

*“When they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. . . One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebuked him. “Do you not fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

Luke 23: 33-43 (NIV)

*This image was taken in Quebec near Percé Rock on the Gaspé Peninsula. When Jacques Cartier landed in North America in 1534, he erected a cross in this area to claim the land for France. There has been a strong Catholic presence in this region since the time of the early French settlers who later followed Cartier.*





## Chapter Seven

# Christianity

**Study the photograph, and read the accompanying passage from the Bible. Consider the following questions:**

1. Describe the setting of the photograph. What mood does the photograph create?
2. What is the significance of the cross shown in the picture? What does it represent?
3. What impressions do you get about Jesus Christ from the quotation?
4. How is the Crucifixion commemorated by Christians?

### Introduction

Approximately one-third of the world's people consider themselves Christians, and they live on every habitable continent of the earth. Christianity, which originated in present-day Israel approximately 2000 years ago, exists in a variety of forms, including Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism. Worldwide, Christians continue to grow in numbers, despite constant division and reform. What accounts for the enduring power of this world religion?

Christianity offers both a satisfying way of life on earth, and the hope of eternal life in heaven. Christians believe that these promises were made possible by Jesus Christ, from whom the religion derives its name. Followers of Jesus believe that he is the incarnate son of God and saviour of the world. During his ministry on earth, Jesus taught people that they must love one another and practise compassion and forgiveness. This principle of love, which Jesus called “a new commandment,” is central to the Christian religion. Christians also believe that Jesus died on the cross to atone for human sin, that is to “save” them. This salvation offers the possibility of everlasting life with God in heaven.

Christianity is still the religion of the majority of Canadians and is closely connected to Canadian history. Much of the settlement and early exploration of Canada was carried out by Christian missionaries, particularly in the establishment of New France. Some early political struggles in Canadian history were fought between Protestant and Catholic Christians. Today, while Canada is clearly a nation of many cultures and faiths, Christianity is still a central part of many Canadians' lives.

# Learning Goals

**At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:**

- identify the origins of Christian beliefs regarding creation, death, God, and the afterlife
- identify influences in the development of Christianity
- identify important figures in the growth of Christianity, and explain their contributions
- evaluate the importance of such concepts as revelation, resurrection, and salvation
- understand the development of Christian institutions that govern the religious lives of Christians
- understand differences in beliefs, symbols, and practices among different Christian sects
- identify the origins, characteristics, and significant passages of the Bible's New Testament
- analyze the changing role of women in Christian institutions, practices, and sacred writings
- identify the origin and significance of Christian practices, rituals, symbols, and festivals
- understand the meanings of symbols in Christianity and their connection to practices
- identify ways in which Christian symbols are incorporated into civil practices
- identify that Canada is a diverse society with a high degree of religious pluralism
- describe how individuals have been influenced by the beliefs of Christianity to challenge the status quo of their day
- identify important rites of passage in the life of a Christian person, and understand the symbols, art, and literature associated with each
- conduct an in-depth interview using an appropriate interview format



• **4 BCE** (approximately)  
Birth of Jesus

• **30 CE** (approximately)  
Crucifixion of Jesus by Roman soldiers



• **50–67 CE**  
(approximately) Paul carries Christianity into Asia Minor and Rome and writes many of the Epistles of the New Testament

• **70–100 CE**  
(approximately) Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John write the four gospels of the New Testament

• **325 CE** Council of Nicaea codifies Christian beliefs in the Nicene Creed

• **1054 CE** Schism divides the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Churches





• **1517 CE** Martin Luther leads the Protestant Reformation (Lutheran Church begins)

• **1095 CE** First of several Crusades begins

• **1870 CE** First Vatican Council declares pope infallible in matters of faith and morals

• **1534 CE** King Henry VIII and Parliament establish the Church of England (called Anglican Church in Canada)

• **1962–1965 CE**

Second Vatican Council reforms practices of the Roman Catholic Church

• **1925 CE** Methodists, Congregationalists, and many Presbyterians merge to form United Church of Canada

• **2001 CE** Organizers plan for World Youth Day when up to 750 000 young people will visit Toronto in July 2002

• **1984 CE** Pope John Paul II tours Canada

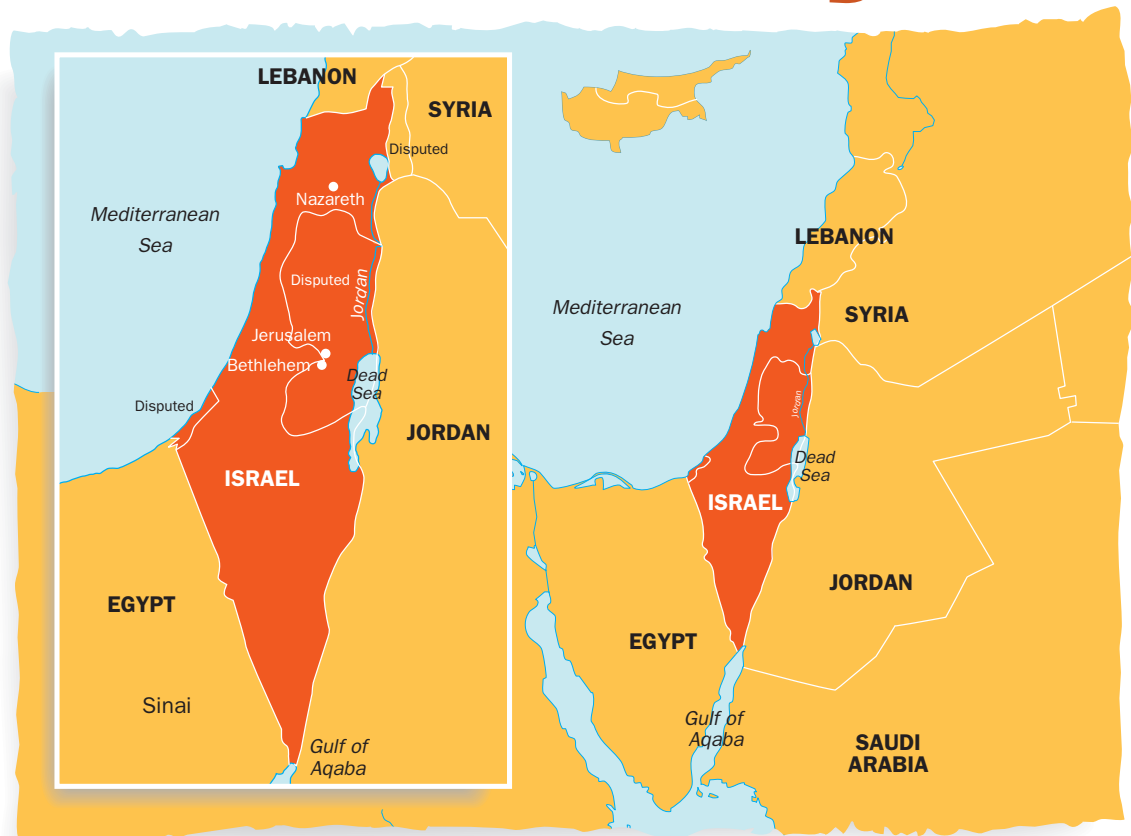


# Timeline



# Christianity

**Figure 7.1**  
 Christianity originated in present-day Israel approximately 2000 years ago. How is Christianity linked to Judaism?



## ORIGINS

Christianity must be examined in the context of its Jewish heritage. As discussed in the previous chapter, Judaism is a monotheistic religion, whose principles are based on the belief that there is only one God. According to the Judaic tradition, God created the universe and everything in it, including human beings. Through many different prophets, God promised to send a Messiah, or saviour. According to Christians, the **Messiah** was Jesus Christ, who they believe to be the son of God.

Information about Jesus Christ comes mainly from Christian followers, as well as Roman and Jewish historians and officials, and was circulated in the oral tradition until it was recorded in writing from one to three generations after his death. The source that provides the most detailed information on the life of Jesus is the New Testament of the Bible, specifically the first four books, known as the **Gospels**, or “good news” of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

### The Early Life of Jesus

In the reign of Caesar Augustus (31 BCE–14 CE), the Roman Empire had expanded into the region of present-day Israel (Figure 7.1), then known as Palestine. Most biblical scholars believe that Jesus was born around 4 BCE in Bethlehem. According to Christian scriptures, Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin named Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph. At the time of Jesus' birth, Caesar Augustus had ordered a census of the Roman empire, requiring that people travel to the town in which they were born to be recorded in the totals. Mary and Joseph came to Bethlehem, Joseph's birthplace, to register for the census. Because they could not find a place to stay, they took shelter in a stable. Mary gave birth to Jesus in the stable and placed him in a manger (Figure 7.2). Nearby, an angel appeared to shepherds who were tending their sheep, and announced the birth of Jesus:

*And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."*

Luke 2: 8-11 (NIV)

The shepherds spread the news of Jesus' birth and went to worship him. These details on the birth of Jesus appear in the gospel of Luke (2:1-20). Other details on the birth of Jesus appear in the gospel of Matthew. According to Matthew's gospel, three Magi, or wise men, from the East followed a star that led them to the site where Jesus was born:

*When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.*

Matthew 2: 10-11 (NIV)

Little is known about Jesus' early life. His family settled in Nazareth, a town in Galilee, located in the northern part of present-day Israel. Jesus of Nazareth was a carpenter's son, and probably lacked any formal education.



**Figure 7.2**  
This painting by Sandro Botticelli, entitled *Mystic Nativity*, shows the birth of Jesus. What qualities of this birth are highlighted by the artist?



### The Baptism of Jesus

According to Christian scriptures, a prophet named John the Baptist was to prepare the way for Jesus. John immersed his followers in a river in ritual **baptism**, to wash away their sins. When Jesus came to the Jordan River to be baptized, John realized who he was and told him that Jesus should be baptizing him. After John baptized Jesus, the **Holy Spirit**, which is considered by Christians to be the life-giving presence of God, came to Jesus:

*As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

Matthew 3:16-17 (NIV)

### Jesus' Ministry

Jesus retreated to the desert for forty days, where he fasted and was tempted by the devil. He was approximately thirty years old when he returned to the region of Galilee and began preaching in the synagogues. Although Jesus preached from a Jewish perspective, his message challenged accepted views, and was not popular in all religious circles.

Jesus gathered around him a group of **disciples**, or spiritual apprentices, and taught in smaller communities, and in large outdoor gatherings. Jesus moved comfortably among the common people and the outcasts of society. He urged people to love their neigh-

bours and their enemies alike, and to forgive wrongs of others. He counselled and forgave even the most sinful and despised members of society. In the gospel of John, he saves a woman accused of adultery from death by stoning.

The gospels describe spectacular works, called miracles, by Jesus during his ministry. For example, Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana and multiplied fish and loaves of bread by the Sea of Galilee. His touch healed the faithful, including people with leprosy, the blind, and those with other afflictions. Often, Jesus spoke in **parables**, or vivid moral stories drawn from situations in life (see page 292). He used parables to emphasize values and teach lessons.

### The Arrest of Jesus

As Jesus' following grew in number, so did his religious and political enemies. He strongly criticized the Pharisees—a Jewish sect who followed strict rules of dietary and ritual purity. The Jewish Sanhedrin, the governing council under Roman rule, worried that Jesus might be dangerous to them. They feared that their Roman masters might accuse the council of not maintaining a tight social order in conquered Israel. Jesus was seen as the son of God, which was considered blasphemous by religious authorities.

During Passover, in the third year of his public life, Jesus entered Jerusalem and was welcomed by the crowds who rushed to meet him with palm branches. However, religious authorities were planning his arrest. Soon after his entry into Jerusalem,

Jesus shared his last meal, the Passover meal, with his twelve **apostles**, who were his closest disciples. This event is known as the **Last Supper**. After the meal, while Jesus was praying in an olive grove, several officials consisting of religious authorities and soldiers, made their way towards him. They were led by Judas, one of Jesus' apostles, who had betrayed him.

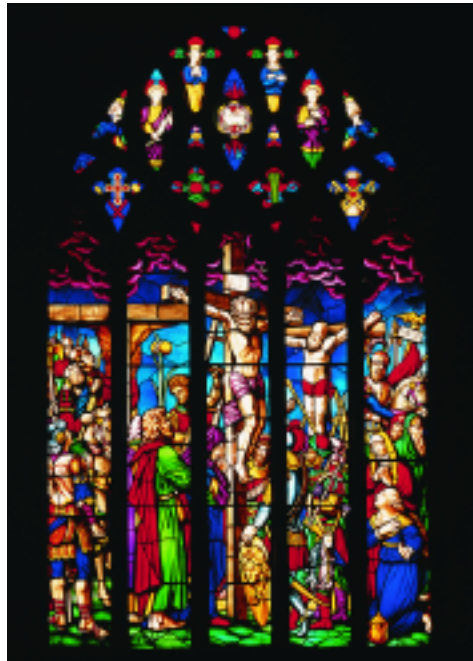
Jesus was arrested and charged by the Sanhedrin with blasphemy, the showing of contempt for God by attributing God-like qualities to that which is not God. The council found Jesus guilty because he would not deny that he was the Messiah, or that he was God's son. They turned him over to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, for sentencing, but Pilate could find no fault with the prisoner. However, he bowed to the demands of the crowd, and ordered that Jesus be crucified, or nailed to a wooden cross, a method of execution that the Romans favoured to provoke fear among conquered nations.

### The Death and Resurrection of Jesus

The gospels report that soldiers led Jesus to the Place of the Skull, where he was to be crucified. They made him carry the heavy cross, while many of his female disciples followed him mourning and wailing. The soldiers nailed Jesus to the wooden cross and hung a sign on it that read: This Is the King of the Jews. Jesus died on the cross that afternoon in the presence of his mother Mary and many of his female disciples, including Mary

Magdalene. This event is called the **Crucifixion**, which Christians believe brought about the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life (Figure 7.3).

According to Christian scriptures, Jesus' body was placed in a tomb cut out of rock. Three days after his death, Mary Magdalene, accompanied by other female disciples, went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices. When they arrived, Jesus' body was gone. An angel appeared and told them that Jesus had risen from the dead. Jesus appeared to the women and several of his followers during the days that followed. Christians call his return from the dead the **Resurrection**.



**Figure 7.3**

*This stained-glass window representation of the Crucifixion adorns Leigh Delamere Church in Wiltshire, England. What is the significance of the Crucifixion to Christians?*

### The Ascension of Jesus

As the resurrected Jesus visited with his apostles, he commissioned them to baptize all nations, and spread his teachings:



*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

Christians believe that forty days after the Resurrection, Jesus ascended bodily to heaven. This event, termed the **Ascension**, ended his time on earth, and initiated two millennia of Christianity.

### The Pentecost

Before the Crucifixion, Jesus had promised the apostles assistance in spreading the "good news" of his ministry: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever." (John 14:16) Christians believe that the comforter, the Holy Spirit, came on the feast that Christians call **Pentecost**, fifty days after Easter. It is believed that during this event, the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles with various spiritual gifts and abilities, including the ability to speak different languages. This enabled them to go into Jerusalem and proclaim their faith enthusiastically. Pentecost is often referred to as the birthday of the Church.

### The Early Christians and the Persecutions

Some of the earliest converts to the apostles' message were Greeks, who took the name Christians, derived from *Christos*, which is Greek for "the Messiah." Within a generation of Jesus' death, an early missionary named Paul was actively carrying Christianity across the eastern corner of the Roman Empire. Paul spread Christianity to Cyprus, Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece. Paul, later called St. Paul, was so important to the development of Christianity that he is sometimes referred to as an apostle even though he was not one of the twelve original apostles of Jesus.

Both tolerance and peace encouraged the spread of Christianity. The Roman Empire was an economic arrangement supported by military power. As long as trade flowed easily along the vast road network focused on Rome, the emperor usually accepted cultural and religious differences. Rome's power resulted in relatively peaceful times, called the *Pax Romana*, during which Christianity multiplied rapidly. However, emperors who opposed the new religion, or sought someone to blame for the problems of their reign, sometimes persecuted Christians. Two centuries later, as Christianity flourished and the Roman Empire declined, the Emperors Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian ordered the destruction of churches, holy articles, and books. Christian **martyrs**, "witnesses" who died for their faith, were dragged to the Roman Colosseum, where they

were mauled by wild animals before cheering crowds. During this period, Christians in Rome were forced to hold secret worship underground in the catacombs, or chambers where they buried their dead (Figure 7.4).

One of Diocletian's commanders, Constantine, became emperor himself, and moved the capital east to Byzantium, in modern-day Turkey. He legalized Christianity and was the first of many Christian rulers of the Roman Empire.



**Figure 7.4**

*The Catacomb of Priscilla, in Rome, Italy, was the site of worship services by early Christians in the late second century. How were Christians persecuted?*

## Check Your Understanding

1. Explain the part played by each of the following in the life of Jesus:
  - a) Caesar Augustus
  - b) the Sanhedrin
  - c) Pontius Pilate
2. Outline factors that might help explain why the life of a good man ended in a cruel execution.
3. How did conditions during the Roman Empire both help and hinder the spread of early Christianity?
4. If it were possible to interview Jesus Christ today, what questions would you ask him? Why?

## BELIEFS

Within a few generations of Jesus Christ's crucifixion, Christian communities had developed from the Middle East to Greece and Rome. In 325 CE, Emperor Constantine presided over a very important council of 300 Christian Church leaders at Nicaea, in modern-day Turkey, to

settle several significant principles of the faith. This meeting produced the Nicene Creed, a statement of beliefs universally accepted by Christianity today. Although the Nicene Creed outlines the basic beliefs shared by most Christians, many differences of opinion exist among the various Christian denominations regarding some of these beliefs. These differences are



discussed in the Groups and Institutions section of this chapter (page 296). The following statements of Christian belief appear as the original Nicene Creed, established in 325 CE:

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was made flesh by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. And we look for the Resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.*

### Creation

The opening of the Nicene Creed explains the basic Christian belief that the whole universe is God's creation. It does not say that one must believe that God created these things step-by-step during one week, as is described in Genesis, the first book of the Bible's Old Testament.

### God

Christian belief in God is derived directly from Judaism. Both religions agree that there is one God, who is an all-good Creator, responsible for the universe and all that fills it. In both faiths, God is viewed not only as a Supreme Being who rules all creation, but also as a personal God, approachable by individuals through prayer. This God is merciful, forgiving, and chooses to be a friend to people. However, God does command authority over all creation, including forces of evil. Overall, Christianity today focuses upon God's love for humanity, a love evidenced by Jesus Christ's suffering and death for the forgiveness of human sin.

### The Holy Trinity

One of the issues that early Church leaders grappled with was the question of the Holy **Trinity**. While there may seem to be three different Gods in Christianity—the Father, his son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit—they are all bound together as one God in the Holy Trinity. Christians must believe that God the Father and God the son are one, and that Jesus Christ is God. There was a practical purpose to the Nicaean Council, for if Jesus was not

God, the framework of Christian doctrine would crumble, and the young Church would disintegrate. The Creed states that Jesus came down from heaven, one with God from the beginning of time. When he entered our world as a baby he became human; therefore, he was both fully human and fully divine.

### The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is believed to be the life-giving presence of God that helps Christians to live faithful lives and continue the work that Jesus began. Christians hold that the Holy Spirit enters into believers, dwelling there and energizing them, just as the apostles experienced at Pentecost.

### Salvation and Eternal Life

Christians believe that Jesus was human, and that he suffered in his last days in order to accomplish the forgiveness of sin and human salvation. Ever since sin had entered the world, as described theologically by the story of Adam and Eve in the Old Testament, people had fallen far from harmony with God's will. Thus, Jesus' mission on earth was to bridge the gap between humanity and God, to bring about the forgiveness of sin, and to open the way to eternal life. The middle portion of the Nicene Creed outlines Christian beliefs surrounding the purpose of Christ's time on earth. The son of God came to give humans the opportunity to be "saved," that is, to attain eternal life in heaven after death (Figure 7.5).



**Figure 7.5**

*This painting by Denis Maurice, entitled Paradise, shows a representation of heaven. How does it reflect Christian beliefs regarding the afterlife?*

### The Last Judgement

Perhaps one of the most interesting statements of the Nicene Creed is the Christian belief that Jesus will come back to earth. At that time, Jesus' purpose will be to make a **Last Judgement**, that is, to determine which humans will join him, body and soul, in heaven. This includes Christians who have died, for they will be risen from the dead to live eternally with God. In Christianity, a person is either rewarded with perfection in heaven, or punished with eternal suffering in hell, depending upon whether or not he or she has practised what Jesus taught during his ministry. This includes forgiveness, providing the poor with the basic necessities of life, and treating one another as you would like to be treated in return.

# Exploring Issues:



Figure 7.6

Some people have strange ideas about the issue of cloning. They may originate from popular science fiction and comedy films, such as *Multiplicity*, in which a busy man gets clones made to help him with all of his responsibilities. People

wonder if a clone would have to be born a baby or if he or she could be created as an exact duplicate of them, identical in every way, including age. Others picture a world populated with identical people, who are eerily perfect. A company called Clonaid promises that for \$200 000 they can enable an individual to attain “eternal life.” They have already arranged to clone the dead infant of an American couple, as soon as it becomes technologically possible.

## How Cloning Works

Scientists begin with a fertilized egg of the species to be cloned. The nucleus of the egg is carefully removed,

and is then replaced by a different cell nucleus taken from the clone donor. The donor could even be dead, provided that he or she has been cryogenically preserved (quickly frozen) immediately after death. The new egg is grown into an embryo, which contains “stem cells” that grow into body parts, such as bones, organs and skin. Medical scientists are mostly interested in cloning as a way to use stem cells to produce new organs and body parts as replacements for the donor if and when he or she needs them.

In 1997, researchers successfully cloned Dolly the sheep (Figure 7.6), and since then have cloned mice, pigs, cows, and most recently, a monkey. However, scientists have found that animal clones tend to suffer from a variety of physical abnormalities and genetic defects that might lead to psychological problems. Should researchers go any further with their experiments or are they playing God? And what about the potential of abusing this new technology: Could terrorists and dictators clone themselves? Would the rich have the ability to custom-design their children? Opinions on the issue vary widely.

Cloning human beings is an example of an ethical, or moral issue posed by modern science and technology. The capability to artificially reproduce human life by cloning is just around the corner.

**At Issue: Should the cloning of human beings be permitted, or are we playing God?**

**The quotations that follow are excerpts from newspaper articles on the topic of human cloning.**

“Cloning of the monkey has already been done. So the possibility of reproducing ourselves, humankind, within the next few years is really not a question of “whether” or “if you can,” but a question of “who does it?”

Dr. Joseph Martin, Dean of Harvard University Medical School

“We believe that attempts to clone human beings at a time when the scientific issues of nuclear cloning have not been clarified are dangerous and irresponsible.”

Rudolf Jaenisch, biologist, Massachusetts Institute of Technology



# Human Cloning

“There is a push in the scientific world to go further in the field of biotechnology. But the church knows that there are deeper questions which must be asked about the impact of such technologies...we must be aware of the difference between arrogance and wisdom.”

Phyllis Creighton, a Diocese of Toronto representative at the 1998 General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada

“Who would be scandalized by the idea of bringing back to life a 10-month-old child who died accidentally? The technology allows it, the parents desire it, and I don’t see any ethical problems.”

Brigitte Boiseelier, chief scientist for Clonaid

## QUESTIONS

- a) Explain what Clonaid means when they state that “Cloning will enable mankind to reach eternal life.”**  
**b) Why would Christians react in a negative way to this statement?**
- Use the Internet to research the viewpoint of Christian Churches on the issue of human cloning.**
- Should human cloning be done? Express your point of view, using a pamphlet, a poster, or some other means of personal expression.**

## Web Quest

For samples of Church opinion on the issue of human cloning, go to the following Church sites:

**Lutheran:**

**<http://www.elca.org/dcs/humancloning.html>**

**Orthodox:**

**[www.greece.org/ahpa/D5/05000eft.html](http://www.greece.org/ahpa/D5/05000eft.html)**

**Catholic:**

**<http://www.catholic.org/pft/magisterium/donumvitae.htm>**

## The Role of Women in Christianity



**Figure 7.7**

Elizabeth Hardy is an Anglican minister at St. Michael the Archangel Church in Scarborough, Ontario.

The Bible supports equality between the sexes. Jesus himself interacted frequently with women in his public life, treating them with high regard. He protected a “sinful” woman from death at the hands of self-righteous zealots, and did not scorn her for wrong-doing. Jesus took women into his confidence, revealing his purpose on earth to them. Women, such as, Mary Magdalene, were some of Christ’s most faithful disciples, following behind as he carried the cross to his crucifixion and remaining there until after he died. Jesus’ female disciples were the first to learn of his

resurrection when they went to visit his tomb, and Mary Magdalene was the first person to whom the resurrected Jesus appeared.

Paul’s letter to the Galatians made clear the status of Christian women, and all other people baptized in Jesus’ name:

*... in Christ Jesus, all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Galatians 3: 26-28 (NIV)

However, although Jesus brought a message of equality among the faithful, the Church grew in societies that were largely dominated by men with most women confined to domestic roles as obedient wives and mothers.

Modern Christianity is more open to the equality of women. The Salvation Army was the first Christian Church to recognize full status for women in its ministry, possibly because it was co-founded by a married couple, William and Catherine Booth (see page 304). Today, there are ordained female ministers in most Protestant Churches (Figure 7.7).

## Check Your Understanding

1. Identify five important beliefs of Christianity that are formalized in the Nicene Creed.
2. Christianity and other faiths promise the opportunity for eternal life. Write a paragraph outlining reasons why people find this possibility so appealing.
3. Do you believe in life after death? How do you envision the afterlife?
4. In your view, have women and men shared an equal role in Christianity? Explain.

## PRACTICES, RITUALS, SYMBOLS, AND FESTIVALS

### Practices and Rituals

Rituals are defined as formal, established acts and ceremonies through which believers worship their deity. They are time-honored activities that are an important part of belonging to the faith. Most, but not all, Christian denominations have developed rituals of formal worship and prayer. Most of these rituals take place in a Christian house of worship, known as a church.

Some Christian denominations engage in simple rituals upon entering a church. Eastern Orthodox Christians cross themselves, light a candle, and kiss the icons (see page 280) depicting Jesus and other religious figures that are displayed at the entrance. Roman Catholics dip two or three fingers in the holy water font at the back of the church and bless themselves with the sign of the cross before walking to their seat.

### The Christian Worship Service

The main elements of the Christian worship ritual were already in place by the second century and included the following: prayers, scripture readings, the singing of psalms from the Old Testament, the consecration of bread and wine, communion, and the collection of offerings for the poor.

Today, Christian worship takes place on Sunday in most Churches, though a growing number of Protestant Churches hold their worship service on Saturday evening. In most Christian services, there is the **liturgy of the word**, which highlights readings and preaching. Often, this portion of worship includes the recitation of core belief statements, like the Nicene Creed. Readings from scripture, particularly the gospels and epistles of the New Testament, which describe the life and teachings of Jesus, are a vital part of the liturgy of the word, and usually provide the theme for a homily, or sermon by the clergy.



The Book of Psalms, which rose out of the daily life of the Hebrews, is also important in Christian worship. Through the psalms, the Jewish people expressed their faith and trust in God. Christians often draw hymns, readings, and prayers, from the Book of Psalms for religious services and for private reflection.

### Holy Communion

Most Christian worship also features a **communion** service in which the congregation is invited to share a ritual meal, as Jesus did with the apostles at the Last Supper. This is known as the liturgy of the Eucharist, and is signified by a procession, led by the clergy, bearing the gifts to the altar. It is held after the liturgy of the word, and there are two parts. First there is a sacred ritual of consecration, conducted by the priest or minister, to prepare the elements of the meal. Then, the blessed bread and wine (or grape juice), symbolizing the body and blood of Christ, is solemnly shared by the congregation. Recipients may be offered a wafer of unleavened bread, and a sip of wine, or a glass of grape juice, or they may receive a piece of bread within a spoonful of consecrated wine. They may file to the front of the church to receive communion, or the clergy (or lay leaders) may bring it to their seats. The different branches of Christianity interpret this portion of the worship ritual in very different ways, which is discussed in the Milestones section of this chapter (page 285).

### Christian Prayer

Christians pray individually and in groups. The Lord's Prayer, which is

the most widely used prayer in all of Christianity, is recited by the congregation at Christian worship services. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus teaches this prayer to his followers:

*Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

Matthew 6: 9-15 (NIV)

Traditionally, Roman Catholic Christians have used this prayer as part of "saying the rosary." A **rosary** (Figure 7.8) is a small chain or string that holds a cross and beads that are arranged in five "decades," or groups of ten. In saying the rosary, the worshipper begins each decade by uttering the Lord's Prayer, which is followed by the recital of additional prayers.

### Contemplative Meditation

Many Christians thoughtfully read and reflect upon the Bible. Since the early days of the Church, members have been encouraged to take initiatives—through fasting, prayer, and meditation—to have mystical religious experiences that bring them closer to the presence of God.

### Fasting

Fasting is abstinence from food, or certain kinds of food, for a period of time. It is often used as a way in which people seek pardon for their misdeeds,

or to participate more fully in the meaning of their religious teachings. For example, Christian fasting may be used to symbolically share in the suffering of Jesus or the hungry, and as a means to set aside the money saved as an offering to the poor. Many Christians fast during Lent, before Easter, to commemorate the forty days during which Jesus fasted in the wilderness.

### The Practice of Giving

Giving to others is a very important Christian practice. Christians are expected to contribute to their church financially and by service in special duties, for example, as choir members. In some churches, members may be asked to tithe, or donate up to one-tenth of their income to the church. Christian service also extends beyond the church into the local community. Members may join service clubs or organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, a Christian volunteer group that builds homes for needy families within the community and elsewhere. Finally, Christian giving should express itself in support toward the poor and those suffering from famine and disaster beyond the local community.

### Christian Pilgrimage

By practising pilgrimage, Christians may want to deepen and broaden their faith, or they might be seeking some special favour from God. Pilgrims are



**Figure 7.8**  
The rosary is used by some Christians during prayer.

religious travellers bound for a holy place, or special religious event. For example, in the summer of 2002, up to 750 000 youths from around the world are expected to converge on Toronto to hear the pope at World Youth Day. Each year, large numbers of Christians of all denominations make pilgrimages to shrines where people have experienced religious visions. They also go to the Holy Land to visit places connected to the life of Jesus.



# Holy Places

## The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Perhaps the holiest structure in all of Christianity is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. This place of worship is believed to be located on the hill of “The Skull,” identified in the gospels as the site of Jesus’ crucifixion and burial. These important Biblical places were located very close together in an old stone quarry just outside the ancient city walls of Jerusalem. Early Christians knew them, and archaeological research appears to support these claims.

The first Church of the Holy Sepulchre was constructed on the site by the Emperor Constantine after the Council of Nicea in 325 CE. It replaced a city square and a temple that the Romans had built over the top of the hill about a century after the death of Christ. Persian and Arab forces partially destroyed Constantine’s church in 614 and again in 1009 CE, but it was rebuilt each time. The present Church of the Holy Sepulchre was constructed from much of the original material in 1149 CE during the Christian Crusades to reclaim the Holy Land. This structure enclosed small shrines that had been built to mark the location of the Crucifixion and the burial tomb. The Grotto of St. Helena beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre also holds special significance. Christian tradition claims that Helena, mother of Constantine, found the wood of the cross of Jesus here when she visited during the construction of the original church.

Today, several Christian denominations share the church, and millions of visitors and pilgrims from around the world come to see it each year. Pilgrims commemorate Good Friday (see page 282) at this site by chanting prayers and reading from the gospels as they retrace Jesus’ route to the site of his crucifixion.

### QUESTIONS

1. Find the meaning of the word “sepulchre” in a dictionary. Why is this an appropriate name for Constantine’s church in Jerusalem? Why do all types of Christians come to this holy place?
2. Make a sequential list of the different uses of the church site, starting with the original stone quarry. How would these changes have complicated the work of modern-day archaeologists?



Figure 7.9



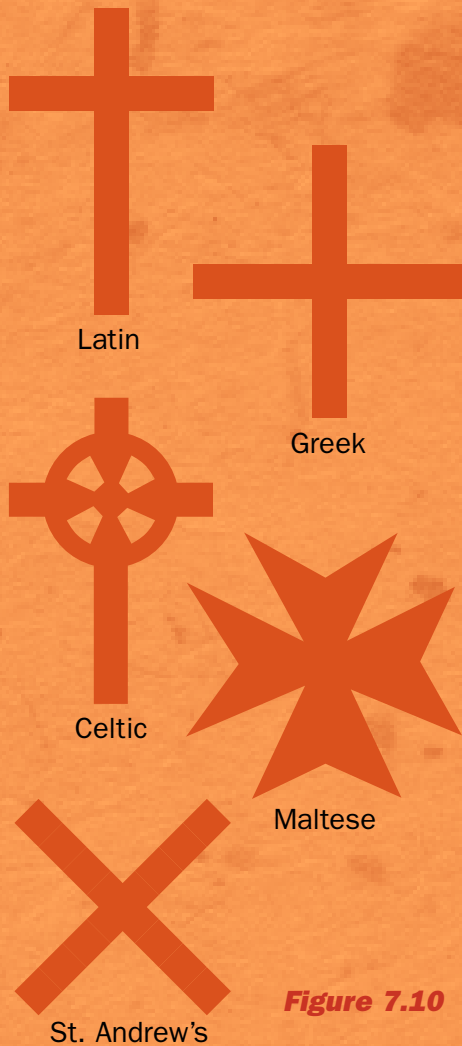
### Symbols and Icons

Like most world religions, Christianity is rich with symbols, especially those focused upon Jesus Christ. Christian Churches vary widely in their use of

symbols, ranging from the ornate symbolism of Eastern Orthodoxy to the stark simplicity of some evangelical Protestant faiths.

# Symbols and Icons

## The Cross



**Figure 7.10**

Jesus was sentenced to a slow, painful, and public death by hanging from a cross. The gospels describe how he was nailed to it through his hands and feet. The cross reminds Christians that this cruel death was for human salvation. It symbolizes the Christian belief that God loved the people of the world so much that he offered his son for the sake of humanity.

The early Church did not use the cross as a symbol because of the horror and suffering associated with this form of execution. As time passed, it became acceptable to use the cross as a Christian symbol.

Crosses take different forms (Figure 7.10) and serve a variety of purposes. The Latin cross is used primarily by Protestants and Roman Catholics. The Greek cross is used mostly by Eastern Orthodox Christians. The Celtic cross is predominant in Ireland and Scotland, and the cross with the flared ends has been associated with Malta. Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians make the sign of the cross on their bodies by touching their forehead, chest, and shoulders.

Religious crosses may be used in jewellery worn by believers, as grave markers in cemeteries, and on the spires and towers of Christian churches. Inside a church, the symbol of the cross might adorn the altar, the vessels used at communion, and the vestments worn by the minister or priest.

The symbol of the cross also appears in the flags of several countries that have a Christian heritage: they include Greece, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. The Union Jack of Britain is actually three superimposed crosses, one of them being the diagonal St. Andrew's cross, which symbolizes Scotland.

### QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel about the use of the cross in national flags? Explain.
2. In Canada, how is the cross used in civil (public or state) ceremonies?

**Figure 7.11****Chi Rho**

Another symbol representing Jesus is the Chi Rho, which looks like a capital letter “P” with an “X” superimposed over it (Figure 7.11). These are the first two letters of the Greek word ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, which means “Christ.” This symbol was used by the early Christians and marks vestments and other religious objects in some Christian Churches.

**The Fish**

The symbol of a fish, used in some Christian Churches, recalls Jesus’ words to his first disciples: “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men,” (Mark 1:17). Thus, the fish symbol is linked to spreading the gospel of Jesus. The fish symbol is also associated with the ancient Greek word for fish, ΙΧΘΥΣ, which is an acronym in Greek for “Jesus Christ Son of God, Saviour,” making the fish a symbol of Jesus himself (Figure 7.12). According to tradition, the fish was used as a secret sign by Christians to identify themselves to one another during periods of persecution.

**Figure 7.12****Figure 7.13****Figure 7.14****Icons and Images**

Icons, or images, of Christian religious figures reflect the divisions between the main branches of Christianity. Icons are stylized images rather than realistic portraits, and they are intended to show the heavenly glory of Jesus and other religious figures. Iconography, the art of making icons, was developed by the early Christians, and is done according to time-honoured rules within the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Byzantine rite of the Roman Catholic Church.

Many icons (Figure 7.13) are found within Orthodox churches for veneration by the faithful, especially on the iconostasis, an ornate screen that separates the congregation from the sanctuary. More realistic-looking images of holy subjects are not permitted in Orthodox churches, but are common in the rest of Christianity.

Three-dimensional statues and half-relief images of religious scenes in plaster, wood, and stone are most typical in Roman Catholic churches (Figure 7.14). In many Protestant churches, religious images depicting scenes from the life of Jesus appear in stained-glass windows (Figure 7.3). Stained glass is a special form of art that originated in the Middle Ages, when these colourful scenes were used to teach the common people who could not read stories from the Bible.

### Festivals

The Christian cycle of holy days follows the major events in the life of Christ as presented in the gospels.

### Christmas

The Christmas season begins with Advent, which starts four Sundays before Christmas, and is a time when Christians anticipate the birth of Jesus. Most Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25th, however many Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine rite Catholic denominations celebrate Christmas on January 7. Often, churches feature a manger scene, depicting the humble stable in which Jesus was born, and special song-filled worship services draw even occasional church-goers to attend.

Many of the most familiar Christmas carols were composed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for Christmas Eve worship. For example, “Silent Night” was composed in 1818 by an Austrian priest named Joseph Mohr.

The tradition of gift-giving at Christmas has two different origins. The gospel of Matthew tells the story of the three Wise Men, or Magi, who followed a bright star that led them from distant lands to the infant Jesus. They brought precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (two fragrant tree resins used for perfume and incense). Gift-giving also originates from the ancient Roman practice of year-end gifts to honour Saturn, the god of the harvest, and Mithras, god of light. The early Church adapted these Roman practices for their own religious purposes.

### Epiphany

Twelve days after Christmas, on January 6, most Christians celebrate the Epiphany, which commemorates the baptism of Jesus, as well as the visit of the Magi. In some Christian countries, gift-giving takes place on this day, or is spread over the “twelve days of Christmas.” The word epiphany means “manifestation” in Greek, and is used to commemorate the revelation of Jesus as God’s son, as reported in the gospels, at the time of his baptism in the Jordan River.

### Lent

The season of Lent begins approximately two months after Christmas and lasts for forty days, ending with





**Figure 7.15**

*The Mardi Gras in New Orleans is a festival that has its origins in the Christian tradition of spirited celebration preceding the sombre period of Lent.*

Holy Week and the festival of Easter. Lent lasts for forty days, representing the length of time Jesus spent on his meditative journey into the desert before he began his public ministry. Traditionally, Lent is a time of fasting, prayer, and spiritual self-assessment. Public festivals, such as Mardi Gras in New Orleans (Figure 7.15), or Carnivale in Rio de Janeiro, are rooted in this Christian tradition as social events before the sombre time of Lent begins. On Ash Wednesday, the day which begins the Lenten season, some Christians are marked on the forehead with ashes to remind them that they are mortals, and will return to dust upon their death.

### Easter

Holy Week, the holiest period of the Christian calendar, climaxes on Easter Sunday. The Protestant and Catholic Churches celebrate Easter on the first Sunday after the first full moon after

the spring equinox. The Eastern Orthodox Church usually celebrates Easter a week later, except when it coincides with the Easter of the Protestant and Catholic Churches, every four years.

Holy Week begins on the Sunday before Easter, which is known as Palm Sunday. On this day, Christians celebrate the day Jesus entered Jerusalem, and was welcomed by crowds holding palm branches, as described in the gospels. To mark this day, clergy bless and distribute palm branches to worshippers.

Holy Thursday marks the day of the Last Supper, when Jesus shared his last meal with his twelve apostles. According to the gospels, Jesus washed the feet of his apostles during the Last Supper. In some Christian traditions, a bishop or priest washes the feet of a group of priests or parishioners to reenact this deed of humble service.

Good Friday is the most solemn of Christian holy days since it commemorates the trial, crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus. The minister or priest reads passages from the Bible describing Jesus' final hours, and in some Christian traditions, worshippers kiss a large cross and/or symbolic tomb displayed at the front of the church. Some congregations reenact the final events of Jesus' life and take a cross out on procession through the streets (Figure 7.16).

Easter Sunday, the most holy of Christian celebrations, marks the resurrection of Jesus and the events surrounding it, beginning with the female disciples' discovery of Jesus' empty tomb. In commemorating the resurrection of Jesus, Easter celebrates tri-



**Figure 7.16**

*Christian congregations across Canada mark Good Friday by taking a cross out on procession through the streets.*

umph over sin and death. Worshippers celebrate this joyous occasion with a song-filled liturgy. Many Christians celebrate the eve of Easter with a vigil service where a flame, symbolizing Jesus—the light of the world—is passed from candle to candle among worshippers of the congregation.

#### Ascension and Pentecost

These holy days are both connected to Easter and evolved at approximately the same time as Holy Week, in early Christianity. Ascension Day takes place about forty days after Easter and celebrates Jesus' return to heaven, as witnessed by his followers. Pentecost falls ten days later. It acknowledges that the Holy Spirit filled the apostles with spiritual gifts of courage and understanding so that they could teach and spread the Christian faith.

#### Saints' Days

The early Christians began to direct prayer and reverence to **saints**, or holy

people, and martyrs, who had died for their faith. Saints are considered to be with God in heaven and can therefore hear prayers. For many Christians, Mary holds a special place of honour because she gave birth to Jesus as part of God's plan. As the mother of Jesus, Mary is considered by some Christians to be the mother of God. Saints' days are recognized and celebrated with special parades and other rituals in many parts of the world.

In Europe, saints' days are honoured in the cultures of Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland. Many nations have a patron saint that they recognize and celebrate, such as St. Patrick in Ireland, St. Andrew in Scotland, and St. Cyril in Slovakia.

In Canada, only a few saints, such as John the Baptist (a traditional holiday in Quebec), the Virgin Mary, and St. Joseph, our national patron saint, are recognized. Locally, many Christian churches acknowledge the saint's day of their particular name-sake.

## Check Your Understanding

1. How does the liturgy of the word differ from the communion service?
2. How does prayer differ from contemplative meditation? How are they similar?
3. Develop a list of Christian service organizations in your community (or a larger one in the region) that aim to help other people.
4. Describe the appearance and the meaning of the following Christian symbols:
  - a) the cross
  - b) the fish
  - c) the Chi Rho
5. In your opinion, which is the most important Christian religious festival? Why? Create a simple poster proclaiming this festival.

## MILESTONES

Religious events can mark important stages in life. Christianity bestows sacraments upon individuals when they reach these stages, to identify a new beginning. Christians call these spiritual benefits grace, or “favour from God,” and they represent high points in a person’s religious life.

There is great variety in the recognition of sacraments among Christians, and there are some branches of Christianity that do not include sacraments as a part of their religious practices. The Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches both celebrate seven sacraments to mark the passage of life; they include baptism, chrismation or confirmation, communion, confession, anointing the sick, ordination, and matrimony. Most Protestant Churches acknowledge two of these sacraments: baptism and communion.

## Baptism

Christians believe that the act of baptism cleanses their soul and signals the beginning of their Christian lives. According to the gospels, Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River. Later in his ministry, he instructed the apostles to go out and baptize all nations, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matthew 28:19). These same words are repeated in most Christian baptisms.

Early Christianity linked baptism to the Old Testament, by teaching that the sacrament removes the stain of **original sin**. According to the scripture, Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, were created by God and lived in the Garden of Eden. They were commanded not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Their defiance of God’s command left a spot on each person’s soul. Baptism reclaims the soul for God by entering the person into the salvation of Christ’s death and resurrection.



Today, most Christian denominations practise infant baptism. However, some Protestant Churches delay baptism until adolescence, or even adulthood, as a sign of choice. In most Christian Churches, baptismal rituals include the anointing of the candidate with blessed oils, and the pouring of water over the forehead. The Eastern Orthodox Church follows the example of Christ's own baptism by having the priest immerse the infant in a font, a reservoir for blessed water. Similarly, some Protestants, such as Baptists, baptize young adults by full immersion in a pool of water.

### Holy Communion

Sharing a meal is an important rite in many world religions. Most Christian Churches celebrate the Last Supper, the Passover meal that Jesus shared with his apostles the night before he was crucified. According to Christian scriptures, during the meal, Jesus passed some bread and wine to the apostles. Matthew's gospel tells the

story in words that are common in the communion rituals of all Christianity:

*While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."*

Matthew 26: 26-28 (NIV)

Early Christians met to celebrate this meal as the most important part of their worship ritual. However, as churches were built, the celebration evolved in form, so that the supper table was replaced by an altar, and the meal was replaced by a piece of bread and wine. The medieval Church taught that through the words spoken by the priest, the body and blood of Jesus Christ actually become present



**Figure 7.18**

*These girls are preparing to enter a Catholic church to receive their first communion.*

in the sacramental meal. This is the doctrine of **transubstantiation**, the belief that the bread and wine undergoes a change in substance, though not in physical appearance or chemical composition. The Orthodox and Catholic Churches believe that transubstantiation takes place through the priest's words. Most Protestant Churches celebrate the Last Supper only in a symbolic way, as a commemorative and spiritual event. They emphasize the sense of sharing of the congregation, but do not accept that the bread and wine has undergone any changes.

There is great variation in this sacrament among different Churches; the actual ritual is described on page 276 of this chapter. It is known by many different names including Holy Communion, the Mass, the Eucharist, Communion, the Lord's Supper, and the Lord's Table. It may be offered daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, or not at all. In all Churches, it is an important rite of passage to receive this sacrament for the first time (Figure 7.17).

### Confession or Reconciliation

The origin of Confession, also known as Reconciliation comes from Jesus' instructions to the apostles:

*“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”*

John 20: 22-23 (NIV)

Members of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, as well as some Protestant denominations, periodical-

ly discuss their sins and struggles with their priest or minister; this is known as **confession**. This may be done face-to-face, or with a screen between the two for anonymity. In Eastern Orthodox Churches, confession is not done until **reconciliation** has been achieved with those who were wronged.

### Chrismation or Confirmation

Many Christian denominations acknowledge the importance of attaining full participation in the Church, and conduct special rituals to recognize this, usually with young adolescents. Some Christians believe that at this time, spiritual gifts, such as wisdom and knowledge, are received from the Holy Spirit to help the individual to grow in his or her faith. In some Churches, sponsors, usually close relatives or family friends, assist the parents in preparing the person to become a young adult member of the Church. On the day of the **confirmation** ceremony, it is the sponsors, not the parents, who come forward with the young person. The anointing with oil, accompanied by the laying on of hands by a minister, bishop, or priest, are common characteristics of this rite. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, **Chrismation** rites are performed on infants at the time of baptism, and include anointing with blessed oils.

### Ordination

Most Christian Churches use extensive education and formation programs at religious colleges and seminaries to prepare candidates for a life as a cleric, though a few Christian



**Figure 7.18**

*A bride and groom walk around the altar three times at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Scarborough, Ontario. What does their walk symbolize?*

denominations see no need for a formal clergy. Christians believe that those called to do God's work are filled with the Holy Spirit, just as the apostles were at Pentecost. The Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament describes ordination of Church leaders, which include prayer and the laying on of hands, rituals still performed today.

### Matrimony

Christianity recognizes the sanctity of marriage because Jesus highlighted that it is a lasting bond before God: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife...So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate," (Matthew 19: 5-6).

In all Christian Churches, the minister or priest functions on two levels, religious and civil, combining Christ

and the law. Marriage is a sacred vow made in front of witnesses by a couple who promise to be faithful to one another, with the help of God. Some Churches consider marriage a sacrament and, therefore, a bond that cannot be dissolved. These Churches believe that the grace of the sacrament comes from God through one person in the couple to the other. Christianity usually puts the wedding into a full worship liturgy, with hymns and preaching, often including communion and a service. The Eastern Orthodox ceremony is the most distinctive in Christianity. The couple is crowned by the priest before God, and drink from a single cup to share in Holy Communion. This is followed by a triple procession around the altar table to symbolize that they have taken their first steps together in the presence of God (Figure 7.18).



# Profile:

## Mother Teresa of Calcutta 1910-1997



Figure 7.19

Mother Teresa was called “a living saint” by *Time Magazine*. During her lifetime, she received numerous humanitarian awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. Her message to the world consisted of three words: “God is love.” She lived this message by devoting a lifetime of work to the poor of India.

Mother Teresa was born Agnes Bojaxhvi in Yugoslavia in 1910. While attending secondary school, Agnes learned about the work of missionaries in India and decided to pursue the calling. At the age of 18, she joined the Loreto nuns of Ireland and arrived in Calcutta a year later. In 1931, she took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, as well as the name Teresa. Fifteen years later, she had a vision in which Jesus spoke the following words to her: “I want you to serve me among the poorest of the poor.” In 1949, she began her mission in the slums of Calcutta, India, and a year later established a new religious order—The Missionaries of Charity. Members of this religious order take a fourth vow of “wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor.”

The Missionaries of Charity expanded so quickly that at the time of Mother Teresa’s death in 1997,

they operated more than 600 houses in 136 countries. In fact, they recently opened a home to serve the poor in Winnipeg. The candid stories that Mother Teresa related about her work tell us a great deal about her. She often spoke frankly, with some humour, about the importance of giving dignity to the dying poor. This excerpt is taken from the book *My Life with the Poor*.

*We have picked up thousands of people from the streets of Calcutta. One day I picked up a man from an open drain. Except for his face, his whole body was full of wounds.*

*I brought him to our house. And what did the man say? ‘I have lived like an animal in the street, but now I am going to die like an angel, loved and cared for.’*

*We just had time to give him a bath and clean him and put him in bed. After three hours, he died with a big smile in his face and with a ticket for Saint Peter [heaven]. We gave him a special blessing by which his sins were forgiven—whatever sins he had ever committed—and he could see the face of God for all eternity. There was no complaint, there was no cursing, there was no fear.”*

## QUESTIONS

1. What impressions do you have of Mother Teresa from this story? Explain.
2. Research the life of Mother Teresa, and then imagine that you are a journalist. Write her obituary (death notice), or prepare a headline and a newspaper article on her death.

### Anointing the Sick or Dying

Throughout his ministry, Jesus healed the sick through prayer and the laying on of hands. Later, his followers did so in his name (James 5: 13-15), and the practice continues today in many Christian Churches. Today, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and some Protestant Churches, anoint the sick. This ritual has certain common characteristics in different Churches. The clergy holds the patient's hand, at the same time anointing the patient's forehead with blessed oil. Prayers are said, and in some cases, communion is given to the sick or the dying. Ritual preparation for death marks the last milestone in the journey through a Christian life.

### Funerals

The Christian funeral has two purposes: to commend the deceased to heaven, and to console the family and friends of the deceased. Some Christian funeral traditions come from the Romans, including cremation, a practice that has never been accepted by the Eastern Orthodox Church. Christian funeral rites can be adapted for use in the church, funeral home, cemetery chapel, or at the grave site. The religious service usually includes prayers, hymns, and other music.

## Web Quest

Find information and links for Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity at:  
[http://www.categoryz.com/m/mother\\_teresa.htm](http://www.categoryz.com/m/mother_teresa.htm)

## Check Your Understanding

1. Identify the meaning of the following terms: sacrament, original sin, transubstantiation.
2. Which two rites of passage are sacraments in most Christian Churches? Why?
3. Which Christian milestones often use the rituals indicated below?
  - a) cleansing with water
  - b) anointing with oils
  - c) laying on of hands
4. Prepare a scrapbook or a poster to illustrate both the religious rites of passage (if any), and secular, or non-religious, milestones that have been important events in your life.

## SACRED WRITINGS

Christianity draws its sacred writings from the two sections of the Bible known as the Old Testament and the New Testament. The former is the Judaic tradition of the law and the prophets, while the latter is the Christian tradition of the apostles. Together, they form a long record of revelations, or promises of delivery or salvation, made by God to his people.

The New Testament emerged as Jesus' apostles developed a new body of writings to tell the story of Jesus Christ. The New Testament is comprised of four main components. The first component is the four gospels, the story of Jesus told by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They are followed by a section called the Acts of the Apostles, which reports on the spread of Christianity after Jesus' death and resurrection. The third section contains the **epistles** (letters) written by early Christians. The last component is the book of Revelation, which contains what some believe to be prophecies about future events.

### The Gospel of Mark

Mark's gospel is considered the oldest of the four, written sometime shortly before 70 CE. Some believe that Mark was an early Christian of Jewish descent, who traveled with Paul on his first missionary trip to the island of Cyprus. Mark is thought to have been with the apostle Peter in Rome, and tradition claims that this gospel contains Peter's memories. It is the shortest of the four gospels, with just 661 verses, but it forms the core of

Matthew and Luke's, both written later. In fact, 600 of Mark's verses are used almost word-for-word in Matthew's gospel and 350 in Luke's. Scholars identify the gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke as synoptic gospels, meaning that they have a shared perspective, because of the text they share.

In the first half of Mark's gospel, Christ moves quickly from place to place, performing miraculous deeds and teaching in parables. The rest of the gospel focuses on the Crucifixion and Resurrection, showing the importance that Mark placed on these two events.

### The Gospel of Matthew

Matthew's gospel was probably written around 80 CE. One of the twelve apostles, he had been a Jewish tax collector, not a popular occupation with the public. According to tradition, after Jesus' death, Matthew preached widely in North Africa and the Middle East, recording this gospel in his later years. This is the longest of the four gospels, and it has two distinct characteristics that set it apart from the others.

Matthew makes a special effort to connect Jesus with the Old Testament, using the first seventeen verses to trace Christ's family line through forty-two generations. The other important feature of the gospel of Matthew is the great detail that it provides about the teachings of Jesus. The most notable is the Sermon on the Mount, more than a hundred verses of lessons covering a wide range of topics. It is a blueprint for Christian life.



# Sacred Text

## **The Sermon on the Mount**

When Jesus taught, he was often followed by large crowds of people. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus retreated part way up a mountainside to escape this crush of followers. There, he gave important lessons about many things, like anger and forgiveness. His sermon on the mountain began by outlining the qualities, known as the "Beatitudes," needed to gain eternal life in heaven.

*Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them, saying:*

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

*"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

*"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

*"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

*Matthew 5: 1-12 (NIV)*

## QUESTIONS

1. Identify the meaning of the word beatitude. Which of the beatitudes in the verses above do you think is most important today? Explain your choice.
2. Compare the Beatitudes to the Ten Commandments. How are they similar? How do they differ?

### The Gospel of Luke

Scholars believe that this gospel was written between 80 and 90 CE. Traditionally, both this gospel and the Acts of the Apostles have been credited to St. Luke, though some modern scholars dispute this. Luke was an early Greek Christian, a well-educated man, and identified by his friend St. Paul as a physician. Many verses used in Luke's gospel are the same as those in Matthew's. This has led Bible scholars to two conclusions: either Luke borrowed from Matthew's work, or else both of them used another source, identified by scholars only as "Q," which has never been discovered.

As a physician, Luke highlights the message of healing by recounting parables about the poor and oppressed that are not contained in the other gospels. Stories, such as "The Good Samaritan," about a man willing to help an injured traveller, are among the best-known lessons in the New Testament. Christianity relies upon Luke's gospel for most of the details regarding Christ's early life, including much of the Christmas story.

### The Gospel of John

The fourth gospel of the New Testament has been credited to John, one of the twelve apostles. It was written around 100 CE, at which time John would have been very old. This gospel differs a great deal from those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and scholars believe it was more likely written by followers of John, rather than the apostle himself.

John's gospel does not tell the story of Jesus biographically. Instead,

he presents it theologically. John recounts Jesus' lessons and actions in long reflections that reveal his godliness. This gospel refers to Jesus as the "Word of God," the "Bread of Life," and the sacrificial "Lamb of God." These metaphors are a very important part of the Christian sacrament of Holy Communion. Another important element of this gospel is the "eleventh commandment" of loving one another. The words spoken by Jesus to his disciples represent a fundamental principle of human relationships in his time and in the present:

*I give you a new command. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another...*

John 13: 34-35 (NIV)

### The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles

Christianity considers the four gospels of paramount importance, but more than half of the New Testament contains other books of history, instruction, and warning. The Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke, outlines the beginnings of the Church, and describes the work of the apostle Peter and the early missionary Paul in spreading the Christian faith. Luke highlights the importance of the Holy Spirit in guiding the early fathers of the new Church.

The Epistles mostly come from Paul, or are attributed to him, though there are three letters from John and other letters from early leaders of the Church. Paul's letters are the earliest

works of the New Testament, written from about 50 to 60 CE to the congregations that he established as he preached across a wide area of the ancient world. Paul wrote to encourage early Christians during times of persecution, and to remind them of Jesus' command that they love one another, just as they love God. The Epistles are used as sacred readings during worship services in many Christian Churches.

### The Book of Revelation

The last book of the New Testament is unlike any other and has created some controversy about its true meaning. It was written around 95 CE by a persecuted Christian in exile named John, possibly, but not likely the apostle. The book of Revelation is an example

of apocalyptic literature, describing, in symbolic and visionary terms, the destruction of the enemies of a persecuted people. Some Christians interpret the book of Revelation very literally to warn of a judgement day that is close at hand.

*Then I saw another angel flying in mid-air, and beheld the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth - to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water."*

Revelation 14: 6-7 (NIV)

## Check Your Understanding

1. What is the major difference between the Old and New Testaments of the Bible?
2. What is the difference between the gospels and the epistles? Compare the general purposes of each type of text.
3. How are the three synoptic gospels similar to one another? How does John's gospel differ from them?
4. Read one section from the New Testament, and write a personal response of at least a half page to what you have read. Be prepared to share your comments.



# Skill Path: In-depth Interview

An interview is a conversation between two or more people. Researchers value this research method because they can ask questions to obtain and clarify information on the spot. For respondents, the interview provides an often-welcome opportunity to express their views.

## Structured Interview

Structured interviews are formal in nature and are designed to elicit specific answers from respondents. The researcher asks a number of prepared questions in a specific sequence, to which the respondents answer orally. Often, a researcher uses this format when testing a specific hypothesis or comparing information. For example, if a researcher is interested in discovering the religious practices of urban churches versus rural churches, he or she might ask the same specific questions during interviews with urban and rural ministers and compare the answers.

## Informal Interview

Informal interviews are relaxed conversations where the researcher has not prepared particular types of questions that must be asked in a specific sequence. The main goal of this type of interview is to simply discover peoples' views on general topics. The informal interview can be the most difficult to conduct. The researcher must display an ability to be "quick on his or her feet." He or she must be able to decide instantly if the interview has become too personal; when to stop the interview; and how to maintain calm and open communication for the entire length of the exchange.

**A helpful hint:** Always begin the interview with non-threatening questions to establish a feeling of trust.

## Retrospective Interview

A retrospective interview can be either structured or informal. The goal of the researcher is to have the person responding to the questions recall, from memory, an incident in the past. All questions reflect this goal. Retrospective interviews often do not provide the most accurate data because of the high potential for human error that might result from poor memory.

## Interview Questions

There are various types of questions that a researcher might ask. They can include the following:

- **Demographic questions**

These questions relate to the background of the respondent and address topics such as age, occupation, income, and education.

- **Knowledge questions**

These questions elicit answers that reflect fact as opposed to opinion. For example, a researcher might ask a priest or minister to identify the milestones that are considered sacraments in his or her Church.

- **Experience questions**

The goal of these questions is to elicit descriptions of behaviours that might have been observed had the researcher decided to conduct an observation instead of an interview. For example, a researcher might ask: "If I were to attend an Easter Sunday service, what rituals would I observe?"

- **Opinion questions**

These questions attempt to elicit an opinion, or determine the respondent's values or beliefs.

For example: “What do you think about the Church’s policy on human cloning?”

- **Feelings questions**

The intent of these questions is to determine how the respondent feels about a topic—what his or her emotions are with regard to experiences. For example: “How did you feel when you attended Sunday School as a child?”

**Note:** Often researchers confuse feelings and opinion questions. Discovering peoples’ opinions on issues is not the same as probing for emotions regarding experiences. “How do you feel...” should elicit responses that reflect a respondent’s likes and dislikes; whereas “What is your opinion of/What do you think about...” should elicit a respondent’s point of view about an issue or policy.

### Tips for a Successful Interview

- Arrive on time with all necessary equipment.
- Greet your respondent and reconfirm the purpose of your research.
- Ask your questions clearly.
- Be a good listener, and be prepared to follow-up with questions for further clarification.
- Use point-form notes to record responses, or consider taping the interview.
- When you are finished, thank the respondent and mention that you may call back for clarification of answers.

### Practise It!

1. Identify each type of interview question from the list below.

- What do you think about the Church’s policy on divorce?
- How did you feel during your ordination?
- How old are you?
- What vestments does a minister wear during Sunday worship?
- How often does the Church offer communion?
- What is your occupation?

2. Interview a priest, minister, or active Christian about the meaning of his or her faith in the modern world. Don’t forget to choose your type of interview and questions carefully.

## GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS

For several hundred years, the Christian Church formalized its beliefs and extended its geographical boundaries. Zealous missionaries continued the work of St. Paul. St. Patrick took Christianity to Ireland, and, although he was more a warrior than a missionary, by 800 CE, King Charlemagne of the Germanic Franks had established the Holy Roman Empire, which stretched across much of Europe.

### The Eastern Schism

As the Church grew larger, the forces of history began to pull it in two. When Roman Emperor Constantine shifted his capital city, he gave the empire two focal points—Rome in the west and Byzantium (Constantinople) in the east. As Christianity expanded westward into Europe, the influence of the Roman patriarch increased, and he came to be called “pope.” Serious disagreement developed as the pope claimed authority over the whole Church.

There was also significant disagreement within the Church over issues of doctrine. The breaking point was the **filioque clause**, a Latin word inserted into the Nicene Creed by the Church in the west. The Roman pope added the expression “and the Son” to the end of the following statement from the original Nicene Creed of 325 CE: “And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father.” The western Church believed that both the Father and Son

sent forth the Holy Spirit. The Eastern Church believed that the power of the Holy Spirit came only from God the Father.

In 1054 CE, the pope in Rome and the patriarch in Constantinople excommunicated, or formally expelled, one another’s senior Church officials. A **schism**, or break, occurred as the Church split into two branches—the Eastern Orthodox, centred on the universal patriarch in Constantinople, and the Western Church, focused upon the pope in Rome.

### The Eastern Orthodox Church

Followers of the Eastern Orthodox Church rejected the authority of the pope and any other modifications made to Christian belief after 787 CE.

Missionaries of the Greek Orthodox Church actively spread the faith into Eastern Europe and Russia. Today, the Eastern Orthodox Church is predominant in Greece, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania. Migration has spread Orthodoxy worldwide, and today it claims approximately 225 million members.

### Characteristics of Orthodoxy

Typically, Eastern Orthodox Churches are constructed with a distinctive cross-shaped floor plan, where four short wings meet under a rounded central roof. Inside, they are ornately decorated with religious icons representing Jesus, Mary, the angels, and saints of the early Church (Figure 7.20). The Orthodox service, called the Divine Liturgy, is usually long and very elaborate, focused upon rituals established early in Christian history.



**Figure 7.20**

*Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow is an example of a Russian Orthodox church.*

Ornate vestments, or clothing, worn by the priest, chanting, and the smell of incense burning all contribute to a sense of “other-worldliness” during the Divine Liturgy.

Today, the Eastern Churches are led by an Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul (formerly Constantinople). In an important symbolic healing of the East-West schism, the patriarch Athenagoras, and Pope Paul VI met in 1965 and lifted the excommunications that their predecessors had levied so long ago. However, the two Churches remain separate institutions.

Only men can be Orthodox priests, and they are allowed to have been married before their ordination; however, once ordained, they cannot marry. The Orthodox Churches have always promoted monastic life for men and women, and thousands live in monasteries around the world.

Monastic priests and nuns are not permitted to have been married.

### Independent Eastern Christian Churches

Several sects (Figure 7.21) in the Middle East and Africa broke from Mediterranean Christianity in the fifth and sixth centuries CE. While they worship the Holy Trinity, these Churches disagree with the decision of early Church councils that Jesus Christ was both true God and true man. About 15 million people belong to these sects, about half of them in the Ethiopian Church. This African sect is the most unusual of the Christian Churches, sharing many traditions with Judaism; for example, practicing ritual purification, keeping the Sabbath, and using a replica of the Ark of the Covenant during worship.

**Figure 7.21**  
Independent Eastern  
Christian Churches

1. **East Syrian Church**—Iraq, Middle East
2. **Chaldean Church**—Iraq, Iran
3. **West Syrian Church**—Syria, Lebanon, Iraq
4. **Armenian Church**—Middle East
5. **Coptic Church**—Egypt
6. **Ethiopian Church**—Ethiopia

### The Roman Catholic Church

After the schism with Orthodoxy, the Western Church expanded its influence and centralized its authority. In 1095 CE, Pope Urban II proclaimed a great expedition to recover Jerusalem and the Holy Land from Muslim rule. This began the Crusades, a “holy war” that lasted more than a century. There were at least five “waves” of crusaders, one of which even attacked and captured the Eastern Orthodox capital of Constantinople. Historians agree that in the fight against a common enemy, the Crusades unified Europe and extended the reach of the Western, or Roman Catholic Church.

### The Catholic Reformation

In response to the Protestant Reformation (see page 299) the Church spent eighteen years, beginning in 1543, at the Council of Trent affirming all of its basic teachings, in what is called the Catholic Reformation. Among other things, the council identified the seven Catholic sacraments for the first time, and described three

destinations for the souls of the dead—heaven, hell, and purgatory. **Purgatory** is a temporary state in which souls exist until they are cleansed of sin and can enter heaven. The Council deemed that prayers to the saints, and to Mary, are acceptable Roman Catholic practices, and it upheld the importance of both the Bible and Church tradition. During the centuries that followed the Council of Trent, missionaries and migration carried Roman Catholic beliefs to practically every corner of the world. Today, this Church has more than one billion members.

### Characteristics of Catholicism

The central role of the pope is one thing that sets the Roman Catholic Church apart from the rest of Christianity. As early as the fourth century CE, the bishop of Rome claimed leadership of the Church, linking himself to the following words of Christ: “Thou art Peter [the apostle] and upon this rock I will build my church,” (Matthew 16:18). Catholics believe that popes are successors to Saint Peter and that their central leadership helps hold the huge membership of the Church together. In 1870, the First Vatican Council strengthened the pope’s authority by making **papal infallibility** Roman Catholic doctrine. This means, that provided the pope has consulted widely and is speaking formally as Church leader, his teachings relating to faith and morals are protected from error by God.

Vatican II, the second Vatican Council, held between 1962 and 1965,

introduced many important documents that updated almost every aspect of the Church. Among other things, Latin was eliminated from worship in favour of the local language. Direct participation in the service, or the Mass, was encouraged by turning the altar and the priest to face the congregation, and by giving lay people roles as commentators and assistants in distributing Holy Communion. Since Vatican II, the Eucharist can be taken in two forms: a small, circular wafer of unleavened bread, called the host, and wine, both of which have been consecrated.

One of the major challenges facing the Roman Catholic Church today is a shortage of priests, particularly in industrialized nations, such as Canada, the United States, and Western Europe. Catholic priests must be males and they must remain both celibate, that is, abstain from marriage, and chaste, that is, abstain from sexual relations. They have a very strict personal code to maintain in an increasingly secular and individualistic society. And, it is quite unlike the Orthodox Churches where men may marry before they are ordained, or the Protestant Churches, with both married clergy and female clergy. For the past generation, the number of new Catholic priests has not been sufficient to replace retirees or to keep up with the growth of new **parishes**, or church districts. Few churches have more than one priest any more; in fact, the clustering of two or three parishes together is becoming increasingly common.



### The Protestant Reformation

The second great division in the Church took place almost five hundred years after the Eastern schism, during the Renaissance, an era of social change. In 1517 CE, a German monk named Martin Luther caused a dramatic change in the Roman Catholic Church by challenging many of its medieval practices. He called for a simpler “inner faith,” free from long-established rituals and outward shows of devotion. The Church excommunicated him, no longer allowing Luther membership or participation in its rites of faith. His followers established the Lutheran Church, and the **Protestant Reformation**—the reform of the western Church in protest to its practices—was underway. The Protestant Reformation also caused the Catholic Reformation, which began in 1543 as a response to the criticisms of the Protestant reformers.

### Figure 7.22

*Pope John Paul II, who became the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in 1978, has been called the “people’s Pope” because of his concern for the poor and his frequent world missions.*



### The Protestant Churches

The Orthodox and Roman Churches had always focused on the importance of both faith and works, but Martin Luther introduced a new view. Salvation by faith alone turned the expectations of belief inward, rather than focusing on outward signs. While love and service to others was important, they were not necessary for salvation. Knowing God through the study of the Bible became more important than following long-established rituals of worship. This is a defining characteristic of many Protestant Churches today.

Martin Luther's translation of the Bible from Latin into German was almost as important as his new interpretation of Christianity. Soon, Luther's new Bibles were in the hands of the emerging commercial middle classes of northern and western Europe. Educated people could now read and interpret the gospels themselves, without the direction of Roman Catholic clerics. As a result, the Reformation spread rapidly, through Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Britain, and Scandinavia. New interpretations of the faith took hold, and the foundations of the Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican Churches were established. Later, several other Christian Churches in the Protestant tradition emerged, some of which will be discussed in this section.

#### The Lutheran Church

More than 75 million people in the world are Lutherans, the first of the Protestant Churches. They focus on the message of God's forgiving love

and consider the Bible, rather than Church doctrine, as the sole guide to religious truth. There are two sacraments in the Lutheran Church—baptism and the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion. Lutherans believe that in communion, Christ is present in a very real way, through consubstantiation. Consubstantiation acknowledges the presence of Christ's body and blood in the offering, but all around it, without altering the substance of the bread and wine.

#### The Calvinist or Reformed Churches

During the mid-sixteenth century, John Calvin, a classical scholar, experienced a sudden religious conversion in Switzerland. He developed a core of doctrine that accepted justification, but introduced new elements of belief, for example, the absolute sovereignty of God. John Knox was influenced by Calvin and carried his ideas to Scotland, where he founded the Presbyterian Church. Today, about 100 different Calvinist-based denominations belong to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Calvinism stresses **sanctification**, that is purification from sin, through obedience of the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament. Members are taught to value integrity, sincerity, and hard work, since all human actions are under scrutiny from God. The liturgies of Reformed Churches are relatively free of ritual, with a strong focus upon preaching and hymn singing. The Lord's Supper is celebrated in a symbolic way, and baptism is the only other sacrament.

# Profile!

## Martin Luther

1483-1546



**Figure 7.23**

Martin Luther was born in 1483 CE, and was ordained as a priest in 1507. He entered a monastery to follow an isolated life of prayer and fasting, but found that this reverence was not bringing him closer to God. Bible study led Luther to refine the idea of **justification**, that which makes a person worthy to God. While the Roman Catholic Church believed that one was justified by having faith, doing good works, receiving the sacraments, and fulfilling a number of Church demands, Luther felt that it was simpler than that. He claimed that salvation was gained “by faith alone.” Furthermore, since God is kind, he looked favourably upon all people, not just the pious.

In 1517, Martin Luther posted his famous Ninety-five Theses on a church door in Wittenberg, Germany. These were points of debate about certain beliefs and practices. Some of the theses presented his radical views about salvation, but his criticism directed at selling **indulgences** angered Church authorities most of all. An indulgence was usually a formal penance of prayers done to obtain

God’s forgiveness for sins; however, the wealthy could simply donate money to the Church instead of praying. This challenge led to intense scholarly debate about the Ninety-five Theses with Catholic theologian Johann Eck. Luther defended his views about justification and salvation, but went even further. He denied the supremacy of the pope and declared that Church councils could commit errors of faith.

He was excommunicated and banned as “an obvious heretic.” Luther translated the whole Bible into German. Later, he wrote several books and pamphlets that outlined his views of a reformed Christianity.

Luther’s revised liturgy was both simpler and in the language of the people instead of Latin. Martin Luther intended to reform the Church rather than break from it, but when he died in 1546, he was already recognized as an important figure who had changed the course of Christianity.

## QUESTIONS

1. How did Luther’s ideas about salvation differ from those of the Roman Catholic Church?
2. Indicate with which of Luther’s ideas you agree or disagree. Be prepared to explain your positions.

### The Anglican Church

Anglicanism includes the original Church of England, the Anglican Church of Canada, and the Episcopal Church in the United States. The formation of this Church was entirely political. King Henry VIII wanted his marriage to Catherine of Aragon annulled, or made void, and the Catholic Church would not comply. King Henry had the Archbishop of Canterbury annul the marriage and had Parliament pass the Act of Supremacy, which made the monarch head of the Church in England. He ordered the translation of the Bible and worship services into English, but made no other changes in doctrine. Anglicans do not recognize the authority of the pope, nor do they accept the doctrine of transubstantiation in the Eucharist (see page 286). However, their liturgy is very similar to that of Catholicism, with the result that

Anglicans tend to view themselves as a “bridge” between Protestants and Roman Catholics.

### The Baptist Churches

These Churches have their origin in the Anabaptist movement of sixteenth-century Protestantism. Baptists believe that becoming a Christian should be a mature and informed decision, and not a birthright. In Baptist Churches, this sacrament calls for the total immersion of adults in water, in the way John the Baptist baptized Jesus (Figure 7.24). Baptist liturgy includes the sacrament of communion, with Christ present in spirit only, as well as Bible preaching and hymn singing. Martin Luther King Jr., the American civil rights leader who championed the rights of African Americans in the 1960s was a Baptist minister. In Canada, Tommy Douglas, the founder of the Canadian medicare system and the first leader of the New Democratic Party, was also a Baptist minister.

**Figure 7.24**

*This baptism is taking place in a Baptist church. What are your views on adult versus infant baptism?*



### The Methodist Churches

These Churches originated two centuries after the Protestant Reformation. In the eighteenth century, John Wesley, an Anglican priest in England, founded the movement as he and a group of friends “methodically” sought a deeper assurance of personal salvation through prayer, discussion, and reflection. He developed the following three basic principles for followers: “Do no harm; Do good; Attend to all the ordinances of God.” Methodism stressed a Christian lifestyle in the world, and has often supported important social causes. Methodist Churches



vary, but all celebrate baptism, and most liturgy is a song-filled preaching service, occasionally concluded by a symbolic Lord's Supper.

The United Church of Canada, formed in 1925, is a product of a merger among the Methodist, Congregationalist, and Presbyterian Churches.

### The Evangelical Movement

The Evangelical Movement, which has historic ties to the Protestant Reformation, represents a very active form of Christian belief and practice based on the literal authority of the Bible. This movement has grown rapidly in Canada to represent one of the largest communities of Protestant worshippers in the country. Evangelical Protestant Christians are very active in charitable causes, such as World Vision, which is the largest non-governmental organization in Canada, raising some 200 million dollars for world relief.

### The Mormons

In the 1820s, American Joseph Smith had visions of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and an angel he called Moroni. He claimed to have received small golden panels engraved in an ancient language that he was given the ability to translate into the Book of Mormon. The Mormon Church, known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, regards this book as divinely inspired sacred writing. Under the leadership of Brigham Young, they

established Salt Lake City, the present capital of the state of Utah. This city is world headquarters to more than seven million Mormons.

Mormons do not recognize original sin; therefore, baptism only serves to receive new members into the Church. Mormons believe that a person's spirit remains on earth after death, and, therefore, family life can continue to include deceased family members. One result is that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has developed a strong interest in genealogy, the study of one's ancestors. In fact, they operate the largest research library for this purpose in the world.

### The Jehovah's Witnesses

This religious group began in the United States in 1868, and currently has about four million members. Jehovah's Witnesses obey the call to "witness the faith," that is bring it to others, by spreading the good news of the kingdom of God. Members personally carry out their ministry by delivering their magazines door-to-door in their home communities. They reject the idea of the Holy Trinity, and interpret the Bible in literal detail, holding it as the infallible source of the truth. One controversial aspect of this faith is its opposition to blood transfusions, even in life-threatening situations. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that it is forbidden by God to take the blood of another into one's body.

# Community Study

## The Salvation Army



Figure 7.25

Most Canadians are familiar with the Salvation Army in some way, for they play a very important social and religious role in many communities. You've probably seen uniformed members in shopping

malls at Christmas,

with bright red containers to collect donations for the poor. Perhaps you've heard their band play music on street corners or in local parades, and seen their familiar big collection boxes for used clothing and furniture. But, you may not know that the Salvation Army is also a Church, one that has been in Canada since 1882.

William and Catherine Booth, married Methodist preachers, started the Army in 1865 to bring faith to the "un-churched" in the poorest districts of London, England. It was organized along military lines, and gave completely equal status to male and female members, called "soldiers," and ministers, called "officers." To this day, members pledge themselves to spread the gospel of Jesus, particularly through charitable works, and to lead a moral life, free from alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs. Ministers also accept a frugal life of relative poverty. William and Catherine Booth pioneered a Christian faith with a strong tradition of music and preaching, but with very little ritual and none of the sacraments. Instead, open prayer and per-

sonal testimony, are encouraged as valuable ways to lead others toward a choice for their own salvation.

The Army has earned the respect of Canadians because of the wide range of social services that it provides to the disadvantaged (below). From the beginning, the motto of the Salvation Army has been "With heart to God, and hand to man."

### Salvation Army Activity in Canada

- Clothing and furniture distribution centres called Thrift Stores
- Community food drives and food banks
- Hospitals and retirement homes for the elderly
- Counselling centres for alcohol and drug addiction
- Shelters and meals for the homeless
- Outdoor summer camps for underprivileged children
- Parole supervision for recently released prisoners
- Language instruction for new immigrants

### QUESTIONS

1. Describe the role of women in the Salvation Army, and trace this role to the founders of the movement.
2. Explain how the community work of Salvation Army members is linked to the movement's origins and to their religious principles.

## Check Your Understanding

1. Identify the meaning of the following terms:
  - a) purgatory
  - b) papal infallibility
  - c) sanctification
2. Compare the views of the Christian Churches toward a married clergy.
3. Explain the controversy of the filioque clause and its effect.
4. In your opinion, has the division of Christianity been good or bad for the faith? Explain.
5. What personal questions do you have about any of the Christian denominations described in this section? How would you go about getting your questions answered?

## CULTURAL IMPACT

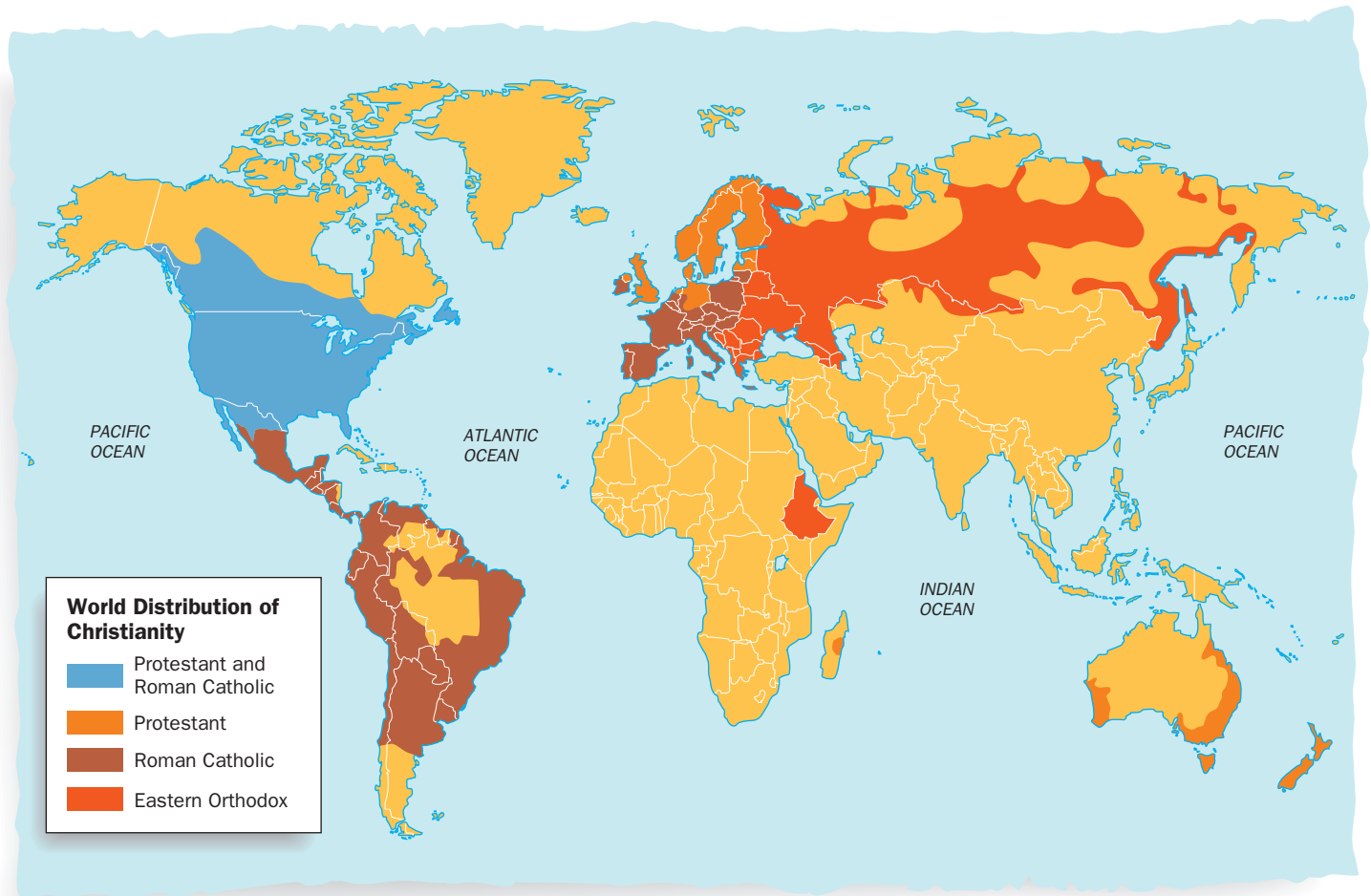
Numbering almost two billion people, Christians form the largest religion in the world. About one-third of the global population follows the teachings of Jesus Christ. As a result of both its huge membership and geographical distribution, Christianity has had a sizable cultural impact on Canada and the rest of the world.

Maps and statistics show that Christianity is dominant in Europe and the Western hemisphere (Figures 7.26 and 7.27). During the ages of exploration and colonization by European powers, such as Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands, missionaries and immigrants carried Christianity to the Americas. Indigenous peoples in those regions were Christianized by peaceful conversion, or by show of force. In the late nineteenth century, the age of imperialism pushed European interests and Christianity deeper into Asia

and Africa. Today, almost two-thirds of Roman Catholics live in the developing nations of Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

The link between Christianity and developing nations can be seen today in the activities of church-based international activities. Many Christian Churches and organizations fund and operate missions, schools, orphanages, hospitals, and other community institutions in the Third World. For example, the Christian Children's Fund uses a sponsorship plan to fund education for the children of poor families overseas. Other organizations, such as the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, or CCOOP, support community-based economic development projects in developing nations. Finally, Church groups, like the Mennonite Central Relief Committee, respond to international crises, such as, famine, flood, and hurricane destruction.





**Figure 7.26** What evidence is there that Christianity is truly a global faith?

	Africa	Asia	Latin America	Europe	North America	Oceania	WORLD
<b>Orthodox</b>	33	15	1	167	7	1	224
<b>Protestant</b>	108	46	43	110	98	11	416
<b>Roman Catholic</b>	118	111	443	287	74	8	1040
<b>Other Christians*</b>	68	125	40	6	48	1	288
<b>TOTALS</b>	317	297	527	570	227	21	<b>1968</b>

\* Catholics (non-Roman), marginal Protestants, Indigenous Christian Churches of Asia, Africa, and Latin America

**Figure 7.27** Christian Adherents by Continent (in millions), 1997

### Christianity in Canada

Christianity is the most widely held faith in Canada, and this has affected our society in many ways. Christian churches are the most striking buildings in many Canadian communities (Figures 7.28-7.30). The architectural landscape of our country features a range of church styles. Some of these churches are the centre of the important pilgrimage travel industry. For example, Ste. Anne de Beaupré near Quebec City, St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal, and Martyrs' Shrine in Midland, Ontario, each draw a continuous stream of religious travellers.

The impact of Christianity is also evident in the Canadian educational system. Some provinces, such as Ontario and New Brunswick, have publicly-funded Roman Catholic school systems, first guaranteed under the terms of the 1867 British North America Act as part of the his-

torical set of compromises that created the dominion of Canada. Religious-based schools, denominational colleges, and "Sunday school" programs aim to pass on the faith from one generation to the next.

Christianity's impact on Canada can clearly be seen with a casual reference to a map or local street directory. Many cities, towns, villages, lakes, and rivers bear Christian saints' names, particularly in Quebec. The St. Lawrence River, Sainte-Marie-Among-The-Hurons, St. Mary's and St. Thomas, Ontario, and St. George Street in Toronto are some examples of this phenomenon. Many of the holidays that we enjoy as Canadians were originally Christian holy days. These include Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving. Thus, although Canada is very multifaith and multicultural today, the Christian heritage is still an important feature of Canadian society.

## Web Quest

1. Christian Children's Fund at <http://www.christianchildrensfund.org>
2. Development and Peace at <http://www.dev.org>
3. Mennonite Central Committee at <http://www.mhsc.ca>



**Figure 7.28**  
St. Dunstan's Cathedral,  
Charlottetown, PEI



**Figure 7.29**  
Precious Blood Church,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba



**Figure 7.30**  
Trinity United  
Church, Oakville,  
Ontario

# Living My Religion

## How Christianity has Influenced my Life by Renée DesRivieres



Figure 7.31

of death.” Renée felt a calling to pursue this challenge. While at the University of Western Ontario, she worked at a teen pregnancy crisis centre. Renée also held the presidential position in the university’s

Renée DesRivieres was born in North York, Ontario, in 1979. She spent much of her adolescence in Sarnia, Ontario, where she graduated from St. Christopher Secondary School. Before beginning university, she attended “World Youth Day 1997” in Paris, France. During this pilgrimage, the Roman Pontiff, John Paul II, challenged youth to be a voice for the voiceless in our current “culture

pro-life association, and attended the United Nations world population conference in New York City as a pro-life delegate. After graduating with a biology degree in ecology and evolution, Renée began graduate study of Catholic theology at St. Peter’s Seminary, in London, Ontario. She aspires to work in a biomedical ethics field where she can combine Christian faith, biology, and medicine.

Renée states:

*“The most influential effect of Christianity on my life comes from reflecting upon the life of Christ. He lived a life of perfection and calls each one of us to imitate Him. I feel this call on a daily basis. For example, if I walk by a homeless person, I am immediately reminded of Christ’s words, “...just as you did not do it to the least of my brothers or sisters, you did not do it to me,” (Matthew 25:45). He calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves and in doing this we are all challenged to protect the rights of the vulnerable, feed the hungry, and comfort all those in need.” This practice has affected my life on both practical and profound levels.*

## QUESTIONS

1. Identify and describe the event that influenced Renée’s commitment to the Christian faith. What activities in her life demonstrate the impact of this event upon her?
2. Think of an event that had a strong positive impact upon you. Write a paragraph detailing how this event affected you.



### Social Change

Christian Churches led social reform in Canada. About a century ago, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, or WCTU, was a powerful church-based organization opposed to the widespread sale and abuse of liquor. They succeeded in outlawing the purchase of alcohol in Canada and the United States for a period of time known as Prohibition. This movement helps explain why the sale of alcohol in Canada is still carefully controlled by government.

During the Great Depression, churches stepped up their efforts to collect and distribute food and supplies for the unemployed and the desperate farmers in the Prairies. Two Christian ministers in the West, J. S. Woodsworth and William "Bible Bill" Aberhart, helped found new political parties that aimed to use political measures to end the economic problems of the times. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (or CCF, forerunner to today's New Democratic

Party), and Aberhart's Social Credit Party were both elected in Western provinces, and introduced bold social spending programs. For example, in Saskatchewan, the CCF introduced public health care, a program available to all Canadians today.

### Pastoral Ministry

One of the most important ways in which Christianity affects society can often pass unnoticed, yet its impact can be profound. Most Christian Churches in Canada have developed vital **pastoral ministries** within the Church community. Pastors and trained volunteers provide emotional support during personal and family crises; for example, bereavement counselling for family members of the deceased. Visiting programs reach the sick, the elderly, and even prison inmates. Youth ministry programs and marriage preparation courses are examples of ongoing projects carried out by several Christian denominations.

## Check Your Understanding

1. Use Figure 7.27 to rank the world continents from most Christians to least. Explain this pattern.
2. Summarize three different types of activities currently supported in developing nations by Christian organizations.
3. a) Make a list of ways in which Christianity has affected Canadian society.  
b) Describe the cultural impact of the following in Canada: the WCTU, the Salvation Army, J.S. Woodsworth, and William Aberhart.
4. What is pastoral ministry? Use two examples to show how it can have a significant impact upon people.

# Activities

## Check Your Understanding

1. Explain the part played by each of the following in the life of Jesus Christ:
  - a) John the Baptist
  - b) Judas
  - c) Mary Magdalene
2. Note two beliefs about the nature of God shared by Christians and Jews.
3. Compile a summary chart about four important Protestant founders as follows:

Church Founder	Church Name	Important Concepts or Activities Introduced
a. Martin Luther		
b. John Calvin		
c. Henry VIII		
d. John Wesley		

## Think and Communicate

4. How important is each of the following in shaping your values: religion, school, media, parents, friends? Rank these five from most to least important, and explain your choices.

5. Do you support or reject the idea that Jesus was a rebel who challenged the status quo of his day? Explain.

6. Prepare a profile, like the one of Mother Teresa on page 288, that examines the role of an important woman, or group of women, in Christianity. Examples might include Mary Magdalene, Catherine Booth (founder of the Salvation Army), or the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU).

7. Interview a church pastor or a volunteer about the pastoral counselling work that he or she performs. Try to find out the difficulties and the rewards that this person experiences with such work.

8. Examine the synoptic gospels and find three examples of the same parables contained in all of them. Then find three parables that are not found in all three gospels. Record the subjects of these parables in a chart.

9. Work with a partner to compare the style and content of the gospels of Luke and John. Summarize some important differences that you notice, using examples.

10. Use photography or sketches to collect images of different types of religious architecture in your neighbourhood or community. Arrange these pictures in an interesting display.

## Apply Your Learning

11. Examine the Sermon on the Mount in the gospel of Matthew (page 291). Summarize three teachings within that passage that would be good advice in today's world. Explain each of your choices.

12. Use print and/or electronic sources to prepare a page of research about one of these topics:

- a) The Crusades
- b) The Coptic Churches of Egypt and/or Ethiopia
- c) The American civil rights movement

13. To what degree should a person be free to practise his or her faith? Select one of the following pairs of statements and explain your point of view:

- a) i) Refusal to volunteer for military service

- ii) Refusal to report for the draft in time of war

- b) i) Refusal to receive a blood transfusion in a medical emergency

- ii) Refusal to allow a young family member an emergency transfusion

14. Work within a group to research the views of Canadian political parties on human cloning, capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia, or another contentious social issue regarding human life. Prepare a report of your findings, and present them to the class in an oral presentation.

15. Compare secular and religious celebrations held either at Christmas or Easter. Trace the origins of the secular celebration, then show how the secular and religious celebrations differ.



# Glossary

**apostle [a POSSLE].** One of the twelve disciples chosen by Christ to go out to teach the gospel to the world.

**Ascension.** Holy day that marks the bodily passing of Christ from earth to heaven on the fortieth day after Easter.

**baptism.** Sacrament or action that involves the sprinkling of a person with water or full immersion as a sign of washing away sin and entering the Church.

**Christmas.** Festival that celebrates the birth of Jesus, marked by special Church services, gifts, and greetings.

**confirmation** (also known as **chrismation**). Sacrament, or rite in some Churches that is a component of the initiation process into the Christian faith, which begins with baptism.

**confession** (also known as **reconciliation**). Sacrament in some Churches in which a person acknowledges, to a priest or a confessor, wrongs committed and receives forgiveness from God.

**Crucifixion [croo suh FICK shun].** Execution of Christ on a wooden cross, in the method of the Romans; an event commemorated by Christians on Good Friday.

**disciple.** Follower of Jesus Christ during his public ministry; includes, but is not limited to, the twelve apostles.

**Easter.** Christian festival that celebrates the Resurrection of Christ.

**epistles [ep PISSLE].** Letters written by Christ's apostles to instruct Churches and individuals about the faith.

**filioque clause [filly O quay].** Latin word, meaning "and the son" inserted into the Nicene Creed by the Western, or Roman, Church.

**gospels.** Story of Jesus Christ's life and teachings told in the first four books of the Bible's New Testament.

**Holy Communion / Eucharist [YUKE a rist].** Sacrament by which Christians commemorate the Last Supper.

**Holy Spirit.** One of the three persons in God, believed, by Christians, to bestow spiritual gifts upon individuals.

**indulgences.** Prayers or actions in the Roman Catholic Church that are believed to free the individual from spending a specified period of time in purgatory.

**justification.** Belief in some Churches that Christians are free from punishment for sin through their faith in Jesus Christ.

**Last Judgement.** Day of God's final judgement at the end of the world, when the faithful will go to heaven.

**Last Supper.** Jesus' last meal with his disciples before he was crucified; the origin of the sacrament of Holy Communion.

**Lent.** Forty weekdays between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday; a period of fasting and repentance for sin in many Christian Churches.

**liturgy of the word.** Portion of the Christian worship service that emphasizes Bible readings and preaching to the church congregation.

**martyr [MAR tur].** Someone who has suffered or died for his or her religion or beliefs.

**Messiah [muh SIGH uh].** Saviour, prophesized by the Old Testament, who would lead his people to God; Christians believe this saviour to be Jesus.

**original sin.** Belief of the human tendency to sin and evil, presented in scripture as a result of Adam and Eve's disobedience of God in the garden of Eden.

**papal infallibility.** Roman Catholic belief that the pope cannot err when speaking on matters of faith and morals in his role as head of the Church.

**parable.** Type of short story often used by Jesus to teach an important truth or lesson in morality.

**parish.** Area that has its own church and a minister or priest.

**pastoral ministry.** Non-ordained people who assist the clergy with many different aspects of their work.

**Pentecost [PENTA cost].** Christian festival commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles to help them spread the Christian faith.

**Protestant Reformation.** Religious movement in Europe during the sixteenth century that led to the establishment of the Protestant Churches.

**Purgatory.** Temporary stage in Roman Catholicism in which the souls of those who have died are purified from sin.

**Resurrection.** Rising of Christ from his tomb on the third day after his crucifixion.

**rosary.** A string of beads used for devotional prayers by some Christians.

**sacrament.** Ritual or ceremony that is an outward sign of spiritual benefits that are given to the recipient.

**saint.** Holy person that Christians venerate.

**sanctification [sank tiffa KAY sh'n].** Act of being purified from sin and made right or holy in the eyes of God.

**schism.** Division of the Church into separate, and often hostile, groups because of strong difference of opinion.

**transubstantiation [tran sub stanshy AY sh'n].** Changing of bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Christ during Holy Communion.

**Trinity.** Christian belief that there are three persons in one God: the Father, the son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit.