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# **BEGINNING THE JOURNEY**





# SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE STUDY OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

We live in a global village. All around us are people with racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds different from our own. We see different clothing and accessories in our shopping malls, along our city streets, on the internet, in our schools, and perhaps even in our homes. We hear various accents, languages, and music on the streets, on the bus, at the gym, and on social media. The aromas of various ethnic cuisines enrich our neighborhoods. The great diversity of the world's cultures is more apparent than ever.

As a high school student, you live in a somewhat protected environment with adult guardians to help you navigate our complex world. Once you leave high school, however, you will be on your own to encounter the world as an adult. One of the foremost roles of high school is to prepare students to live as responsible, thinking, loving, productive, active adults in a very diverse global village.

Religious diversity abounds in our world. It is most prevalent in large cities. Just look at London, Sydney, Montreal, Rome, Paris, Frankfurt, Johannesburg, Mumbai, Singapore, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. In many of these cities, one may find not just Buddhists but Buddhists from such diverse places as Japan, India, and Vietnam. Not only do Christians live in all these places but there may be Roman Catholics, Chaldean

Catholics, Russian Orthodox, Anglicans, German Lutherans, and Southern Baptists.

This is a different kind of religion textbook; it is about religion itself. In other religion courses, you learned about one particular religious tradition—Christianity, and specifically Catholicism. You have most likely taken courses on such topics as Jesus of Nazareth, the Bible, sacraments, morality, justice and peace, and Church history. A class on the world’s religions is different. Rather than an in-depth study of one religious tradition, this class is an overview of many religious traditions, including Catholicism. This book challenges Catholic students to dialogue with and learn from other religious traditions through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit while proclaiming in word and deed Jesus Christ as “the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6, NABRE).

You are probably familiar with the term *world religions*. It refers to religious traditions that are worldwide, such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Adherents of these worldwide religions are found on most continents. In this class, you will study both *worldwide religious traditions* and others of our *world’s religious traditions* that have great significance but are not as widespread. For example, Chapter 5 is about Hinduism. The vast majority of Hindus (80 percent) live on the subcontinent of India. Hinduism’s significance is found, among other things, in its great number of adherents (one billion) and its foundational influence on Buddhism, which is very widespread.

## What Is Religion?

As we begin our study, it’s important to try to define the word *religion*. Though we glibly refer to religion, the vast majority of scriptures used by the various religious traditions, including the Bible, do not contain the word. Until modern times, religion was not separated from the rest of life. In birth and death, work and play, relationships with people, and connections with nature, what we now call *religion* was once—and for many cultures still is—all wrapped up in the fabric of life.

Even now, a definition of *religion* is elusive. The word is derived from the Latin word *religare*, meaning “to bind.” Under the name of religion, a person or community “bound” itself to something that was worthy of reverence and respect. Generally, certain obligations came with these strong ties with an entity that was over and beyond them. When we ask people to define *religion*, we hear phrases like “worshipping God,” “living a moral life,” or “one’s belief

system.” Religion is not just one of those things. The spectrum of religious expression among the world’s religious traditions is vast.

### **Why Study the World’s Religions?**

You may wonder, “If religion cannot be clearly defined and if the spectrum of religious expression is so vast, why study the various religious traditions?” This is a fair question. At first glance, it may seem impossible to get a handle on what we have described as elusive. However, there are some elements or patterns that can be included in a systematic study of religious traditions. These elements—sacred stories and sacred scriptures, beliefs and practices, sacred time, and sacred places and sacred spaces—will be introduced later in this chapter.

Reasons to study the world’s religious traditions include the following:

- to gain a clearer understanding of your own religious tradition, which in turn allows more commitment to and thus growth in your own religious tradition
- to become more open to and accepting of people who on the surface seem very different
- to dispel fears and misunderstandings relating to persons of other religious traditions
- to gain better insight into human beings through understanding their religious activities
- to gain a better understanding of the history of humankind’s various civilizations, since religion is almost always an important factor
- to gain a better understanding of the various cultures around the globe today
- to learn from some of the world’s great sources of wisdom

Until very recently, the study of religious traditions was a peculiarly Western discipline. Nowadays, the study of religious traditions is universal.

### **A Different Kind of Religion Class**

As you have no doubt already experienced, religion courses are different from any other course in school because they engage both the head and the heart. More than any other class, religion courses call on you to deal with both facts

and experiences. They do address the rational, but also integral to religion courses are topics such as life and death, good and evil, love and hate, and joy and sorrow, along with questions about where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. In studying the full array of the world's religions, you learn that each tradition addresses and interprets these and other topics and questions differently.

## **Studying with a New Attitude**

As students of the world's religions, we are not to pass judgment upon the various religious traditions. In 1965, the Catholic Church officially updated its perspective on how Catholics are to understand other religious traditions at the Second Vatican Council:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. (*Nostra Aetate*, 2)

The Church asks us to suspend judgment as to the truth claims of a religious tradition and accept the tradition on its own terms. Catholicism has something to teach other religious traditions, but all of the religious traditions that we will study have something to teach us. We are asked to cultivate an attitude of empathy. The word *empathy* means identifying and understanding the situation of another. In other words, as we study some of the world's religious traditions, we are asked—to paraphrase a Native American proverb—to “walk a mile in the moccasins of another.”

At the same time, we are not asked to accept what others believe and practice. Instead, we are asked to be humble, open, and respectful. As Pope Benedict XVI once wrote, “*Equality*, which is a presupposition of inter-religious dialogue, refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue” (*Dominus Iesus*, 22). Pope John Paul II also emphasized this attitude in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*:

Those engaged in this dialogue must be consistent with their own religious traditions and convictions, and be open to understanding

those of the other party without pretense or close-mindedness, but with truth, humility, and frankness, knowing that dialogue can enrich each side. There must be no abandonment of principles nor false irenicism, but instead a witness given and received for mutual advancement on the road of religious inquiry and experience, and at the same time for the elimination of prejudice, intolerance and misunderstandings. Dialogue leads to inner purification and conversion which, if pursued with docility to the Holy Spirit, will be spiritually fruitful. (56)

We return from our journey of studying the other religious traditions with more insight into our own faith—particularly the Catholic faith—which “proclaims and must ever proclaim Christ ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ (John 14:6, NABRE), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself (cf. 2 Cor 5:18–19)” (*Nostra Aetate*, 2).

## SECTION Assessment

### *Reading Comprehension*

1. Briefly describe religious diversity in the world today.
2. From which language does the word *religion* derive?
3. What attitude should Catholics have in studying the world’s religious traditions?
4. What makes a course about the world’s religious traditions different from other religion courses?
5. Name some reasons for studying the world’s religious traditions.

### *For Reflection*

6. Why do you think *religion* is such a difficult term to define?
7. What religious diversity are you aware of in your region?
8. What is one reason you are studying this subject?

### *Flash Search*

9. Cite a recent news story from your local area that mentions a religious tradition other than your own.



## SETTING THE CONTEXT OF CATHOLICS IN DIALOGUE

Before becoming Pope John XXIII in 1958, Angelo Roncalli during the 1930s and 1940s was a Vatican diplomat to Turkey and Greece, where he was in contact with Greek Orthodox Christians and Muslims. During World War II, Roncalli helped thousands of Jewish people escape death under the Nazis. As Pope John XXIII, he worked toward Christian unity. In his first encyclical, *Ad Petri Cathedram* (*To the Chair of Peter*), the pope referred to Protestants as “separated brethren” rather than as “heretics,” as they had been called before. After centuries of strained relations between Catholics and Anglicans and between Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, the pope received the archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, at the Vatican and sent a delegation to greet the patriarch of Constantinople, Athenagoras I.

Pope John XXIII was not only interested in improving relations between Catholics and other Christians. Because of his deep affection and respect for the Jewish people, the pope had the egregiously offensive language of praying for the “perfidious Jews” removed from the Good Friday **liturgy**. The Second Vatican Council later soundly denounced the rejection of the Jewish people (see *Nostra Aetate*, 4; cf. CCC, 839).

These gestures of respect for persons of other religious traditions may seem minor today, but they were tremendously significant in the early 1960s. Before the pontificate of Pope John XXIII, Catholics were not allowed to set foot in

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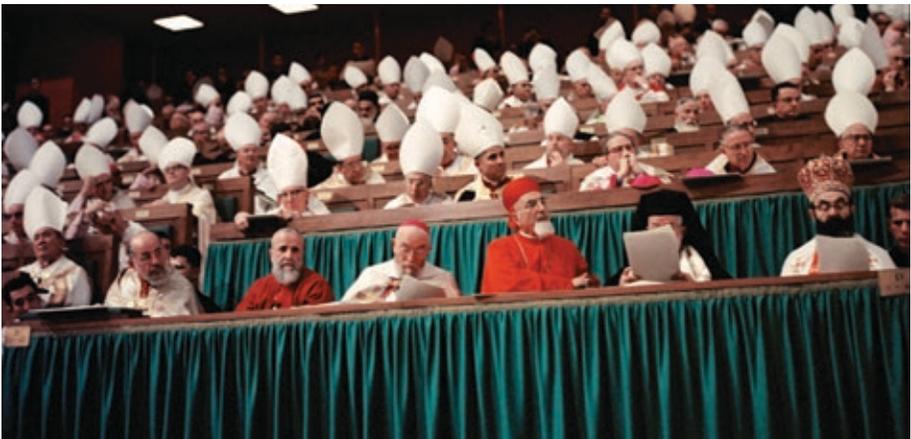
**liturgy** A definite set of forms for public religious worship; the official public worship of the Church. The Seven Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, are the primary forms of Catholic liturgical celebrations.

a Protestant church except to attend a funeral. As late as 1960, one could still hear and read Catholic leaders calling Protestants “heretics,” Eastern Orthodox Christians “schismatics,” Muslims “infidels,” and Jews “Christ killers.”

Pope John XXIII’s vision was that the Catholic Church not set itself *against* the world but engage in dialogue *with* others, including people of other religious traditions. He wanted the Second Vatican Council, which he opened in October 1962, to be a truly ecumenical council. To that end, not only did more than 2,200 Catholic bishops from across the world attend the opening session but also a number of leaders from other religious traditions were invited as observers of the Council. Protestant, Anglican, Eastern Orthodox, and Jewish leaders were all present. Pope John XXIII died after the convening of the first of the four sessions of the Second Vatican Council. His successor, Pope Paul VI, and the bishops of the Council continued in the direction of Pope John XXIII’s vision.

### **Second Vatican Council: Impetus for Dialogue**

Three of the sixteen documents that came out of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) set an expectation for Catholics to dialogue with other Christians and non-Christians alike. *Dignitatis Humanae* (*Declaration on Religious Freedom*) addressed the right of the individual to social and civil freedom with regard to religious matters. *Unitatis Redintegratio* (*Decree on Ecumenism*) spoke to the Catholic Church’s relationship with other Christians, while *Nostra*



*Among the non-Catholic observers of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) were delegates from the Russian Orthodox Church, the Anglican Communion, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, and the Syrian Orthodox Church.*

*Aetate (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions)* addressed the Church's relations with non-Christian religious traditions.

These documents are essential for showing Catholics the path to respect and dialogue with persons not of their religious persuasion. Popes Paul VI and John Paul II put the words and spirit of these documents into action by following and expanding on the example of Pope John XXIII. Pope Paul VI was very interested in **ecumenism** and religious freedom. Not only did he meet with Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I, but at the end of the Second Vatican Council in December 1965, they issued a joint resolution regretting the mutual excommunication of 1054 that has kept Catholics and Eastern Orthodox separate ever since. Pope Paul VI also met with two successive archbishops of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey and Donald Coggan, issuing with the latter a joint declaration to seek unity.

Pope John Paul II was the most traveled pope in history. On his international visits, he typically made it a point to sit down and talk with the religious leaders of each region. In 1986 and again in 2002, he invited religious leaders from all over the world to Assisi, Italy, for a World Day of Prayer for Peace. As far as history can tell us, Pope John Paul II was the first pope since St. Peter to visit a synagogue. In 2001 in Damascus, Syria, he became the first pope to visit a mosque. He supported meaningful theological dialogue with Lutherans that produced a 1999 document called the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. Serious about healing the wounds between Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox churches, Pope John Paul II worked mightily for that cause. The success of Pope John Paul II's outreach to members of religious communities all over the world was seen in the number and diversity of religious leaders who attended his funeral at the Vatican in April 2005.

Pope Francis continued the fifty years of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue of his predecessors. Pope Francis emphasized that, in Baptism, all Christians are grafted onto Christ and are from the same stock. He advocated for Catholics to accompany members of other Christian traditions in mutual projects and prayer services. On October 31, 2016, 499 years after the start of the Protestant Reformation, Pope Francis traveled to Lund, Sweden, to attend festivities to mark the beginning of a yearlong celebration of that historical

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**ecumenism** The movement, inspired and led by the Holy Spirit, that seeks the union of all Christian faiths and eventually the unity of all peoples throughout the world.

event. As part of the commemoration, Pope Francis and Lutheran bishop Munib Younan signed a joint declaration for greater reconciliation between Catholics and Lutherans.

When he was archbishop of Buenos Aires, Pope Francis worked on a joint television program with a Jewish rabbi. Regarding Catholic-Islamic relations, Pope Francis and the grand imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed el-Tayeb, formulated together the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on February 4, 2019.

## **Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue Is a Duty of All Catholics**

All baptized Catholics are called to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the world (see CCC, 849). This is known as **evangelization**, which is traditionally understood as desiring to convert others to Catholic Christianity. However, today we live in a world of great religious diversity, full of people with their own strong religious convictions. How can Catholics engage in dialogue with persons of



*Pope Francis shakes hands with Israeli Sephardi Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef during a visit to the Heichal Shlomo Center in Jerusalem, Israel.*

other religious traditions without the expectation that they must try to convert them? The Catholic Church is very clear that there is no conflict between dialogue and proclamation. In dialogue, Catholics are evangelizing by **witnessing** to their faith without trying to get people to change their religious allegiance. God, who is the Father of all, offers the gift of salvation to all the

**evangelization** From the Greek root word translated into English as "Gospel"; the "sharing of the Good News."

**witnessing** Giving testimony of one's religious faith to another.

nations. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is also at work outside the visible limits of the Church, people in every part of the world seek to adore God in an authentic way.

The scriptures of other religious traditions point to a future of communion with God, of purification and salvation, and they encourage people to seek the truth and to defend the values of life, holiness, justice, peace, and freedom. When Christians engage in interreligious dialogue, they bring with them their faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. This same faith teaches them to recognize the authentic religious experiences of others and to listen to others in a spirit of humility in order to discover and appreciate every ray of truth from wherever it comes (see Pope John Paul II, General Audience, para. 4, November 29, 2000). There are many avenues of interreligious dialogue, but one must never forget that the Holy Spirit is present with us no matter how we take on this task.

Dialogue can be carried out through words, actions, or both. For example, youth groups from various religious traditions getting together to care for people who have been displaced because of man-made or natural disasters is a type of dialogue. Meeting socially and sharing experiences from the different religious traditions is a dialogue. Classroom sharing on experiences such as prayer, God, how families celebrate a religious festival, or what symbols in their religious tradition are most meaningful to them is also a dialogue. You are not asked to be a specialist in every religious tradition in order to participate in interreligious dialogue. You only have to share your faith experiences and listen intently while others share theirs.

Of course, participating in this class is a form of dialogue with other religious traditions.

## SECTION Assessment

### *Reading Comprehension*

1. Relate some of the ways in which Popes John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, and Francis have broken new ground in the Church's relationship with other religions.

2. What is one avenue of interreligious dialogue that teenagers can participate in today?

### *Vocabulary*

3. How is the practice of *evangelization* different today from how it was prior to the Second Vatican Council?

### *For Reflection*

4. Which of your personal behaviors witness to your religious beliefs?

### *Flash Search*

5. Summarize a time when a recent pope met with a leader of another Christian or non-Christian religious tradition.



# SOME COMMON ELEMENTS OR PATTERNS OF RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Since we have found a definition of the term *religion* elusive, we will study some of the world's religious traditions from a slightly different angle. We will look at “what a religion is” rather than “what is religion.” We can then see that there are some common elements or patterns that can be broadly categorized as aspects of religious traditions. These aspects, covered in the following subsections, overlap.

## ***Sacred Stories and Sacred Scriptures***

Most religious traditions have stories that tell how the world came to be; how humans, plants, and animals were created; why; and where we are going. Some of these sacred stories, particularly creation stories, are commonly called **myths**. They are not *true* stories but *truth* stories that aim to convey sacred truths. For some religious traditions, these sacred stories are part of *sacred history*. Certain core historical events—for example, the birth of Muhammad, the Exodus of the Jewish people, or the death of Jesus—have become part of that religious tradition's sacred history. These events are known as *empirical*

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**myths** Traditional or ancient stories that help explain a people's creation, customs, and/or ideals.

*history*—that is, history verifiable or provable from other sources. Generally, these stories were first passed on orally. Later, some sacred stories became part of the collective memory of the adherents of a religious tradition and often defined them as a community.

The history of a particular religious community often includes myths, sacred history, and empirical history. For example, the story of the Jewish people includes creation stories; the sacred history of the patriarchs, prophets, and a nomadic tribe; and centuries of empirical history up to the establishment of the State of Israel in the twentieth century.

We know many sacred stories because they move from oral telling through the ages to the writing down of the sacred stories into some form that readers deem sacred scripture. The Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Holy Bible, and the Qur'an are all considered not just writings but sacred writings. Some religious traditions consider their sacred scriptures to be inspired by God or the gods, while others consider their sacred scriptures as the exact word of God or the gods.

Other sacred stories may not have the authority of sacred scripture. For Muslims, stories about Muhammad are collected into the Hadith. Christians treasure the many lives of the saints. Jews revere the many stories told by Eastern European spiritual leaders known as *rebbe*s. Whether sacred stories are codified into sacred scripture or not, they help unite, preserve, and perpetuate a community of people who have similar beliefs and values. One major way sacred stories are passed on is through ritual.

## **Beliefs and Practices**

Though not all religious traditions have a formal set of beliefs, each holds certain truths that separate it from other religious traditions. Buddhism and Christianity have well-formulated doctrines. The Four Noble Truths and the



*Modern Jewish schools teach their students to study the Torah. See Chapter 2, Judaism.*



*The Ka'bah is considered by Muslims to be the house of God. See Chapter 4, Islam.*

Noble Eightfold Path are clearly delineated Buddhist doctrines. The Apostles' Creed is a formal statement of Christian beliefs. Though the Sh'ma is the one formal doctrine of Judaism and the Shahadah is the one formal doctrine of Islam, this does not mean that Judaism and Islam have nothing to say about human nature, sin or how to relate to widows and orphans. Often, individuals or groups communicate their beliefs through how they act or how they explain their actions when faced with such issues rather than through

formal doctrinal statements. The faithful of the various religious traditions act out their beliefs in the vertical and the horizontal. The vertical is how adherents relate to the divine, while the horizontal is how they relate to both other believers and nonbelievers.

Practices are part of every religious tradition. They may be as simple as a child's bedtime prayers or as formal as the Eastern Orthodox Divine Liturgy. Practices can be personal or communal. Prayer, meditation, and ritual washing may be personal practices, while the sacrifice of animals, going on pilgrimage, or participating in a sacred meal may be communal practices. The more formal the ritual is, the more likely it is based on at least one sacred story. For example, in the Book of Exodus, God exhorts the Israelites to remember and recount his saving power in the Exodus of their spiritual ancestors from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the Promised Land. Thus arose the annual Jewish celebration of *Pesach*, or Passover, held every spring.

A person's behavior tells us about his or her beliefs. For example, observing our Muslim neighbors praying several times a day tells us that prayer is very important to Muslims. Noticing that a pulpit is front and center in many Protestant churches tells us that preaching is important to Protestant Christians.

Each religious tradition has some sort of moral code—written or unwritten—that lays out expected conduct for adherents. Proper beliefs and behaviors make a person a good Buddhist or a good Hindu. However, some religious

traditions place more emphasis on behaviors than on beliefs, while other religious traditions place more emphasis on beliefs than on behaviors. For many religious traditions, behaviors also determine how one will spend the next life or eternal life. The moral code of a number of religious traditions is found in, or at least based on, their sacred stories and sacred scriptures.

## **Sacred Time**

Though most religious traditions consider all time sacred, they mark particular times when certain actions or attitudes give greater focus to the sacred. In one sense, participating in a sacred ritual seems to transport an individual or community from ordinary time to sacred time. In another sense, participating in a sacred ritual reminds participants that all time is sacred. In still another sense, sacred time is timeless. It draws the past and the future into the present so that adherents can live in and celebrate the now. Whether these times occur daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, or even every seven years, observers are able to document that time is sacred to them.

Though times for personal devotions are often at the discretion of the individual, communal observances are more formal. Muslims have Friday, Jews have Saturday, and Christians have Sunday as their day for weekly communal observances. Muslims have Ramadan, Jews have Yom Kippur, and most Christians have Lent as annual times of fasting for spiritual renewal and growth. Festivals mark times of celebration for the different religious



*The Obon Festival, an annual event for remembering ancestors, is based in Japanese Buddhist traditions. See Chapter 8, Japanese Religious Traditions.*

traditions. Buddhists celebrate Bodhi Day, Sikhs celebrate Gobind Singh's birthday, and Hindus celebrate Diwali. Festivals and religious observances give members of a religious tradition a sense of belonging and are opportunities for personal recommitment and renewal.

Rites of passage are also sacred times. In particular, rites of birth, coming-of-age, marriage, and death are observed as sacred times in many religious traditions.



*During the Kumbh Mela Festival, Hindu devotees bathe at a pilgrimage site to wash away their sins. See Chapter 5, Hinduism.*

## **Sacred Places and Sacred Spaces**

Generally, sacred time can be observed and celebrated anywhere. However, sacred time is often experienced at a sacred place or in a sacred space. Places where the religious tradition began or where the founder traveled often become sacred places. Hence, Mecca and Medina are sacred places for Muslims. Christians call the region of Palestine the Holy Land. Some religious traditions call places in nature, such as mountains and rivers, sacred places. The Jordan River for Christians and the Ganges River for Hindus come to mind. Mount Sinai is a sacred place to Jews, while Mount Fuji is a sacred place for practitioners of **Shinto**. Shrines, temples, churches, mosques, and synagogues are all sacred

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**Shinto** The indigenous religious tradition of Japan. It was the state religion of Japan until the end of World War II.

spaces. Other places can be temporary sacred spaces; for instance, a gym or a large tent can be converted temporarily into a sacred space.

## **Other Elements or Patterns**

As you study some of the world's religious traditions with this book, each chapter covers the above common elements or patterns found in the various religious traditions. This book is like inviting a panel of people from various religious traditions to speak about their religious tradition. Each speaker is given the same allotted time, and each is asked to confine remarks about their respective religious traditions to the following topics: a brief historical overview, sacred stories and sacred scripture, basic beliefs and practices, sacred time, and sacred places and sacred spaces. Expanding the dialogue, a final section in each chapter explores topics about which Catholics and adherents of the particular religious tradition can have a meaningful dialogue.

Religious traditions have other aspects in common. In particular, adherents of religious traditions have sacred symbols and objects they use in their various rituals. Some sacred symbols and objects are considered by people both in and out of the religious tradition to be beautiful works of art, such as the icons of Orthodox Christianity, the architecture of Islam, and the statuary of Hinduism.

Other aspects common to many religious traditions are implicit in the descriptions of the various religious traditions. Some religious traditions have laws that adherents are to follow; for example, Muslims have *shari'ah* and Jews have *halakhab*. Some religious traditions have more institutional structure than others; for example, Roman Catholicism has much more institutional structure than Reconstructionist Judaism. The various religious traditions have holy people, or faithful adherents—be they saints, gurus, shamans, or mystics—whose lives embody the ideal or point to the divine in their respective religious traditions. Sacred symbols and objects, laws, institutional structure, and holy people are important in any study of the world's religious traditions, whether or not they are addressed separately. Each chapter of this book includes sections on a key image, a faithful adherent, and a prayer from the religious tradition it covers.

Finally, although we will begin our study of the world's religions with Judaism in Chapter 2, followed by Christianity in Chapter 3, this order is not meant to suggest that these are the two oldest of the world's religious

traditions. They are not. The purpose of beginning with these religious traditions is that the Judeo-Christian religious tradition is the one most familiar to a majority of Western high school students. By the time you study the other religious traditions, you will be versed in the structure of each chapter through surveying traditions that are more familiar to you.

## **SECTION Assessment**

### *Reading Comprehension*

1. What are some of the common elements or patterns you will investigate in your study of some of the world's religious traditions?

### *For Reflection*

2. What times are sacred to you? What do you do to mark those times as sacred?
3. What places and/or spaces are sacred to you? What makes these places/spaces sacred?

### *Flash Search*

4. Research and record the date when your church or religious space was built. Include a photo of the building's cornerstone or dedication plaque, if possible.

## Chapter Summary

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Religious diversity abounds in our world. One of the major tasks for a Catholic is to determine how to grow as a Catholic amid such diversity. There is a difference between the terms *world religions* and *world's religions*. Empathy is the attitude to cultivate in studying the world's religious traditions. Though difficult to define, the term *religion* comes from a root word meaning “to bind.” Interreligious dialogue is the duty of all Catholics, for it is part of the Catholic Church's mission of evangelization. In describing a religious tradition, some common elements or patterns to consider include sacred stories and sacred scriptures, beliefs and practices, sacred time, and sacred places and sacred spaces.

## Chapter Projects

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Complete one of these projects by the conclusion of your study of this chapter.

1. Digital Presentation of Sacred Places, Sacred Spaces, and Religious Festivals

Recalling the common elements or patterns found in religious traditions, create a digital presentation with photos and captions of sacred places, sacred spaces, and holidays or festivals representing at least four of the religious traditions mentioned in this chapter.

2. Pope Francis on Interreligious Dialogue

Research and write a one- to two-page essay on statements from Pope Francis (written prior to or during his pontificate) that support the Catholic call to dialogue with other religious traditions.

## Prayer

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This “Peace Prayer” attributed to St. Francis is one that adherents of most religious traditions would be comfortable praying.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

Lord, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen.

