

Prayers from Chautauqua's Interfaith Family

No. 11 • *A Reflection from Our First-ever Rabbi Chaplain*

Shalom, friends.

In midst of Ferguson Uprising 2014, my friend Pastor Michael-Ray Mathews developed a new mission statement for Faith in Action: "If we're not cultivating a moral imagination together, we're probably living inside someone else's."

This moment, with all its loss, uncertainty and upheaval, demands of us the cultivation of a new moral imagination.

I know. A pandemic is a strange time for creative, generative reimagining. We're tired, scared, more aware of our vulnerability than ever before. But I have begun to think of the world before COVID-19 as "the world as it was," and the time after as "the world as it could be." And for us to build "the world as it could be," we will need to seize this moment, even with all of its vulnerability, and dream.

The sabbath calls us into that dreamscape every week, giving us a chance to press pause and engage in the work of reflection that enables us to reenter the world with a sense of perspective and possibility. It is the sabbath that has given us a sense of what's possible through times far darker and more dangerous than this one.

But the sabbath is an individual and communal practice, not a societal one. The world barrels ahead, whether we're on the right track or wrong, and our ability to really reflect and reimagine is anemic at best.

And yet, in COVID times, our systems have shut down. Global commerce has essentially halted. The world has neared a standstill. We have pressed pause.

But as we stand on the precipice of some kind of return, I wonder: what might we hear if we stop for a moment to listen? Can we embrace these final days of stillness? Let us see what we're called to learn from this strange and beautiful and unnaturally natural quiet. Let us see how this time may have created space for a new kind of moral imagining.

We will need to be brave when this is over, and we'll have to be visionary. I pray that from this time, with all its heartache, we find the opening to cultivate a moral imagination worthy of the new world we'll build together on the other side.

Amen.

—**Rabbi Sharon Brous**
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