



Ollscoil Chathair
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Dublin City University

DCU Chaplaincy: An Introduction to World Religions

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STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT





Christianity

Christians believe in One God. This God has three persons (The Trinity) named the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.


Christianity is focused on the life and ministry (work) of Jesus Christ. The life and teaching of Jesus Christ are told in the sacred book called the Bible. Christians believe that the story and message of the Hebrew scriptures (the Old Testament) foretell and lead up to the incarnation of Jesus in the world.

Christians believe that God created the world so that we might live in relationship with God and with all creation. Over time humanity lost sight of this through our human frailty and sinfulness. God gifted humanity with Jesus, God the Son, to restore us to a right relationship with God the Father.

Through his life and teaching Jesus showed people how they ought to live. He summed this up as 'Loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength' and 'Loving your neighbour as yourself'. Jesus did this perfectly and demonstrated the extent of his love and conviction about his message so strongly that it led to his crucifixion. Christians believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and that those who live in unity with Christ's message will share this same reward: eternal life with God. After his ascent in to heaven humanity received the gift of the Spirit of God which enables them to live as God desires and to follow Jesus Christ.

Place and style of worship

While Christians spend time praying as individuals they usually gather together once a week on a Sunday in churches. Worship at church on Sunday is called Eucharist and involves prayer, singing, and reading of



the Bible, along with an explanation of the Bible passages, and the changing of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. This is done by a priest or an ordained minister. This Holy Communion is then shared among those gathered.


Sacred Text

The primary source for Christian faith and practice is the Bible. It contains information and stories about the Hebrew people, the coming of Christ and the early church. The majority of Christians recognise the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as expressing their key beliefs.

Types of Christian community

Christian churches can be grouped into four main groupings: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Evangelical.

- **Roman Catholic:** God reveals himself in the world in which Christians live. Reverence for Mary, the mother of Jesus, is part of the Catholic teaching and gathering for weekly Mass is very important. Community is a central value for Catholics. Having a sense of connection with all the faithful who have died and the Saints. Having a deep respect for Scripture and the canon of the Catholic Church. The Pope is elected by the Cardinals to be a pastoral and spiritual leader.
- **Orthodox:** There are Eastern Orthodox Churches and Oriental Orthodox Churches. There are many similarities with the Roman Catholic Church. Three of the seven sacraments are given in infancy. The head of the Church is the Patriarch. The Churches are widely adorned with Icons and incense is used at every service.
- **Protestant:** Protestantism arose during the 16th century Reformation and contains many churches and communities.



Most of those have only two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion. Men and women can be priests. Protestants believe that salvation comes only by God's grace, through faith in Christ, as revealed in the scriptures.

- **Evangelical:** While technically Protestant, Evangelical churches lack the hierarchical structure common to other Christian churches. They believe that the fall of human beings has resulted in the sinfulness of all humanity so God's wrath is levelled against humanity. Believe in the absolute authority of the scriptures regarding all aspects of life. Through God's grace alone can sinners be saved.

Significant Feasts and Celebrations

The Orthodox Church follows a different calendar to other Christian Churches but celebrates the same feasts.

- **Christmas Day** celebrates the birth of Jesus into humanity and is celebrated by most Christians on the 25th of December
- **Ash Wednesday** is the beginning of Lent, a time when Christians fast. Most Christians are marked with a cross of ash on their foreheads this day.
- **Holy Thursday** is when the oils used in many Christian sacraments are blessed. It is also a day when Christians remember Jesus' last meal with His disciples and His instruction to celebrate the Eucharist.
- **Good Friday** is a fast day and recalls the day that Jesus was crucified and died.
- **Easter** celebrates the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
- **Pentecost** marks the day when the apostles received the gift of the Holy Spirit and celebrates the beginning of the Christian



Church.

Visiting a Christian Church

You are welcome to take part in services, and you are expected to be quiet and respectful of others. No food or eating is allowed. In Roman Catholic churches a gentle bow is made on entry and leaving towards the Tabernacle, the place where the Eucharist is reserved.



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