available as a private retreat, an independent study, or as a course for sharing in a cohort model.

Cohorts meet in a Zoom video conference to share insights on their meditations.

For those taking this course as an independent study or retreat, Bridget Mary will be available upon request to share with you in phone or Zoom conversations.

[Enroll here.](#)

**"Belonging Together:
Migrants, Refugees, Displaced People and
Global Solidarity"**

Join Us!

Third Online Conference
Promoting the Ideals of
Fratelli Tutti

Belonging Together:
*Migrants, Refugees, Displaced People,
and Global Solidarity*

6-8
FEBRUARY
2025

YouTube
Live

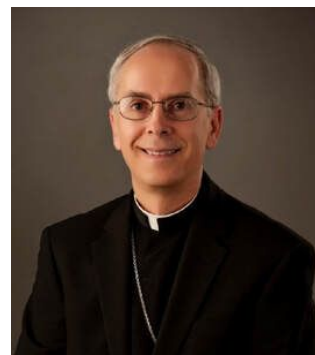
The human family is indivisible. Regardless of origin or residence status, people belong together. This international interfaith conference emphasises humanity's responsibility for mutual care, solidarity, and the fostering of inclusive communities.

Join brothers and sisters from all religious and spiritual traditions as we continue the legacy of Pope Francis and Sheikh Mohamed Ahmed El-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, in the tradition of *Fratelli Tutti*.

<https://fratellitutticonference.org/>

The United Nations has highlighted GMU's upcoming conference on [their website](#).

During **World Interfaith Harmony Week, February 6 - 8, 2025**, GMU is once again collaborating with **Tangaza University**, **IRDIS**, and the **Harmony Institute of Kenya** on a third international online conference dedicated to fostering the precepts of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. Titled, "Belonging Together: Migrants, Refugees, Displaced People, and Global Solidarity," the conference will focus on "the inseparability of the human family—people belong together regardless of their origin and residence status. At the same time, the title alludes to the irrevocable responsibility of humankind for mutual care—being human and being in solidarity with others, especially the most vulnerable, belong together."



Keynote speakers for the conference include **Rev. Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C.**, author of ***A Theology of Migration: The Bodies of Refugees and***

[the Body of Christ](#), which won first-place honors from the Catholic Press Association; [Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J.](#), Prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; and [Most Rev. Mark J. Seitz, D.D.](#), Bishop of El Paso, Texas..

Subscribe to the Conference on
YouTube.

Follow the Conference Facebook
page.

"Abducted Person"
Mustafa GENC

He dedicated his life to education and Intercultural Dialogue in Kenya for 23 years. He is a refugee. He was abducted at gunpoint together with his 15 years old son on the 18th October in the morning. He is still missing. His family is worried. We urge authorities to take immediate action.

Help Us Find Him



#BringThemHome #EmergencyKenya

Technical Director of Conference Abducted in Kenya

Mustafa Genç, who led the technical operations of the biennial conference from Harmony Institute and the Institute for Religious Dialogue and Islamic Studies at Tangaza University (IRDIS) was kidnapped with other Turkish refugees in Kenya by gunmen on October 18. They have been repatriated to Turkey. The United Nations and international organizations are working for their release.

[UN 'deeply concerned' Kenya returned Turkish refugees](#)

"Help Us Bring Them Home"
petition.

Global Initiatives

GMU will partner with the [Omeriey Foundation](#) as the focal point in Kenya, and participate as the USA mentor for Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, and Nairobi University in the EARTH FUNDS AI for Climate and Environmental Challenges in September 2025



Global Gratitude



GMU recently received donations to Honor Mary Manseau
\$500 from Marita and Gerry Grudzen
\$1000 from Graf Family Fund

Individual donors have provided scholarships for women students in the Religion and Science program.

GMU operates under the corporate umbrella of the Federation of Community Ministries of California (FCM of CA), originally formed on October 30, 1997, when we gained the status of a 501c3 nonprofit corporation. GMU is registered in Santa Clara County, CA, as a DBA of FCM of CA. The two entities have the same Board of Directors.

Please consider making a year-end tax-deductible contribution to
GMU.

Thank you for your generosity!

Help Our Global Family

Donate to GMU.



GMU wishes all of our FAMILY of faculty, students, friends, partners, collaborators, affiliates, and benefactors very Blessed Holidays and Happy New Year!





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Honoring the Sacred in All!

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