



F A C E S 2 3 O A 7

IN THE WONDERFUL GARDEN OF
RELIGIONS / PHILOSOPHIES
AN INNER PERSPECTIVE

TEACHER'S BOOK



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the European Union

IN THE WONDERFUL GARDEN OF RELIGIONS / PHILOSOPHIES

TEACHER'S BOOK

EDUC8

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

EDUC8 TO BUILD RESILIENCE

Dear friends and colleagues,

The material in this book as well as the videos and Students' Book in the Shallow Module of EDUC8 are the product of a group of experts in religious education coming from various European universities and institutes. It aims at providing solid information and educational tools that can be used as an introduction to various religious and ethical worldviews in the context of religious education for young students in the level of secondary education. In this respect, the Shallow Module material is complementary to the one discussed in the Deep Module and provides useful information in matters of convictions, rituals and places of worship, everyday life and holidays, holy books and symbols, the role of women in communal life and moral values.

The main idea while preparing the material in Shallow Module was

- a) to provide concise and clear information as well as useful exercises that could help students become aware of the diversity of religious and ethical worldviews and lifestyles in Europe,
- b) to assist teachers in applying this material in their religious classes and refer them to relevant bibliography and internet sources.

The scope of this project is not only the collection and dissemination of information but also the formation of an ethos of mutual understanding and respect among young people coming from different religious, cultural, and philosophical backgrounds. This is, for example, evident in the case of the narrators in the videos. They are young girls and boys at the age of the target group of this project. They all tell their personal stories and describe their feelings and everyday realities as members of certain communities and groups. Although this personal approach made the challenge of providing objective and representative information more difficult it was preferred

because we thought that it could help students to identify themselves with these young people, process the information provided and respond to the challenges posed by these stories. Most of the exercises in the students' book are also structured on the same basis and aim at helping students to focus on important aspects of each tradition and critically reflect upon them, to find similarities and differences and, eventually, create the necessary requirements for mutual understanding and respect. They have been carefully designed to cover the time of an average teaching hour (approximately 45 to 50 minutes) but there is also enough extra material in the Teacher's Handbook for additional activities.

In the Teacher's Handbook you can find the script of the video, all the material of the students' book, guidelines and tips about how to organize the teaching hour for each religion and ethics, extra exercises, information, a glossary of the most important technical terms used in the texts of each unit, internet links and bibliography for further research and study. We gave special effort to keep this book both concise and practical by focusing on the essentially significant and providing practical tips. We have also added links to easily available and reliable sources on the web but also some useful bibliography for those of you who would like to learn more about the traditions they are going to discuss with their classes.

The main faith and ethical traditions introduced in this course are: **Judaism**, the main three Christian denominations in Europe, namely **Catholicism**, **Orthodoxy**, and **Protestantism**, **Islam**, and **Ethics**. Their impact on the history and identity of Europe is quite important. Each unit is prepared by experts either coming from this certain tradition or having a long experience in teaching about them. In each teaching hour the point of departure is a short video, approximately 7 minutes long, that provides essential information about these communities, their convictions, their holidays and aspects of communal life, their rituals and worshipping places, the presence of women and children in them, and their moral values. Students are invited to watch these videos and adjust their own conceptions about each tradition discussed in them. The exercises and the short texts in the Students' Book encourage them to reflect upon the information provided, to focus on the most important aspects, to apply their critical thinking, to interact with the rest of the group classmates, to engage themselves in discussions and debates, to go underneath the surface of the individual stories in these videos, to acknowledge and appreciate the cultural richness and the fullness of life in all of them. Special effort was given to include the main trends within each tradition without burdening students with a lot of information and details: the culturally diverse, the geographically apart, women and children, and the environment are some of the aspects included

either in the video script or the exercises and the rest of the material. The structure of the course encourages group interaction, discussions, role play and it can, therefore, be more useful in such contexts and not as material for individual study at home.

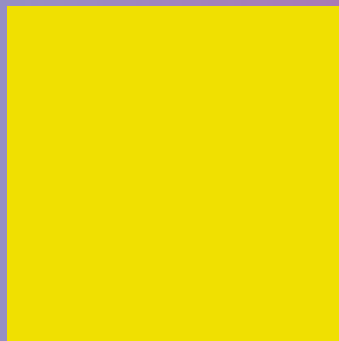
Finally, it should be noted that the structure of each unit remains open and it is up to you to organize the material provided in the most effective way on the basis of the needs and the dynamics of your classes. Moreover, it is important that the discovery of religious and non-religious otherness remains an ongoing and open process for our students in the sense that the material provided should encourage them to explore and discover the traces of traditions discussed in their environment and realize their impact in public space, in the cultural and political history of Europe. Thus, apart from providing students with knowledge the ultimate purpose of the Shallow Module educational package is to help them become aware of and appreciate the richness of the lives of these communities as well as their vital role in shaping the lives of people in Europe and elsewhere in this world.

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Editor

“ WHAT IS NEEDED FOR RELIGION, IS TO GUIDE PEOPLE TO THE DEPTH OF THIS TRUTH, TO A CHANGE OF MIND AND LIFE AND TO MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. THIS IS INDEED THE CORE OF OUR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS. ”

————— Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch

1



JUDAISM

JUDAISM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 GENERAL

With 14 million members, Judaism is the smallest of the monotheistic religions. Judaism, like Christianity and Islam, is an Abrahamic religion. Similar to the other Abrahamic religions, God revealed himself to Abraham, an important figure in the Tanakh. Thus, Abraham is known as the patriarch of Judaism. The religion gets its name from one of his dissidents, Judah.

Jews represent 0.2% of the world population. Geographically speaking, Jews can be divided into two groups: Jews living in Israel, and the diaspora communities to be found outside of Israel. Most of the diaspora Jews live in America, with the remainder mostly living in Europe or the Latin American-Caribbean region.

Useful numbers and facts regarding Judaism are provided by Pew Research Center on their webpage: <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/jews/>



Figure 1.3
Hand holding a Star of David, a Jewish religious symbol against the Western wall of the Jewish Temple in the Old city of Jerusalem.
Source: © Roman Yanushevsky / Adobe Stock

1.1.2 CONTENTS OF TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

The starting point of this module is the letter from Moshe: a letter from a young Jewish student talking about his religion. Most of the material unpacks the Jewish topics that Moshe mentions in his letter. The teacher's handbook offers background information on those elements, and extra exercises that can be used at the teacher's discretion. The topics are: the importance of the covenant with God, Jewish ethics, the role of tradition, and some of the most important Jewish feasts. Special attention is given to the initiation rite bar or bat mitzvah, and the feasts of Shabbat and Passover [Pesach]. All of these are paradigmatic examples of the religious underpinnings explained in this handbook. A last section is dedicated to extra material that contains information on the synagogue and further references to more important Jewish feasts. This material is, again, intended to be used at the teacher's discretion. All of the exercises are numbered in a chronological order.

Introduction to the topic

- The students are asked to write down five things that come to their mind when they think about Judaism. A mind map can be created on the blackboard to write down their ideas.
- The students note three questions that they would like to ask regarding Judaism.

1.2 UNPACKING THE LETTER

1.2.1 A LETTER FROM MOSHE

The class watches the brief video of Moshe's description of Judaism and is asked to answer the multiple-choice questions.

Exercise 1: quiz – ca. 7m.

What do we remember from Moshe's letter? (After watching the film, Multiple choice – Comprehension of the video)

1. Halacha
 - a. Are the Jewish laws for a Jewish walk of life!
 - b. Are the 613 commandments of the Torah.
 - c. Are enforced by rabbis
 - d. All of the above

2. The synagogue is also known as the
 - a. House of assembly
 - b. House of learning
 - c. House of prayer
 - d. All of the above

3. On Shabbat Jews
 - a. Connect with God and with their family
 - b. Live a secluded life
 - c. Get their final work done
 - d. Eat food that reminds them of Ancient Israel

4. The word "monotheism" means
- a. Believing in multiple Gods
 - b. Believing in only one God
 - c. The same as polytheistic
 - d. The Jewish walk of life
5. The Torah
- a. Is the central Holy book for Jews
 - b. Contains the Five Books by Moses
 - c. Contains the written words given to Moses by God at mount Sinai
 - d. All of the above
6. A bar mitzvah celebrates
- a. the twelfth birthday of a Jewish boy
 - b. the twelfth birthday of a Jewish girl
 - c. the thirteenth birthday of a Jewish boy
 - d. the thirteenth birthday of Jewish girl
7. A bar mitzvah celebrates
- a. a festival of sorrow
 - b. a festival of celebration where we remember the story of Passover
 - c. another word for Seder
 - d. the weekly day of rest or Shabbat

Solutions: 1a. 2d. 3a. 4b. 5d. 6c. 7b.

1.3 THAT'S TRADITION

Tradition occupies an important part in Judaism, as the accumulated experience and knowledge, but also as the customs, habits, and commandments. Of course, not every Jew strictly adheres to the tradition. There are many different Jewish movements or 'branches'. There is Liberal or Reform Judaism, that has assimilated into the cultures Jews live in, and made traditional customs and practices more modern. Liberal Jews don't follow all the traditional halachic rules, for instance. Or they make halachic rules that correspond and fit with their daily, modern life. They are also more free in their preparation and approach to religious events. Traditional or orthodox Judaism is the opposite. Orthodox Jews stick close to practices, customs, and rules or norms that have given structure to Jews for a long time. These can offer some safety and reliance in an ever changing world. Of course, liberal Judaism and orthodox Judaism are presented here as opposite poles. In reality, there are many different variations and gradations.

Exercise 2: Following tradition – ca. 20m.

Within Judaism there are a lot of questions about to what extent we should follow the tradition. Having watched Moshe's presentation, please make the following exercise in groups of two or four:

- a. Jews have their own view on tradition, as explained by Moshe. What is your opinion on their idea and practice of tradition?
- b. Does your family or society have similar practices that are seen as traditional? Discuss them among each other.
- c. Tradition can be authoritative in how it regulates the everyday, religious lives of the members of a religious group. Discuss among each other positive and negative aspects of being part of a tradition.

1.4 JEWISH ETHICS

Moshe writes: "We believe that God loves us in a unique way. This love implicates a task. Answering the love of God means loving our fellow people by doing justice. Hearing the word of God means doing the word of God!"

Jews believe that God wants them to be just and compassionate. To understand the importance of justice and doing good toward others, Jews often draw from their own experiences as a people. That's why the understanding of your history can be so important.

Exercise 3: Jewish ethics – ca. 10m.

The students can be asked to look at the following passage from the Book of Exodus, and answer the following questions.

Exodus 23:9¹

[9] You are not to oppress a foreigner, for you know how a foreigner feels, since you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

- a. Who is the 'you' in this story? Why was this 'you' a foreigner in Egypt?
- b. What possible associations could someone reading this passage make, considering current situations and challenges?

¹Bible Gateway CJB (The Complete Jewish Bible). "Exodus 23:9." Accessed 16 September 2020. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+23&version=CJB>.

1.5 SHABBAT

Shabbat is one of the most important feasts in Judaism. *Shabbat* is celebrated every week, from Friday evening until Saturday evening. During this day, Jews are not allowed to do any kind of work, and must rest. *Shabbat* is the fourth of the Ten Commandments.

***Exodus 20:8-11*²**

[8] Remember the day, Shabbat, to set it apart for God.

[9] You have six days to labor and do all your work,

[10] but the seventh day is a Shabbat for Adonai your God. On it, you are not to do any kind of work — not you, your son or your daughter, not your male or female slave, not your livestock, and not the foreigner staying with you inside the gates to your property.

[11] For in six days, Adonai made heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. This is why Adonai blessed the day, Shabbat, and separated it for himself.

More information on Shabbat can be found on the following webpage:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/holydays/sabbath.shtml>

²Bible Gateway CJB (The Complete Jewish Bible). "Exodus 20:8-11." Accessed 15 September 2020. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+20&version=C-JB>.

Exercise 4: Experiencing Shabbat – ca. 5m.

You have read or watched Moshe's description of Shabbat. Fill in the missing words:

Ten Commandment – kiddush – covenant – challah – wash our hands – Torah – covenant – parashah – Kiddush Cups

Today is a happy day. We are celebrating *Shabbat*: our weekly day of rest. On this day, we celebrate our **covenant** with God. We do this by laying down our work for one day, and reconnect with ourselves and our community. This way, we honor God who created the world in six days, and rested on the seventh. It's also one of the **Ten Commandments**. A Jewish day is from evening till evening, not from twelve till twelve. Shabbat begins on Friday evening, and lasts until Saturday evening. *Shabbat* is officially over the moment we can count three stars in heaven. Because we can't work, we have to prepare everything beforehand. That means Friday is usually an extra busy day! Once the sun starts to set, my mother lights two candles for every family member that is present. And my dad speaks a prayer, to which everyone answers with 'amen'. This blessing is called **kiddush**. Everyone gets a little bit of wine, that we drink from **Kiddush Cups**. On this day, everyone wears beautiful, fancy clothes. We always eat fish, and sometimes chicken soup. It's usually a big dinner with salad, potatoes, meat, and dessert! My favorite part, however, is eating a special braided bread called **challah**. It's white, and eggy, and very soft inside! My mother makes it for Shabbat. We have to **wash our hands** before. It's forbidden to eat bread with dirty hands. We eat the challah at the start of the dinner, by ripping of the pieces with our hands. It's a lot of fun to eat bread that way!

Every Saturday morning, there is a Synagogue service, where we read a portion of the **Torah**, called **parashah**. We read these portions three days a week, on Saturday, Monday, and Thursdays, but on *Shabbat* we read the biggest portions. By the end of the year we have read the Torah in its entirety.

1.6 EXTRA MATERIAL

1.6.1 THE SYNAGOGUE

In ancient Israel the Temple of Jerusalem was the central religious place for Judaism. One of the main functions of the Temple was that of sacrifice. Ancient Jews would often travel great lengths to reach this Temple and make an offering to God. However, because not every Jew could reach the Temple, or make an offering, there was a need for a different place where their religion could be practiced. This place became the synagogue. After the Temple's destruction by the Romans, however, the synagogue became the central house of worship. Synagogue is Greek and stands for 'House of Assembly'. It is the place where Jews pray, learn, and hold feasts together. Nowadays, there are three services each week during which a weekly Torah portion is read.

There are two essential aspects for any synagogue: 1) a safe storage space to keep the Torah-scroll in, the Holy Book of Judaism, and 2) a clear visible space from where the Torah-scroll is read from. The Torah is placed in what we call the Torah Ark or Holy Ark. The Torah Ark is sealed with a door, and can be found in, or behind, the wall that faces the old Temple of Jerusalem. A beautifully ornamented curtain called parochet hangs in front of the Ark. The central, visible space from where the Torah-scroll needs to be read is called a bimah, a heightened platform. The location of the bimah varies according to the synagogue. In the synagogue, the minyan is very important. The minyan is a quorum of ten Jewish adults that are required in order to carry out communal Jewish worship. Orthodox synagogues only allow a minyan to be made up of Jewish men, that are considered adults after their bar mitzvah at the age of thirteen.

More information on the synagogue can be found on the following webpages:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zbm8jty/revision/1>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z3sf2nb/revision/1>

Exercise 5: Inside the synagogue – ca. 5m.

Fill in the gaps with one of the words given below. Each word can be used only once.

Baal kore – chazan – parochet – bimah – Torah Ark – Torah-scroll – minyan – ten adult men – three times a week – Holy Ark

Our synagogue plays a very important part in my Jewish community. Me and my family go each time, which is **three times a week**. In the middle of the synagogue is a **bimah**. It's difficult to describe... It's kind of like a heightened platform! On it are a couple of important people for our services. One of them is the **chazan**. He sings and recites a lot of the prayers. He leads the synagogue service! There is also the **baal koree**, who reads from the Torah-scroll. This is so difficult, there is even a special education designed to learn to this. The Torah has to be carried to the bimah from a safe storage room. We call this storage room the **Torah Ark**, or **Holy Ark**. There is a **parochet** hanging in front of it, which is a beautifully ornamented piece of fabric. This synagogue-service is a special occasion, because I get to be part of the **minyan**. This is a special chorus made up of **ten adult men**. I had my bar mitzvah last week, so I'm finally old enough to be a part of it! Some prayers can only be recited by us. My sister would like to be a part of it, too, but in our synagogue, that is not allowed. It is a halachic rule!



Figure 1.1
The interior of the
synagogue Brahat ha-
levana in Bnei Brak .
Israel.
Source: © suprunvitaly /
Adobe Stock

1.6.2 A COVENANT WITH GOD

Moshe writes the following: “Our relation to God is the most important aspect of our lives. This relation is a relation of love. We believe that God loves us in a unique way. This love implicates a task. Answering the love of God means loving our fellow people by doing justice. Hearing the word of God means doing the word of God! We see this as a covenant of love with God.”

This covenant with God is inscribed in the daily life of Jews to this day. One very corporeal sign is the circumcision. The circumcision is a controversial practice, but also a misunderstood one. Firstly, only boys are circumcised. This is done by someone that is specially trained to carry out the operation. Nowadays, it's carried out by someone from a medical profession. The circumcision is not that painful, since they only cut in the skin. It takes place on the eighth day of the boys life, which is an age at which the circumcision is less painful than at later age. After three days, the wound is fully healed.

In orthodox branches of Judaism, they only assign a name after or during the circumcision, which outlines its importance. Girls become part of the covenant differently. In orthodox Judaism they do this by saying words of gratitude on the girls' first *Shabbat*.

Exercise 6: About the covenant – ca. 7m.

The students can be asked to reflect on this central aspect of Judaism. A class conversation can take place by making use of the following questions:

- a. Why do Jews experience this covenant as something hugely important?
- b. What could “hearing the word means doing the word” mean?

1.6.3 BAR AND BAT MITZVAH

One important moment in every Jewish kid's life is the bar or bat mitzvah. This event celebrates the moment when a Jew becomes an adult member of the religious community. It's when they become 'children of the commandments', because from now on they are expected to carry on following the commandments. Jewish children celebrate their bar/bat mitzvah on the Shabbat that is closest to their actual birthday.

More information on bar and bat mitzvah can be found on the following webpage:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zrrkxnb/revision/2>

Exercise 7: Moshe's bar mitzvah – ca. 5m.

You have read or watched Moshe's description of his bar mitzvah. Fill in the missing words:

bar mitzvah – bat mitzvah – twelve – ancient Hebrew – daughter of the commandment - parashah – thirteen – rabbi – son of the commandment

This Shabbat is a special occasion. I turned thirteen this year, so this Shabbat we will celebrate my bar mitzvah! This means that I'm now a 'son of the commandment'. We will celebrate my bar mitzvah in the synagogue. I'm kind of anxious, because I have to read the parashah, the weekly Torah portion. What makes matters even worse is that it's written in ancient Hebrew. As if standing in front of the synagogue wasn't stressful enough! You could say I'm looking forward to the feast afterwards. We are very close to our synagogue's rabbi, and he made sure that there will be a nice reception. At least, that's what my parents told me. My younger sister will be there too, but she won't have her bat mitzvah yet. According to our tradition, girls become adults at the age of twelve. Well, a lot of girls in my school class are bigger than me, so there must be some truth to that. Either way, my sister will have her turn next year. She can't wait to become a 'daughter of the commandment'.

Accompanying question

The students can be asked to reflect on their own (religious) customs and compare them to the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony.

1.6.4 PASSOVER OR PESACH, THE FESTIVAL OF FREEDOM

Passover, or Pesach in Hebrew, is one of the most important religious festivals in the Jewish calendar. According to the Jewish stories, Jews used to be slaves in Egypt. Luckily, God helped them escape, and allowed them to reach a land He promised them. This story is recounted in the Book of Exodus. During Passover, Jews celebrate Pesach to commemorate this redemption and liberation from slavery. That is why it's called the Festival of Freedom!

Passover is so popular that families often travel great lengths to celebrate it together. The length of the celebrations can vary, depending on where you live. In Israel, Passover lasts for seven days, with the first and the last being a full days of rest, kind of like *Shabbat*! In diaspora communities, Passover lasts for eight days, with the first two and last two being full days of rest.

In the Diaspora, they have two ritual meals on the first two nights. In Israel they have only one. This meal is called *Seder*. *Seder* means order, because there is a strict order in which the feast is arranged. For this event Jewish households even have specific cutlery and plates. The meal itself consists of a fixed amount of components. Each component is symbolic, and has to be eaten in order. During the meal they discuss these meanings. During Passover *Seder* Jews read from a book called *Haggadah*, which tells the story of Exodus and Passover.

More information on Passover can be found on the following webpage:

https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/holydays/passover_1.shtml

Exercise 8: Pesach – ca. 15m.

After reading or watching Moshe's description of Pesach, more background can be given on this important event by use of the information found above. Afterwards, the students can be separated into groups, and reflect on the following questions:

- a. Who was set free? And by who? And why is this event worth remembering for Jews? Why is it so important?
- b. Today, not everyone lives in freedom. Who do they think needs freedom today? And in what ways?
- c. What kinds of freedom do you look forward to as you grow up?



Figure 1.2
Passover wine and
matzoh jewish holiday
bread wooden board.
Source: © ungvar /
Adobe Stock

1.7 GLOSSARY

Aramaic

Aramaic is a language that originated in the ancient Near East. For example, Aramaic was spoken in regions that today are known as Iraq, Syria, Israel, Palestine, and Eastern Arabia. Aramaic and Hebrew are part of the same language family.

Circumcision

Circumcision is a medical practice through which a piece of the foreskin of the penis is removed. In Judaism, this is taken as a corporeal sign or token of their covenant with God. In Genesis 17:10-13, God commands Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish people, and all of his descendants to be circumcised. The circumcision is a very common practice, even among areligious Jews. Nowadays, this practice is carried out by someone from the medical field, and the potential pain of the operation is seriously minimized.

Covenant

The covenant is another word for 'bond': the relation between God and his People, the Jews. This covenant implies rules about how Jews should act, and thereby it has consequences to how Jews orient themselves in life.

Diaspora

Diaspora is the whole of Jewish people living outside of Israel. After the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, or during various periods of slavery, the Jewish people dispersed all over the world.

Exodus

The term 'Exodus' has two meanings. Firstly, it refers to the Book of Exodus, the second book of the Torah. Secondly, it refers to the first part of this book: the Jewish people's exodus out of Egypt. The name Exodus comes from Ancient Greek and means "going out-" The Hebrew name is "Names", which refers to the opening words of the text.

Mitzvah

Mitzvah is a synonym for a religious commandment or religious obligation. The plural of 'mitzvah' is 'mitzvot'.

Mount Sinai

Mount Sinai is the place where the prophet Moses is said to have received the Torah from God. It is also the place where the Jewish people made their covenant with God. It is known as a sacred location.

According to the story in the Bible, the ancient Jews were slaves in Egypt, until God helped them escape. Afterwards, they wandered through the desert for 40 years, during which they reached Mount Sinai.

Torah and Talmud

The Jewish texts are divided into the oral Torah and the written Torah. According to Judaism, Moses received both on Mount Sinai. Together they form the Torah. Torah is Hebrew for “Law” or “Teaching.”

The written Torah consists of five books, also called the Five Books of Moses. These are the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The oral Torah is the set of explanations that Moses also received in the process. Moses passed them on orally to Joshua, who in turn passed it on to the elders, until finally it was passed on to the rabbis. These explanations are very important. The written Torah is not always clear on every point. For example, Jews are not allowed to work on Sabbath, but it is not clear what is meant by ‘work’. This problem is solved by appealing to rabbinic explanations and commentaries.

Two commentaries formed on the Torah: a commentary on the written Torah, and a commentary on the oral Torah. The commentaries on the written Torah are called Midrash. These are direct text commentaries. The commentaries on the oral Torah are known as the Talmud. The Talmud itself consists of two parts: the Mishna and the Gemara. According to Orthodox Jews, the oral Torah has as much Divine authority as the written Torah.

Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments is a list of ten principles that have to be followed according to the Written Torah. Judaism believes that the Torah has many more commandments, but the Ten Commandments are often understood as being the basis of all the other commandments. The Ten Commandments also exist in Islam and Christianity!

Shoah

The Shoah, also known as the Holocaust, was a horrific event in the years 1941-1945 during which many European Jews were killed by Nazi Germany. It is thought that approximately 6 million Jews were killed in this genocide. At the time, this accounted for almost two-third of the Jewish population in Europe.

Wailing Wall

The Wailing Wall is another term for the Western Wall, the last remaining piece of the ancient Temple of Jerusalem. This Temple was the center of the religious, cultural and economic life of ancient Jews. The Temple was destroyed twice. The first time by the Babylonians, after which the Jews were enslaved in Babylonia. After a while they escaped, however, and they returned and rebuilt the Temple. Sadly, it got destroyed a second time, by the Romans.

1.8 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

A letter from Moshe

Hello! My name is Moshe, and I would like to tell you about my religion: Judaism! There are 14 million Jews all over the world. A lot of us live in Israel, but not every Jew is an Israeli! Jews living outside Israel are what we call the diaspora. I live in Europe, so I'm part of the diaspora! We are also the smallest monotheistic religion. Monotheism means believing in only one God. Although Judaism is the smallest monotheistic religion, it's actually the oldest one!

Some people find the terms 'Jew' or 'Judaism' a little bit complex. Someone is born as a Jew when their mother is Jewish. Few of us were not born by a Jewish mother, but converted to Judaism. Also, not all Jews look alike. We can even vary in how we live our Jewish life. Some Jews decided to assimilate into the cultures they lived in. As a result, they became less strict in following traditional customs and practices. These are liberal or Reform Jews. My family is orthodox or traditional. That means we keep close to our traditions. But there are even Jews who do not believe in God. Every Jewish community is unique!

Our main holy book is the Torah that God revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. That's why it's also called the Five Books of Moses. Most of our texts are in Hebrew, but we also have some texts written in Aramaic and Greek. Our relation to God is the most important aspect of our lives. It is a covenant of love that guides our daily life. We believe that God loves us in a unique way, and this love gives us the task to love other people and do justice. Hearing God's word means actually doing God's word! A sign of this covenant is circumcision: every Jewish boy has to be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth.

Several rules guide our behavior towards God and other fellow humans. These are called *mitzvot* (commandments). The Ten Commandments are the most famous among them. But life constantly

changes, and is now very different from life in ancient Israel, an area now made up of Lebanon, Israel, a part of Syria, and Jordan. That's why we need help to interpret these commandments in order to apply them in our lives. Rabbis, our religious leaders, discuss and teach these rules in the form of halacha, Jewish law. *Halacha* in Hebrew means 'to go', 'to walk', so Halacha refers to the Jewish walk of life!

A lot of halachic rules were written in important texts called the Talmud. Learning our traditions is very important for us. It's part of our education. However, every rule is founded on the Torah, as the expression of God's love for us, and every rule needs to be accepted by a majority of the community. And because our life and experiences keep changing, we never stop discussing these laws. Our tradition is not just repeating what our ancestors did, but learning what they thought, in order to learn things for our own lives! That way our tradition never becomes closed, but stays open.

A big part of our life takes place in the synagogue. 'Synagogue' is a Greek word that means 'house of assembly'. It's the place where we learn, pray, and celebrate feasts! In earlier times, we had a temple in Jerusalem. It was the center of our religious, cultural and economic life. Unfortunately, the Temple was destroyed in ancient times. The Wailing Wall is the only thing that's left of this destroyed temple. Me and my family go and visit Jerusalem once a year. This place makes me feel connected to my Jewish history, which is very important to me and my family. Some moments in our history are sad to think about. During the second world war there was the Shoah, in which the Nazi's killed many Jews. For me and my family, this event is a reminder to always keep going!

Rituals and feasts are very important in the lives of Jews. They celebrate our covenant with God. Let me tell you about two of my favorites.

Firstly, there is *Shabbat*. *Shabbat* is a day of rest. It lasts from Friday evening to Saturday evening, because Jewish days begin at sundown. The Torah teaches us that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Imitating God, we also rest on the seventh day! This *Shabbat* is a special occasion: I turned thirteen this week, so we will celebrate my bar mitzvah! This means that I'm now a 'son of the commandment'. The ceremony will take place in the synagogue. I'm kind of anxious, because I have to read the *parashah*, the weekly Torah portion. What makes matters even worse is that it's written in ancient Hebrew. As if reading out loud in front of a full synagogue wasn't stressful enough! Luckily, there's a feast afterwards, and I'll get many gifts! My younger sister will be there too. According to our tradition, girls become adults at the age of twelve. That's when they become bat mitzvah, 'daughter of the commandment'.

Besides *Shabbat*, my favorite feast is *Pesach*, or Passover. Passover is known as the Festival of Celebration, when we remember our exodus from slavery in Egypt. God liberated us and under Moses' leadership brought us to the promised land. This event is the origin of our identity, during which God gave us the Torah! Passover is always in the spring, and it lasts eight days. The evening before we have *Seder*, a ritual meal during which we retell the story of Exodus. During Passover *Seder*, we only eat food that reminds us of ancient Israel. That means we can't eat anything with *chametz*, or leaven, because ancient Jews had to leave quickly and didn't have time to let their bread rise. My favorite part is the search for *chametz* the day before *Pesach*. This ritual search is always a lot of fun! It symbolizes getting rid of arrogance or pride in our house.

In short, Judaism is about the love of God, learning the Torah, doing good for others, and justice!

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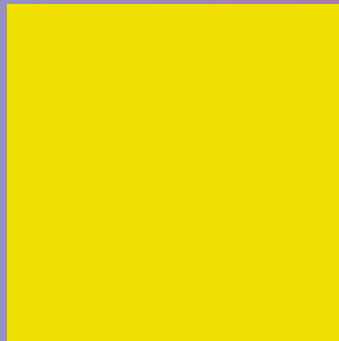
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2



CATHOLICISM

CATHOLICISM

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE TEXTBOOK

This teacher's book is a didactic packet that focuses on a first introduction to Catholicism. It has been developed for a 12- to 18-year-old audience and offers the teacher/supervisor the opportunity to develop this theme at the level of their class group.

Catholicism is a widespread and well-known movement within Christianity. The term, Catholic, originally comes from Greek, and means universal. The Catholic message and the Catholic Church are particularly addressed to every person in the world. This didactic package introduces students to the core elements of the Catholic faith, the Catholic Church, and the daily life of a Catholic believer.

The starting point of this textbook and didactic package is a video clip in which a Catholic girl, Sara, reads a letter about her own faith: Catholicism. Sara discusses the core elements of her faith. This letter can be found in the textbook, so students are able to (re)read the letter at any time.

Based on Sara's letter, the students work on exercises. In this teacher's textbook you will find the correct answers to each of these exercises, as well as additional information.

This textbook also contains a more in-depth exercise, which is not included in the basic curriculum for students. It can be discussed with students depending on the specific needs of the class context. Finally, this teacher's book contains a glossary in which all difficult terms are explained concisely at the level of the student. This is followed by a bibliography.

Structure and schedule of the module:

- Introductory exercise (5 minutes)
- Video clip (10 minutes)
- Exercise 1 (5 minutes)
- Exercise 2 (10 minutes)
- Exercise 3 (10 minutes)
- Exercise 4 (5 minutes)
- Exercise 5 (5 minutes)

2.2 EXERCISES

2.2.1 BEFORE WE START (5 MINUTES)

The students individually answer the questions below before Sara's letter is viewed or read. Students' personal answers can be discussed in class.

1. Please write down five things that come to your mind when you think of Catholicism.
2. Please write down three questions you would like to ask about Catholicism.



Figure 2.1
Church buildings are places of worship for Catholics. The photo shows the Saint Giles church in Bruges, Belgium.
Source: © Renáta Sedmáková / Adobe Stock

2.2.2 EXERCISE 1: A FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH CATHOLICISM (5 MINUTES)

The students individually answer the questions below after Sara's letter is viewed or read. Students' personal answers can be discussed in class.

1. What did you already know about the Catholic faith?
2. What information about the Catholic faith is new to you?

**2.2.3 EXERCISE 2:
WHAT DO YOU KNOW
ABOUT THE CATHOLIC
FAITH? (10 MINUTES)**

The students individually answer the questions below after Sara's letter is viewed or read. You can find the correct answers here with additional information about the correct answer.

1. What does the word, Catholic, mean?

a. Universal

b. Church

c. Big

The word, Catholic, means universal. The Catholic message and the Catholic Church are addressed to everyone. Catholicism is a branch within Christianity.

2. When Catholics speak of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, they call this...

a. .. the cross

b. ... the Last Supper

c. ... the Holy Trinity

Like other Christians, Catholics speak of the triplicate God: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We call this the Holy Trinity. Christians thus believe in one God who reveals himself in three different forms. These forms are inseparable from one another. This is also reflected in the sign of the cross that Christians make, saying, *"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."*

3. What is the correct ranking of leadership figures within the Catholic Church?

a. Bishop, priest, deacon

b. Bishop, deacon, priest

c. Lay people, priest, bishop

There are three offices within the Catholic Church: bishop, priest, and deacon. Only unmarried men can fill the offices of bishop and priest. Deacons may be married or single. The pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church and is called the Bishop of Rome. Catholics believe that the pope is the successor of the apostle Peter, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. Bishops occupy the most important position after the pope. Bishops are the successors of the disciples of Jesus and are appointed by the pope. The offices of priest and deacon were established to support the bishops.

Catholics who do not take up a formal office in the Church are called the laity. Lay people are encouraged to engage with society from a distinctly Christian standpoint. Women may serve the Church by joining religious communities (thereby becoming a nun), or as laity (both within and outside marriage).

4. At Easter, Catholic believers commemorate...

- a. the resurrection of Jesus Christ, after the crucifixion.**
- b. the birth of Jesus Christ.
- c. the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

During Easter, the most important holiday within Christianity, Christians commemorate the resurrection of Jesus. After dying on the cross, Jesus was brought back to life by God. Easter signifies that death does not have the last word; the love of God is stronger than death. Thus, Easter is the symbol of hope and the future. The suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are at the heart of the Christian faith.

5. What is the name of the sacred text of Christianity?

- a. The Old Testament
- b. The Bible**
- c. The Koran

The Bible is the sacred text for Christians. This sacred text consists of two parts: the Old/First Testament, and the New/Second Testament. The term, Bible, comes from the Greek word, *biblia*, which means books. Indeed, the Bible is a collection of several books, consisting of different literary genres: legends, wisdom, (historical) stories, prophetic visions, Gospels, and so on.

6. The Catholic Church has seven sacraments. What is a sacrament?
- a. A sacrament is a reference to a text in the sacred text of Christianity.
 - b. A sacrament is a ritual in which God and humankind meet.**
 - c. A sacrament is a holy place where believers pray.

A sacrament is a ritual in the Catholic Church in which God and humankind meet. The Catholic tradition has seven sacraments that symbolize significant moments and transitions in the lives of Catholic believers: baptism, penance or reconciliation, the Eucharist, confirmation, marriage, holy orders, and anointing of the sick.

7. The veneration of saints plays an important role in the everyday life of Catholics. What is a saint?
- a. A saint is someone who has been on a pilgrimage five times.
 - b. A saint is a person born on Christmas.
 - c. A saint is an example of a Christian life that inspires.**

Saints are examples of a Christian life that inspires. A deceased person can be canonized if they lived an inspiring and faithful life.

The veneration of saints plays an important role in the everyday life of Catholics. The most famous saint who is venerated by Catholics is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Faith in and veneration of Mary is also expressed in numerous songs, prayers, and art. There are also certain places connected with Mary, such as Lourdes in France, and Scherpenheuvel in Belgium.

8. Where does the pope, the head of the Catholic Church, live?
- a. Vatican City**
 - b. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
 - c. Lourdes, France

Vatican City is an independent state located within Rome, Italy. It is the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church, and the place where the pope lives.

9. What is one of the most important symbols for Catholics?

a. The mountain

b. The cross

c. The grave

Jesus was born in the first century of the Christian era in Palestine and was a unique person. He taught many inspiring lessons, shared stories, and performed miracles. He announced the Kingdom of God: an empire of love, not of power. That is why Jesus experienced resistance. He eventually died on the cross for the sins of all people. However, as the Son of God, He rose from the dead. His death and resurrection reveal God's love for us and marked the beginning of Christianity. Therefore, the cross is one of the most important symbols within the Christian faith, reminding us of the death of Jesus on the cross.

10. The Eucharist is a commemoration for Catholics of...

a. the pope.

b. Mary, the mother of Jesus.

c. the Last Supper, Christ, and the Easter mystery.

The Eucharist reminds Christians of the Last Supper. This is the last meal Jesus shared with his disciples, who are also called the apostles. During the Last Supper, Jesus broke bread and shared it. Then Jesus said, *"This is my body, which is given for you"* (Luke 22:19). Jesus also circulated wine, which he called his blood: *"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood"* (Luke 22:20). With these words, the sacrament of the Eucharist emerged. Jesus asked his disciples to keep repeating the meal this way. That is why the ecclesial community has come together from the very beginning to celebrate the Eucharist. The celebration of the Eucharistic is not only a commemoration of the Last Supper, but also the commemoration of Christ and the Easter mystery.



Figure 2.2
The moment of the
Eucharist during Mass.
Source: © lightpoet /
Adobe Stock

2.2.3 EXERCISE 3: THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS (10 MINUTES)

A sacrament is a **ritual in the Catholic Church** in which God and humankind meet. The Catholic tradition has **seven sacraments** that mark important moments and transitions in the life of Catholic believers.

Students can find a list of the seven sacraments in their manual. They have to connect them to their definitions by noting the number of the sacrament next to the description. You can find the correct answers here.

1. Sacrament of baptism
2. Sacrament of the Eucharist
3. Sacrament of confirmation
4. Sacrament of marriage
5. Sacrament of holy orders
6. Sacrament of anointing of the sick
7. Sacrament of penance or reconciliation

Description	Sacrament (number)
In this sacrament, a Catholic believer is anointed with the Holy Spirit. It is a confirmation of baptism. In this way, the believer shows God and the Church community that they want to be Catholic.	3
This sacrament grants forgiveness and reconciliation after a Catholic believer has confessed their own sins and is willing to renew their own life.	7
A Catholic receives this sacrament for the first time at their First Communion. The sacrament reminds Catholics of the Last Supper, where Jesus asked his disciples to always repeat the meal in the same way. With this sacrament, Catholics commemorate Christ and the Easter mystery.	2
In this sacrament, two people are joined not only for life to each other, but also to God, and the Church community.	4
People join the Christian faith by means of this sacrament of initiation. Water is often poured over the candidate's head.	1
This sacrament is given to the sick and dying. It allows the sick or dying person to experience the closeness of God.	6
With this sacrament, a person demonstrates their choice to serve God and the Church community. Only unmarried men can obtain this sacrament.	5

2.2.4 EXERCISE 4:
RIGHT OR WRONG?
(5 MINUTES)

The students answer the questions below after viewing/reading Sara's letter. You can find the correct answers here with additional information about the correct answer.

1. Jesus lived in the first century of the Christian era. He was a unique and inspiring person. He knew no opposition throughout his life.

RIGHT / **WRONG**

This statement is wrong. Jesus was born in the first century of the Christian era in Palestine and was a unique person. He taught many inspiring lessons, shared stories, and performed miracles. He announced the Kingdom of God: an empire of love, not of power. That is why Jesus experienced resistance. He eventually died on the cross for the sins of all people. However, as the Son of God, He rose from the dead. His death and resurrection reveal God's love for us and marked the beginning of Christianity.

2. A Catholic pilgrim is a traveller who is on a journey to a place of religious significance. Catholics can choose to go on pilgrimages to places connected to saints, such as Lourdes.

RIGHT / WRONG

This statement is right. For many people, a pilgrimage is an inspiring experience that stays with them for the rest of their lives.

3. Vatican City is a special place for Catholics. It is the place where the Bible, the book of faith of Christians, can be read.

RIGHT / **WRONG**

This statement is wrong. Whilst it is true that Vatican City is a special place for Catholics, it is not the only place where the Bible can be read. Vatican City is the headquarters of the Catholic Church and the place where the Pope lives. The pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church.

2.2.5 IN CONCLUSION: THE LORD'S PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Prayer is an important activity for Catholics. The best known prayer for all Christians is the **Lord's prayer**, which is also called the **Our Father**. So this prayer is important not only for Catholics, but also for Protestants, Anglicans, Orthodox, and so on. The prayer was given by Jesus Christ himself. So it is ancient and can even be found in the Bible.

The Lord's Prayer is a powerful text addressed to God. Believers can find comfort, support, hope and trust in it. It is a text that also makes Catholics dream about the future, in which nothing good is ultimately lost.

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.

The students silently read the prayer and background information. Then students reflect on the following questions:

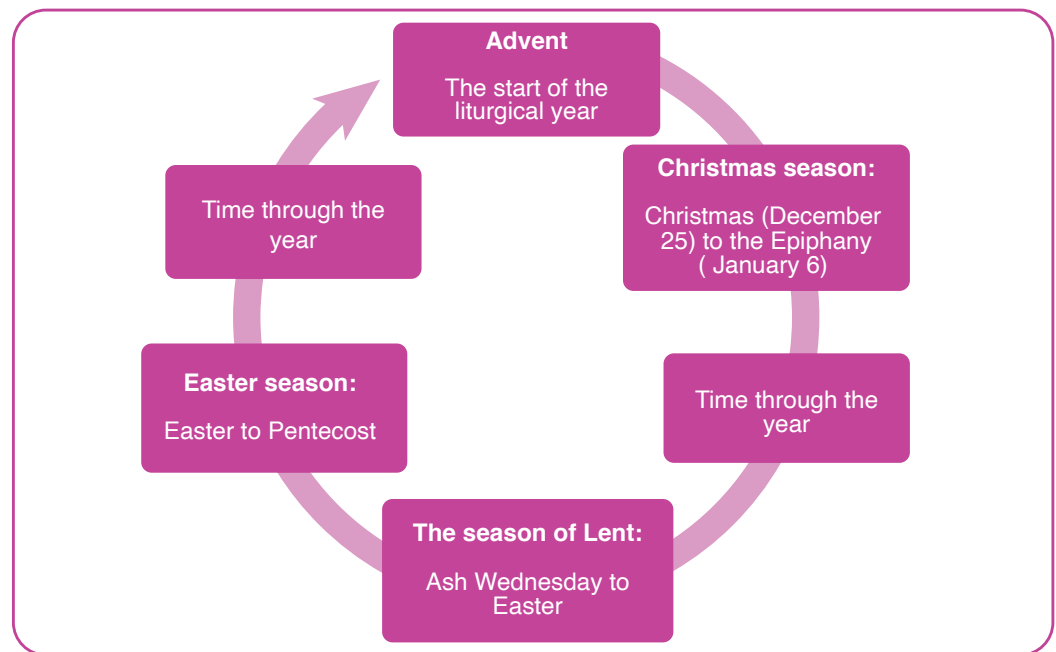
1. What amazes you the most in this prayer?
2. Do you ever pray?
3. If you don't pray yourself, do you understand why others do? What would you like to ask them?

2.3 ADDITIONAL EXERCISE

2.3.1 LITURGICAL YEAR

Not only in Christianity, but also in other religions and philosophies of life, rituals and customs are important in (religious) life. These different rituals and practices are usually connected to a certain holiday. Feast days often have a special meaning for believers and break through everyday life. Also within Catholicism, there are several special moments throughout the year when Catholics live out their faith together. Within the Catholic Church, the faithful speak of the church year, or the liturgical year. The **liturgical year** always begins with the first Sunday of Advent and ends with the feast of Christ the King.

The liturgical year can be divided into several periods, but largely focuses on two major holidays: Christmas and Easter. Here you can see a schematic representation of the liturgical year:



In what follows, you will find an overview of the most important feast days in the ecclesiastical/liturgical year in the Catholic Church. In addition to these feast days, of course, there are many other feast days of importance to Catholic believers.

The Advent Period

The first Sunday of Advent marks the **beginning of the liturgical year** within the Catholic Church. Advent is the period leading up to **Christmas**. It is the preparation for Christmas, during which Christians look forward to the coming of Jesus. During Advent, the four weeks leading up to Christmas, Christians decorate a wreath. This Advent wreath is decorated with four candles. Each Sunday of Advent, a new candle is lit to count down to the birth of Jesus Christ.



Figure 2.3
An Advent Wreath
Source: © sandra starke/
EyeEm / Adobe Stock

The Christmas season

Every year on December 25, Christians around the world celebrate **Christmas**. At Christmas, believers celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas is a real family celebration; believers get together with their whole family. Also, the faith community comes together for a celebration in church.

Christmas is also characterized by some customs, such as the setting up of a nativity scene with Jesus, Mary and Joseph. But also the shepherds, the Three Kings and other figures appear in this nativity scene. The nativity scene and the Christmas tree are usually set up by believers during Advent and Christmas every year. A nativity scene reminds believers of the birth of Jesus. Catholics usually place this nativity scene next to a decorated Christmas tree. Gifts are placed under the Christmas tree.

The Christmas season concludes with **Epiphany**. This is celebrated annually on January 6. On Epiphany, believers remember the 'wise men from the east' who followed a star in search of 'the newborn King of the Jews', and brought gifts for the newborn Jesus.



Figure 2.4
A nativity scene
Source: © MarianStock /
Adobe Stock

The season of Lent

The celebration of Easter is preceded by Lent. Lent, or the Lenten season, are the forty days before Easter. Lent starts annually in February or March, depending on when Easter falls. Lent is the preparation for the Easter celebration, beginning on **Ash Wednesday**. Believers receive an ash cross on their forehead on Ash Wednesday. The following Lent refers to the forty days Jesus spent in silence and solitude to turn to God through prayer and fasting, as recounted in the gospels.

The last week before Easter is called **Holy Week** by Christians. Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, when believers commemorate the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. The day before Jesus' death on the cross, Christians celebrate Maundy Thursday, which is when Jesus shared the Last Supper with his disciples. On Good Friday, Christians then commemorate the suffering and death of Jesus. Jesus died for the sins of all people. Silent Saturday is the day before Easter, when Christians reflect on the death of Jesus. And on Sunday, Christians celebrate Easter.



Figure 2.5
On Ash Wednesday,
believers receive an ash
cross.
Source: © iweta0077 /
Adobe Stock

The Easter season

The most important feast for Christians is **Easter**. At Easter, Christians commemorate the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. After all, after dying on the cross, Jesus was brought back to life by God. Christians thus celebrate on Easter that Jesus rose from the dead and that death does not have the last word. The love of God is stronger than death. Thus, Easter is the symbol of hope and future. The suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are at the heart of the Christian faith. Christians celebrate this on Easter Day itself with a celebration in church. Easter, like Christmas, is a joyous family celebration, where Christians, for example, go in search of chocolate Easter eggs, or decorate Easter eggs themselves.

Forty days after Easter, Christians celebrate Ascension Day. With **Ascension**, believers commemorate Jesus being taken up into heaven, with God the Father, after his resurrection. Just as Ascension is connected to Easter in this way, the feast of Pentecost is also connected to the Easter story. **Pentecost** falls ten days later than Ascension, or fifty days after Easter. On this day, Christians commemorate the coming down of the Holy Spirit. On Pentecost, Christians commemorate that Jesus did not abandon them after Ascension; on the contrary, Jesus announced the coming of the Spirit himself. This also brings us to the concept of the Holy Trinity, Christians in particular always speak of God in triplicate: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit.



Figure 2.6
At Easter, Christians
celebrate the resurrection
of Jesus.
Source: © Aldeca
Productions / Adobe
Stock

End of the liturgical year

The last period of the liturgical year includes All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. These annual holidays are celebrated on November one and two each year. **All Saints' Day** falls on November 1 each year and is a feast day in memory of all the saints and martyrs in the Catholic tradition. On November two, **All Souls' Day** is celebrated, which commemorates all the deceased. Catholics have the habit of going to the cemetery on All Saints' Day or All Souls' Day to commemorate the departed.

On the last Sunday of the liturgical year, believers celebrate the **feast of Christ the King**. This feast signifies the end of the liturgical year. Advent, the beginning of a new liturgical year, starts a week later.



Figure 2.7
On All Saints Day and All Souls Day, Christians visit the cemetery in memory of all the deceased.
Source: © encierro / Adobe Stock.

Didactic suggestions

The students are introduced to the meaning of the important feasts within Catholicism. They connect the appropriate meaning with the appropriate feast day.

Discuss the various feast days of Catholicism with the students using the schedule of the liturgical year. The following questions can be discussed:

- What holidays are you familiar with? Which holidays are new to you?
- Which holidays do you know the meaning of?
- Are there any holidays that you yourself celebrate in a particular way (with your family or friends)?

The different holidays can be discussed with the students using the pictures with the following questions:

- What do the students see in the picture?
- What holiday is it about?
- How can this be connected to the holiday in question?
- What meaning(s) can we find in this picture, what significance does the holiday have for believers?

The class is divided into groups, with each group assigned a holiday. Then, the different groups present the assigned holiday to the rest of the class using a PowerPoint presentation with pictures, footage, quotes, personal stories, etc.

2.4 SCENARIO

Hello! My name is Sara, I am 14 years old, and I am Catholic. Like the rest of my family, I feel connected to the Catholic Church. Catholicism is a denomination within Christianity. Catholic means 'universal', so you can say that the Catholic message and the Catholic Church are addressed to everyone.

Like many other Christians, Catholics believe God exists as three persons: God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This is known as the Holy Trinity. This is also reflected in the sign of the cross that Christians perform, saying 'In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'. The sign of the cross is a symbolic action; it is a reference to the cross that Jesus died on, which is one of the most important symbols within our faith.

Jesus was born in the first century of the Christian era in Palestine and was a unique person. He taught many inspiring lessons, shared stories, and performed miracles. He announced the Kingdom of God: a kingdom of love, not of power. That is why Jesus experienced resistance. He eventually died on the cross for the sins of all people. However, as the Son of God, he rose from the dead. His death and resurrection reveal God's love for us and marked the beginning of Christianity.

Today is Christmas! Every year on December 25, Christians around the world celebrate the birth of Jesus. Christmas is a real family celebration. We come together with the whole family to eat and open presents! You know what I really like about Christmas? The nativity scene! A nativity scene reminds us of the birth of Jesus. Catholics often put a crib next to a decorated Christmas tree.

Besides Christmas, there are other feast days that have an important place in the life of Catholics. The most important holiday is Easter. At Easter, Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The love of God is stronger than death. Thus, Easter is the symbol of hope and the future. The suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus are at the heart of the Christian faith. Easter is also a cheerful family celebration where we go on a chocolate Easter egg hunt, or we decorate boiled eggs!

On holidays like Christmas and Easter, Catholics go to church, the Christian house of prayer. During every Mass, we read passages from the Bible. The Bible strengthens believers. In addition, Catholics receive the sacrament of the Eucharist during the Mass. A sacrament is a ritual in the Catholic Church in which God and humankind meet. The Catholic tradition has seven sacraments that mark important moments and transitions in life.

The sacrament of the Eucharist is received for the first time at one's First Holy Communion, I was seven years old back then. The Eucharist reminds Christians of the Last Supper. This is the last meal Jesus shared with his apostles. Jesus asked his disciples to keep repeating this meal. That is why the ecclesial community has come together from the very beginning to celebrate the Eucharist.

In addition to the sacrament of the Eucharist, there are six other sacraments that play important roles in the lives of Catholics. The first sacrament is baptism. My parents chose to have me baptized as a baby. Baptism is a sacrament of initiation in which people are formally welcomed into the Catholic Church. Water is poured over the head of the person to be baptized, and they are assigned a Godfather

and a Godmother. Children and adults can get baptised to become a member of the Catholic Church. A Catholic believes that baptism is the beginning of a new life in Christ.

When I turned 12, I received the Sacrament of Confirmation. This is also a sacrament of initiation, like baptism. The confirmand is anointed with the Holy Spirit. It is an affirmation of baptism and of the union with God and the ecclesial community. One publicly declares to everyone: 'I want to be a Catholic'.

In the future, I would like to get married in a church! The Sacrament of Marriage not only connects two Christians with each other, but also with God, and the faith community. Some male Catholics are called to the priesthood, or to a religious life. They receive the Sacrament of Ordination. These men are not permitted to marry. Also, women can serve the church, as religious persons in congregations or as lay people, both inside and outside of marriage.

Last year my grandfather died. At the end of his life, he received the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, which was a special and comforting moment for him and our family. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is given to the sick and dying. The sick or dying person experiences or feels that God is lovingly close to them.

The last sacrament I want to tell you about is the Sacrament of Penance, or reconciliation. This sacrament gives Catholics the opportunity to confess their sins to a priest. Our sins, anger, and powerlessness are entrusted to God, who then grants us forgiveness and reconciliation if we are willing to renew our lives. Being a Catholic has moral implications: to respect the dignity of the human person, and to take responsibility for the community and the whole of creation.

In the everyday life of Catholics, the veneration of saints plays an important role. Saints are examples of a Christian life that inspires. The most famous saint who is venerated is Mary, the mother of Jesus. There are also certain places connected with Mary, such as Lourdes in France. People often go on pilgrimages. A pilgrimage is a journey of a believer to a place of religious significance. For many people, a pilgrimage is an inspiring experience that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

To end, I just want to say a few words about Vatican City, located in Rome, and it is the most important place for Catholics all over the world because it is the headquarters of the Catholic Church. It is the place where the Pope lives! The Pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Besides the Pope, there are other leadership figures within the Catholic Church: bishops, priests, and deacons. Catholic believers who do not take up a formal leadership office in the Church are called lay people, or the laity. The laity are called to engage in society based on the Christian inspiration. I would like to conclude with a prayer, perhaps the most famous Christian prayer in the world, given by Jesus himself: The Lord's Prayer.

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.

2.5 GLOSSARY

Bible

The Bible is the book of faith for Christians. This sacred book for Christians consists of two parts: the Old/First Testament and the New/Second Testament. The term 'Bible' comes from the Greek word *biblia*, which means 'books'. Indeed, the Bible is a collection of several books, consisting of different literary genres: legends, wisdom, (historical) stories, prophetic visions, Gospels, and so on.

Catholic

Catholicism is a movement within Christianity. Catholic means 'universal'. The Catholic message and the Catholic Church are addressed to everyone.

Holy Trinity

Like other Christians, Catholics speak of God in triplicate: God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. We call this the Holy Trinity. This is also reflected in the sign of the cross that Christians make, saying, *"In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."*

Kingdom of God

Jesus announced the Kingdom of God: a kingdom of love, not power. The Kingdom of God has an important place within Christianity and is partly at the heart of Jesus' proclamation. When Christians speak of the Kingdom of God, they refer to the hope and dream of a different and new world of God's Kingdom. However, the exact meaning and content is open to interpretation and varies according to context and time.

Pilgrimage

A Catholic pilgrim is a traveller who is on a journey to a place of religious significance. Catholics can choose to go on pilgrimages to places connected to saints, such as Lourdes. For many people, a pilgrimage is an inspiring experience that stays with them for the rest of their lives. For many people, a pilgrimage is an inspiring experience that stays with them for the rest of their lives.

Sacrament

A sacrament is a ritual in the Catholic Church in which God and humankind meet. The Catholic tradition has seven sacraments that symbolize significant moments and transitions in the lives of Catholic believers: sacrament of baptism, sacrament of Eucharist, sacrament of confirmation, sacrament of marriage, sacrament of ordination, sacrament of anointing of the sick, sacrament of penance and reconciliation.

Saint

In the everyday life of Catholics, the veneration of saints plays an important role. Saints are examples of a Christian life that inspires. A well-known example of a saint is Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The Lord's Prayer/The Our Father

The Our Father is a well-known and frequently prayed prayer among Christians, addressed to God. It was given by Jesus himself and can be found in the Bible. This prayer is centuries old and has been translated into hundreds of languages.



Photo: Annie Spratt | Unsplash

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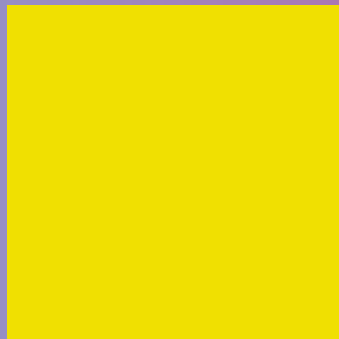
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3



ISLAM

ISLAM

3.1 GENERAL

Islam is the second largest world religion after Christianity. Its source is located in Mecca, in the west of the Arabian Peninsula. Islam has approximately 1.6 billion followers. This means 24.1% of the world's population.

The largest Muslim population is concentrated in Africa and Asia. There are also Muslims in Europe, especially Eastern European countries, such as Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Due to the large migration flows in the 1950s and 1960s, Islam, especially through Moroccans and Turks, settled in Western Europe.



Figure 3.1
Source: © Ahmed Aqtai /
Pexels.com

3.2 STRUCTURE OF TEACHING

3.2.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC (5-6 MIN.)

- As a point of departure, the teacher could show a picture of a mosque (see below under resources for useful links) and ask students to identify it.
- The teacher then asks students to write down five things that come to their mind about Islam. He/She then creates a mind map on board and writes down their ideas.
- Or he asks them to note three questions that would like to ask regarding Islam

3.2.2 WATCHING VID. (CA. 10 MIN.)

- The class watches the brief video of Samir's description of Islam and are asked to answer the multiple-choice questions of exercise

3.2.3 EXERCISE 1 (5 MIN.)

What do we remember from Samir's experience?

(After watching the film, Multiple choice – Comprehension of the video)

1. What does the word "Islam" means?
 - a. Mandatory conversion.
 - b. Understand with your heart.
 - c. Understand with your mind.
2. Why is Prophet Mohammad very important to Muslims?
 - a. Because Prophet Mohammad is an Arab.
 - b. Because Prophet Mohammad is a descendant of the elite.
 - c. Because Prophet Mohammad received the Revelation from Allah.
3. Which city is the most important city for the Muslims.
 - a. Mecca
 - b. Baghdad
 - c. Fez
4. What are the two dominant currents in Islam?
 - a. Sunnism and Shi'ism
 - b. Hanbalism and Malikism
 - c. Hanafism and Shafi'ism

5. The different schools of Islam:
- a. prove that Islam is homogeneous.
 - b. result from the fact that there are some Muslims who interpret the Qur'an literally and others who interpret the Qur'an in spirit.
 - c. prove that there is only one method of interpreting the Qur'an.
6. How many pillars are there in Islam
- a. 3
 - b. 4
 - c. 5
7. Muslims gather in the mosque to listen to the imam preach on social issues such as poverty, climate change, and solidarity from a religious perspective:
- a. On Saturdays,
 - b. On Fridays
 - c. On Thursdays
8. What are the two most important feasts in Islam?
- a. Feast of birth and feast of marriage
 - b. Circumcision and Birthday celebrations
 - c. Feast of Ramadan and feast of Sacrifice
9. A woman can
- a. become a mufti
 - b. become an imam
 - c. become a Friday preacher
10. Islam teaches Muslims
- a. to think only of himself.
 - b. to be a good person.
 - c. to think only of his family.

Solutions: 1b. 2c. 3a. 4a. 5b. 6c. 7b. 8c. 9a. 10b

3.2.4 EXERCISE 2 (3-5 MIN)

Students will answer the questions below about interpretations within Islam:

As Samir has explained to us, Islam has various currents. Read the following sentences and mark with (v) if it is right and with (x) if it is wrong:

- (a) Islam has various currents but only one is dominant.
- (b) Sunnism has the most followers.
- (c) Shi'ism has four schools of law.

3.2.5 EXERCISE 3 (10-15 MIN)

Students read a text about ritual ablution/wudu and prayer then answer the questions (10-15 min.)

In the story of Samir, you can see that prayer occupies an important place in Islam. A small ablution or wudu precedes prayer. This is a ritual washing that all Muslims perform before praying. This washing distracts them from all worldly affairs. In addition, this washing has a symbolic meaning; it is those parts, which in general take part in the daily activities that should be washed.

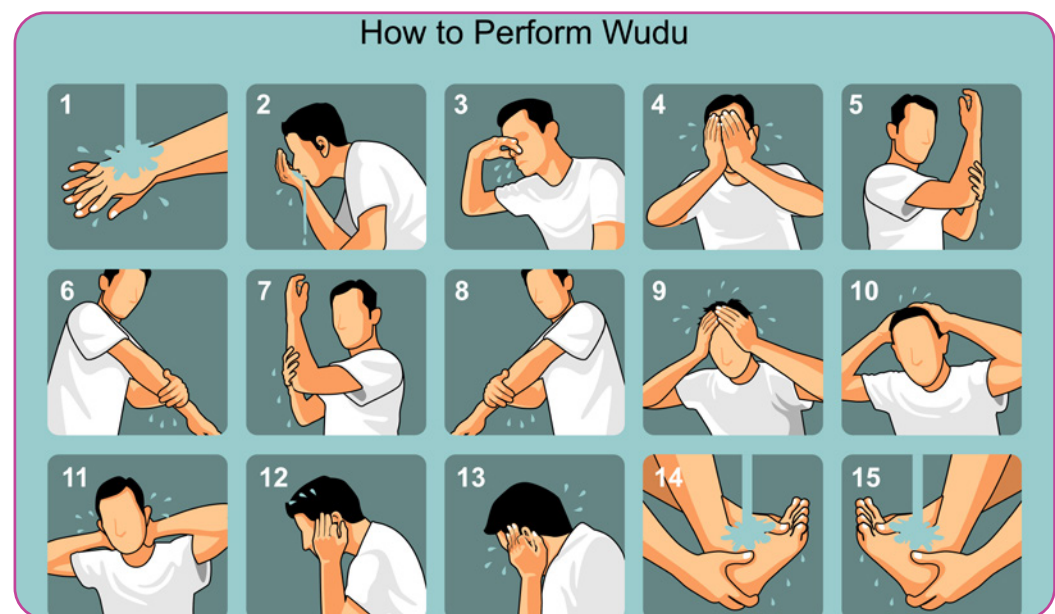


Figure 3.2
How to Perform Wudu
Source: © Ariyadi /
Adobe Stock

It is important that each person who wants to perform the wudu should have a pure intention to serve Allah. One washes their hands, then they rinse their mouth and blows their nose. Then they wash their face, then both arms up to the elbow. Then the hair on the head and ears and finally both feet up to the ankles.

As mentioned in Samir's story, Muslims pray five times a day and draw strength from this. The posture of prayer expresses reverence for God and human submission to God. Prayer consists of a number of postures: standing, bending over and kneeling. In a prescribed ritual manner, these forms are addressed during each prayer. The ultimate expression of submission is the moment in prayer when one kneels down and touches the ground with their forehead. The whole ritual is concluded with a head movement from right to left.



Figure 3.3
Praying Girl
Source: © Creativa
Images / Adobe Stock

a) Muslims, as you may have noticed, pay a lot of attention to the prayer and draw their strength from it. What is your opinion about the prayer of Muslims?

b) Do you also have an activity or a habit from which you draw your strength?

c) Muslims experience prayer as a form of rest. They often regard prayer as a remedy for stress and burn-out. What is your opinion about this?

3.2.5 EXERCISE 4 (10-15 MIN)

Exercise 4. You have read/watched Samir's full description of the five main faith pillars of Islam. Please try to fill in the gaps with one of the words given below. Each word can be used only once.

Purification - Full of goodness - Freedom - Mecca -As-Shahada

1. **As-Shahada** is the testimony that Allah is the only God and that Mohammad is His prophet. As-Shahada is considered "the key" of Islam. This is also the only sentence that a person must utter if one wants to convert to Islam.

2. A Muslim prays five times a day. As-Salaat (The prayer) is a form of meditation. For me, prayer is a means of escaping from human substance (body) to the universe **full of goodness** and beauty far from the worldly noise. While reciting from the Quran and bowing to Allah, I am in search of Enlightenment where I can find my peace.

3. Az-Zakaat means that rich people give some of their wealth to the less fortunate. For me Az-Zakaat means **purification** of the soul because, it is a way to purify the soul of the rich from avarice and greed and of the poor from jealousy towards the rich.

In short, Az-Zakaat teaches me as a Muslim to share with others so that there is a certain justice in society.

4. The ninth month of the Islamic calendar is called Ramadan and is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting (sawm), prayer, reflection and community.

I participate in fasting. This means that from sunrise to sunset I do not eat or drink. Fasting has a spiritual dimension in addition to a physical effort, especially the path to freedom. That means, I must not make my soul dependent on lusts and material things.

Fasting is, therefore, an extraordinary opportunity to find the path to **freedom** and liberate myself from any dependence on material things. Furthermore, fasting helps me to think of people who are less fortunate because by fasting I partially experience the feeling of hunger.

5. Al-Hadj is the fifth pillar of Islam. This means that all Muslims who are able to do so (financially and physically) must visit **Mecca**, the holiest place in Islam once in their life.

Exercise 5: Islam and Peace

Samir told us in his letter that Islam also means peace.

However, Islam is often associated with violence. Several incidents 'in the name of Islam' created an incorrect perception of what is prescribed in Islam. Some Islamic group use Islam to justify violence. Use of violence is by no means a justified manner of bringing change in society. Violence must always be condemned.

However, there are specific situations where violence is allowed like war for protection. When a Muslim country is threatened and all alternatives to stop violence have been exhausted, one may resist with violence, if the strict rules of war within Islam are still respected. The rules are:

1. No violence until all alternatives to stop violence are exhausted.
2. No violence unless a country is attacked, then they can protect themselves.
3. No violence unless people are driven from their homes.

As can be understood from above, war is something to be strongly avoided in Muslim tradition. But if it becomes real, still there are humanitarian rules that should be observed. Those are:

Those are:

1. Do not kill women, children, the elderly or sick people (only use of force against soldiers in a war).
2. Always respect nature and animals.
3. Always respect people's homes.
4. Looting is never allowed.

As we see, the rule that allows violence refers purely to self protection.

a. Why do you think Islam is often associated with violence?



b. In your opinion, are the conditions of violence righteous? Why yes/no?



3.3 EXTRA EXERCISES

3.3.1 EXERCISE: THE PARTS OF A MOSQUE

The parts of a mosque. Student read the sentences below that explain some parts of the mosque. Then he / she tries to fill in the parts in the picture under text. (10min).

1. The **mihrab**, a niche in the wall, indicates the direction of the Kaba, also called the Qiblah. At this place the imam leads the prayer.
2. On the right side of the mihrab you will find the **minbar**, the pulpit where the Friday sermon is held.
3. **Koursi** or **chair** is used during lectures or lessons.
4. The mosque usually also has a **quba**. This is a semi-spherical roof.
5. A mosque has a tower, which is called a **minaret**. The adaan (call to prayer) is called from the minaret.

Place next to the numbers below, the correct section of the mosque:

1. Koursi

2. Minbar

3. Minaret

4. Quba

5. Mihrab



Figures 3.4

Source:

Koursi: © berkay08

Minbar: © FS-Stock

Mihrab: © dani3315

Quba: © hamza /

Adobe Stock

Minaret: © Dipin Pas /

Pexels.com

3.4 GLOSSARY

As-Shahada

Is the testimony that Allah is the only God and that Mohammad is His prophet.

Az-Zakaat

It is an important rule of Islam that demands that rich people should give some of their wealth to the less fortunate.

Djibriel

Angel Jibreel is Allah's messenger Allah to all prophets. He has conveyed the revelation / Quran to the Prophet Mohammad.

Imam

The religious guide of Muslims who also leads communal prayer.

Minbar

The minbar is the pulpit in the mosque where the imam stands and gives a sermon (khutbah) during Friday's prayer.

Mufti

A mufti is a spiritual religious leader who has the authority to give religious advice regarding certain issues.

Ramadan

The ninth month of the Islamic calendar.

Sawm

This term describes the abstinence of food and drink from sunrise to sunset in the month of Ramadan. Besides its physical effort, fasting also has a spiritual dimension and is a path to freedom. It teaches that human soul should not be dependent on lusts and material goods.

Shi'ism

Current of Islam that claims that Mohammed himself designated Ali ibn Abu Talib (Mohammed's nephew; married to his daughter Fatima) as his successor but his wish was not fulfilled.

Sunnism

Current of Islam that follows the tradition based on the life of Islam's last prophet, Mohammed.

Wudu

The wudu is the small ritual ablution performed by a Muslim before salat,

Zakat elfitr

It is a small contribution offered before the end of the month of Ramadan. It is intended for the neediest and aims to compensate for the deficiencies during the fasting period.

3.5 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

Hello, my name is Samir and I would like to talk to you about Islam. I still remember my first religion class when the teacher of Islam told us that "Islam" is an Arabic word with several meanings. The most common meaning is submission. In other words, Islam means accepting with your heart what you cannot grasp/understand with your intellect. Therefore, faith is rather a matter of feeling, he said. He also told us that Islam means peace.

Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, is a very important person to Muslims, because he received a revelation from Allah and he was hence acknowledged as the trustworthy (al-amine) in the Arabic society. Muslims respect Mohammad so much that any image of him is considered disrespectful.

He was born in Mecca, a town in the western Arabian Peninsula, around 570 AD. He started receiving revelation from God at the age of 40. The religion he brought, Islam has approximately 1.6 billion followers. The spiritual capital of Islam is Mecca. Islam spread from there not only geographically, but also culturally through art, science, poetry and philosophy. In a short time, the Islamic empire stretched from the borders of China in the east to southern France (Poitiers) in the west.

The largest Muslim population is concentrated in Africa and Asia. There are also Muslims in Europe, especially Eastern European countries, such as Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Islam is the largest world religion. Due to the large migration flows in the 1950s and 1960s, Islam, especially through Moroccans and Turks, settled in Western Europe.

Today there are 2 dominant schools of thought within Islam., Sunnism and the Shi'ism. Sunni Muslims, who make up 87 of all Muslims, follow the tradition based on the life of Islam's last prophet, Mohammed. Shi'ites believe that Mohammed himself designated Ali ibn Abu Talib (Mohammed's nephew; married to his daughter Fatima) as his successor but he was prevented from this.

The Sunni Islam has four main schools of law: the Hanafi, the Maliki, the Shafi'i and the Hanbali.

The different schools can also explain why some Muslims read the texts literally and others focus on the spirit of the words.

Islam has five main faith pillars: 1) The profession of faith (As-Shahada), 2) Prayer (As-Salat), 3) Giving alms (Az-Zakaat), 4) Fasting during Ramadan (As-Sawm), 5) Going on pilgrimage to Mecca once in life (Al-Hadj).

1) As-Shahada is the testimony that Allah is the only God and that Mohammad is His prophet. As-Shahada is considered "the key" of Islam. This is also the only sentence that a person must utter if he wants to convert to Islam.

2) A Muslim prays five times a day. As-Salaat (The prayer) is a form of meditation. For me, prayer is a means of escaping from human substance (body) to the universe full of goodness and beauty far from the worldly noise. While reciting from the Quran and bowing to Allah, I am in search of Enlightenment where I can find my peace.

3) Az-Zakaat means that rich people give some of their wealth to the less fortunate. For me Az-Zakaat means purification of the soul because, it is a way to purify the soul of the rich from avarice and greed and of the poor from jealousy towards the rich.

In short, Az-Zakaat teaches me as a Muslim to share with others so that there is a certain justice in society.

4) The ninth month of the Islamic calendar is called Ramadan and is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting (sawm), prayer, reflection and community.

I participate in fasting. This means that from sunrise to sunset I do not eat or drink. Fasting has a spiritual dimension in addition to a physical effort, especially the path to freedom. That means, I must not make my soul dependent on lusts and material things.

Fasting is, therefore, an extraordinary opportunity to find the path to freedom and liberate myself from any dependence on material things.

Furthermore, fasting helps me to think of people who are less fortunate because by fasting I partially experience the feeling of hunger.

5) Al-Hadj is the fifth pillar of Islam. This means that all Muslims who are able to do so (financially and physically) must visit Mecca, the holiest place in Islam once in their life.

I try to read from our holy book, namely the Quran, every day. For Muslims, the Qur'an is the Word of God. The archangel Djibriel revealed those words to Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him). If I find something vague in the Qur'an, like, for example, how should I pray, I turn to the Sunnah to find an answer. The Sunnah are words and deeds of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him).

A mosque is a sacred place for Muslims where, among other things, we participate in communal prayer. The first time I visited a mosque I was 8 years old. I experienced a pleasant feeling and peace. Most rituals are done communally. Praying together in the mosque or fasting during Ramadan are examples of this. This closeness made me feel good as a Muslim.

Friday is an important day for Muslims. We gather for afternoon prayers and listen to the imam's sermon. He stands on a seat or minbar and preaches about social issues from a religious perspective, like, for example, poverty, climate change, and solidarity. This gathering also strengthens the sense of belonging.

In addition to the Friday prayer, prayers during the feasts of Ramadan and sacrifice are also special. The end of Ramadan is celebrated with a banquet. In the morning, I dress myself beautifully to perform the morning prayer of the Ramadan feast together with my brothers and sisters in Islam. But before the morning prayer I offer a small contribution called "zakat elfitr" to poor people, because this is a religious obligation. Thus, everyone can celebrate that day without exception. Then I spend the whole day with my family. We exchange wishes and gifts.

The feast of sacrifice is also celebrated together. After the morning prayer, those who are able to do so sacrifice a sheep. The meat is normally distributed to people who are less fortunate.

Rituals are performed by both women and men. However, only men can become imams, that is religious guides of Muslims who lead communal prayer. A woman, however, may become a Mufti. A mufti is a spiritual religious leader who has the authority to give religious advice regarding certain issues.

Muslims celebrate many beautiful moments together, but during less beautiful moments, they also support each other. A few months ago, I had to say goodbye to my father. The imam closed his eyes and pronounced the As-shahada (The Creed). He was then washed and wrapped in a shroud. After washing, the prayer for the dead was performed in the mosque and then we buried him.

After that, the mourning period began. The official mourning period for the relatives of the deceased is three days. Those who have not been able to send their condolences earlier will visit the family of the person who died on one of these days to do so. The mourning visit is also done to comfort and support the next of kin. Those who visit the bereaved traditionally bring food because relatives of the dead person have other concerns. There is also reading from the Quran.

Islam actually expects Muslims to be good persons. This means to live according to the Islamic principles such as for example respecting monotheism (the oneness of Allah), showing respect to others, doing justice....

4



ORTHODOXY

ORTHODOXY

4.1 GENERAL

With 260 millions of members, Orthodox Christianity represents about 12% of all Christian population around the world. For historical reasons, the main part of Orthodox Christians, namely 77%, is located in Europe. There are also some big Orthodox Christian Diaspora communities in America and Western Europe (e.g. Germany). Orthodox Christians are usually defined according to their ethnic origins (e.g. Greek, Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian, etc). They should also be distinguished from Oriental Christians. The former live mainly in Central and Eastern Europe and the latter in Africa. However, apart from geographical location, there are also some significant theological differences between these two groups, especially in matters regarding Christology (the person of Jesus and his divine and human natures).

Useful numbers and facts regarding Orthodox Christianity are provided by Pew Research Center on their webpage.¹

¹ See:

a) "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, November 8, 2017, <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/08/orthodox-christianity-in-the-21st-century/>,

b) "Orthodox Christianity's Geographic Center Remains in Central and Eastern Europe," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, November 8, 2017, <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/08/orthodox-christianitys-geographic-center-remains-in-central-and-eastern-europe/>.

4.2 STRUCTURE OF TEACHING

4.2.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC (5-6 MIN.)

- As a point of departure, the teacher could ask to look at figure 6.1 in students' book and ask them if this kind of building is familiar to them.
- The teacher then asks students to write down five things that come to their mind about Orthodox Christianity. He then creates a mind map on board and writes down their ideas.
- Or he asks them to note three questions that would like to ask regarding Christianity

4.2.2 WATCHING VIDEO (CA. 10 MIN.)

- The class watches the brief video of Eleni's description of Orthodox Christianity and are asked to answer the multiple-choice questions of exercise

4.2.3 EXERCISE 1 (5 MIN.)

What do we remember from Eleni's experience

(After watching the film, Multiple choice – Comprehension of the video)

1. The word "Orthodox" means

- (a) the right belief
- (b) the conservative
- (c) the old-fashioned

2. Why are icons so important for Orthodox Christians?

- (a) they tell stories of faith in a simple way
- (b) they are the holy book of the Orthodox Church
- (c) they are made by holy men of the Bible

3. The holy day of Orthodox Christians is

- (a) Saturday
- (b) Sunday
- (c) Friday

4. The most important feast for the Orthodox Church is
- (a) Christmas
 - (b) a fixed feast in spring
 - (c) Easter
5. In the Orthodox Divine Liturgy the participants
- (a) receive both the consecrated bread and wine
 - (b) receive only the consecrated bread
 - (c) drink wine from a cup
6. During the Baptism in the Orthodox Church
- (a) water is sprinkled on the head of the child
 - (b) a crown is placed on the head of the child
 - (c) the child is immersed three times in a font full of water
7. Which number is important in the Orthodox Church?
- (a) two
 - (b) three
 - (c) forty
8. In the Orthodox Church, women
- (a) do not participate in common worship
 - (b) help in the church but cannot be religious leaders
 - (c) they can be priests like men
9. Eleni says that living according to the Orthodox faith means
- (a) caring only for other Orthodox Christians
 - (b) leading a secluded life in the family
 - (c) showing solidarity to other humans and all creatures

Solutions: 1a. 2a. 3b. 4c. 5a. 6c. 7b. 8b. 9c.

4.2.4 DISCUSSING TYPICAL FEATURES OF ORTHODOX WORSHIP (15-20 MIN)

Most Orthodox Christians keep icons at home

% of Orthodox Christians who ...

	Have icons at home
Former USSR	
Moldova	97%
Georgia	96
Ukraine	91
Armenia	89
Belarus	88
Russia	87
Kazakhstan	85
Latvia	84
Estonia	74
MEDIAN	88
Other European countries	
Greece	95%
Romania	95
Bosnia	93
Serbia	92
Bulgaria	83
MEDIAN	93
Ethiopia	73%

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 19 countries. Data for Ethiopia from Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey. Data for U.S. not available.

"Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 4.1

Icons at Orthodox
Homes, <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/08/orthodox-christianity-in-the-21st-century/>

It is difficult to tell Orthodox Christians from their appearance or dressing. They do not usually pray in public although in mainly Orthodox countries they sometimes cross themselves when they pass by a Church building. Their worship buildings are, however, easy to identify (if there is some time left in the class, exercise 1 of extra exercises could be a useful introduction to an Orthodox Church). If there is time available, the teacher could also briefly discuss figures 6.3 and 6.4 (6.3: All baptized Orthodox Christians receive both the consecrated bread and wine. Orthodox Christians believe that they are spiritually changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The consecrated bread is cut in very small portions and put in the chalice together with the consecrated wine. It is then distributed to the members of the congregation. 6.4: Candles play an important role in Orthodox spirituality and worship. Orthodox Christians usually light candles, usually made by bee wax, when they enter a church. Candles stand in other places in the church. They remind the faithful that Jesus Christ is the light of the world and that his death and resurrection brought the light of hope in the world).

Icons (10-15 min.)

Icons are also a very important part of Orthodox Churches but also of everyday religious practice and worship. Most Orthodox Christian homes have one or more icons or a special praying corner full of them. The Pew Research Center provides some useful facts regarding icons in Orthodox practice (see fig. 1).¹

The teacher could use some facts from this figure and then ask the class to read the text of Exercise 2. (The teacher could project the icon of Theotokos Glykofilousa, see under resources below, on the wall while students could spend 5 min. reading the text. Alternatively, students could look at the picture in their book). Then they could discuss it for about 6-10 min.

Exercise 2: Let's talk about icons

Icons occupy a central place in Orthodox life and spirituality. Orthodox icons have a deep symbolic meaning. Even the colours used stand for certain ideas. Read the following explanation and choose the colour you feel suits you better. Explain why:

Gold: it is the colour that symbolizes the divine world. It is usually found as a background in various icons, in halos and on the clothes of Jesus Christ.

Blue: it stands for the Kingdom of God, heavens, infinity or eternity. It is usually found as a background in various icons and as the colour of garments of the Mother of Jesus.

Red: it is the colour of life, love, passion, of Jesus' sacrifice but also his resurrection. It is sometimes found as background as well.

¹ A "Most Orthodox Christians Keep Icons at Home," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project (blog), accessed June 22, 2020, https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/08/orthodox-christianity-in-the-21st-century/pf_11-08-17_orthodoxy-00-03/.

Green: it is the colour of renovation, hope, youth and nature. It is usually found in icons that depict Jesus' birth or the annunciation of his birth to his mother by the angel.

White: it stands for purity and divinity. This is the colour of garments of the angels and Jesus when the aim is to stress his divine nature as the Son of God.

Black: it can either be the colour of death or evil but it also used for the garments of the ascetics and monks to denote that they abstained from all worldly pleasures.

Brown: the colour of the earth, a symbol of mortality and ascetic life

Purple red: the colour of royalty and glory. It is used for the garments of Jesus Christ and his Mother.

Now look at the following icon of Jesus' Mother** and Jesus as a young child and try to explain the message of the colours used on it.



Figure 4.2. The Theotokos in the type of Glykophilousa (kissing her child, Jesus), 15th c. Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève: "Creta o venezia, madona glykophilousa, 1457.JPG", https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Creta_o_venezia,_madonna_glykophilousa,_1457.JPG

The colours that students could identify are: gold as a sign of divinity in the icon background and the clothes of Jesus and Mary; Mary's garments in purple-red, a sign of her royalty being the Mother of God; the blue inner garment of Mary as a sign of eternity, since again she is the Mother of eternal God.

Rituals: Baptism (6 min.)

Orthodox rituals are also quite different from those of the other Christian denominations and religions. The class is invited to read a passage written by Eleni describing the baptism of her young sister and fill the gaps with words provided. The class could also consult the glossary for possible unknown words.

Exercise 3: Baptismal Ritual

You have read/watched Eleni's full description of the ritual of baptism. Please try to fill in the gaps with one of the words given below. Each word can be used only once.

Faith, anointment, candle, cross, cut, oil, crossing, life, reborn

Today is a happy day in my family. My young sister is going to get baptized. She will become a full member of the Orthodox Church. During the ceremony, she will get her Christian name, she will be dressed in white new clothes and wear a **cross**, all symbols of her new **life** as a Christian. Although in ancient times people were baptized as adults, today in the Orthodox Church children are usually baptized in the early months of their lives. Baptism will be performed in our parish by the priest and the godparents of my soon-to-be-baptized sister will be there to help during baptism. Godparents are usually friends of the family or relatives. They will be her spiritual parents and responsible for her growing up following the teachings of the Orthodox Church.

In the first part of the ceremony, the priest will announce the name of my sister and everyone will look happy. He will, then, ask her godmother to recite the Symbol of **Faith** on behalf of my sister who is of course still too young to read it on her own.

Then the priest will lead both my sister and her godmother in front of the baptismal font and with the help of the godmother, he will anoint my sister with blessed **oil**, a symbol of blessing and new creation. He will immerse her three times into the water of the font in the name of the Father, the Son, and

the Holy Spirit. Well, not all babies find it very amusing and many of them cry when immersed in water. It is, however, a moment of joy. My teacher explained to us that this is a symbol of dying and being **reborn** into a new life following the example of Jesus Christ who died and was risen from the dead. Immediately after getting out of the font, the chrismation takes place. It is the **anointment** of the child's body blessed oil. Through this, my sister will become a child of God who received the Holy Spirit of God. The priest will **cut** a few hairs from her head that symbolizes a small gift that my sister offers in the ceremony. She will be dressed in new clothes and she will wear a cross, an important symbol of faith for all Christians. It shows that from now on my sister will have to follow the example of Jesus Christ in her own life. The godmother will carry my sister and hold a lighted **candle** symbolizing my sister's first steps in her new life as a Christian. Finally, the priest will read a short passage from the holy book of the Gospel and bless my sister again touching her head with it. People show their great respect towards this book by kissing it and **crossing** themselves, a typical gesture of the Orthodox people. As a member of the Church my sister will participate in the sacraments of the Church. No surprise that this is an important day in our family. After the ceremony we will celebrate it together with friends with food, sweets and music and my lucky sister will get a lot of presents!

Tradition plays an important role in Orthodox theology, spirituality, and everyday life. Among Orthodox, there is currently an ongoing discussion about the nature of this tradition and whether it is a temporary or everlasting authority. In other words, the main question is whether the tradition is a kind of anchor that ties Orthodox Church to her past and history but somehow does not leave much space for innovation or whether it could be used as a springboard for a brave leap into the future. The class is invited to think about the advantages and disadvantages of tradition as a religious authority that dictates certain attitudes and behaviours. The class could devote the last part of the lesson in discussing tradition.

Exercise 4: That's tradition

Tradition as the accumulated experience and knowledge of the Orthodox Christian Church plays an important role in the lives of Orthodox Christian even today. However, the question is often raised whether or in what extent can or should tradition shape the life of contemporary Orthodox Christians. Having watched Eleni's presentation please make the following exercise in groups of two:

a) Think of practices and customs that are regarded as traditional in your families or society and discuss them among each other,

4.2.5 DISCUSSING TYPICAL ASPECTS OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN LIFE

- b) What role do you think tradition plays in the lives of Orthodox Christians, and
- c) Discuss the pros and cons of tradition as an authority regulating the religious lives of the members of a religious group (the one member of the group could present the positive aspects and the other negative ones).
- Alternatively, the class could reflect on the two verses from the Good Friday hymn (exercise 5) and relate them to contemporary issues like alienation, refugees, marginalized people. The main question to reflect upon is how worship can influence the worldview of Orthodox Christians and provide ethical standards. The reference to Jesus Christ is here of significance.

Exercise 5: Living according to faith

Eleni finished her letter by saying that “being Orthodox does not only mean keeping the proper faith but also living according to this faith”. This is often repeated in many ways in texts of Orthodox worship. Moreover, it is often stressed in them that a true expression of love towards God is love towards people in need. Jesus Christ many times is used as the prototype of all people that are unjustly persecuted and suffer.

Read the following verses of a hymn sung on Good Friday (the Friday before Easter Sunday). Joseph of Arimathea, one of Jesus’ followers laments his death and asks the Romans for his body to bury.

“Give me this stranger, who from infancy has been as a stranger, a sojourner in the world.

.....

Give me this stranger, that I may hide him in a tomb, for as a stranger He has no place to lay His head.”

What possible associations could someone hearing the hymn make to current situations and challenges?

Preparing this exercise, the teacher could read the excerpt from a homily by Epiphanius of Salamis (4th century) that follows, which seems to have been the inspiration of the hymn. It is a fictive reconstruction of the speech of Joseph of Arimathea, a follower of Jesus Christ, who came to the Roman governor, Pilate, to ask for the body of Jesus to bury it properly:

“O judge, I have come to make of thee a trifling of Him that was by thee condemned, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the poor, Jesus the homeless, Jesus the crucified, the bound, the shelterless, the Stranger, who in a strange land is unknown, Jesus the contemptible, who for all was suspended [on the Cross].”

“Give me this Stranger, for what profit to thee is the body of this Stranger? Give me this Stranger, for from afar He came to this place to save a stranger, to a dark region He descended to draw up a stranger. Give me this Stranger, for He alone is a stranger. Give me this Stranger, whose country we know not, the strangers. Give me this Stranger, whose place and birth and ways we know not, the strangers. Give me this Stranger, who lived in a strange land a strange life and existence. Give me this Stranger, whose generation and disposition we know not, the strangers. Give me this Stranger, who had not where to lay His head. Give me this Stranger, who as a homeless stranger in a strange land was born in a manger. Give me this Stranger, who from the very manger fled Herod as a stranger. Give me this Stranger, who from His very swaddling bands was a stranger in Egypt, who has no city, no village, no home, no abode, no kindred, for this Stranger is found in foreign lands with His Mother.

Give me, O prince, this naked man on the Cross that I may cover Him that covered my nature’s nakedness. Give me Him that is both a dead man and God, that I may shroud Him that has hidden mine iniquities. Give me, O prince, this dead man who buried my sin in Jordan. I entreat thee for a dead man Who suffered injustice from all, who by a friend was sold, who by a disciple was betrayed, who by brethren was persecuted, who by a slave was smitten.

For a dead man I interceded, who was condemned by them that He freed from slavery, who by them was given vinegar to drink. who by them that He healed was wounded, who by His own disciples was forsaken, who of His own Mother was bereaved. For a dead man, O prince, I beseech that homeless One Who was suspended on the Cross, for He has no father near Him upon the earth, no friend, no disciple, no kindred, no burier. Nay, He is alone, the Only-begotten of the Unique, God in the world, and none else save He.”

(Epiphanius of Salamis, Homily on the Burial of the Lord Jesus Christ, 11-14: *Patrologia Graeca* 43:444C-448B)²

² English Translation: “Homily of Saint Epiphanius,” Dormition of the Theotokos Orthodox Church (blog), April 18, 2014, <https://dormitioninconcord.wordpress.com/2014/04/18/homily-of-saint-epiphanius/>.

4.3 EXTRA EXERCISES

4.3.1 EXERCISE: THE PARTS OF AN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Read the following description of a typical Orthodox church and compare it with the image of its interior. Fill in the brackets in the text those numbers of the parts noted in the image that correspond to the description given. Not all numbers will be used.

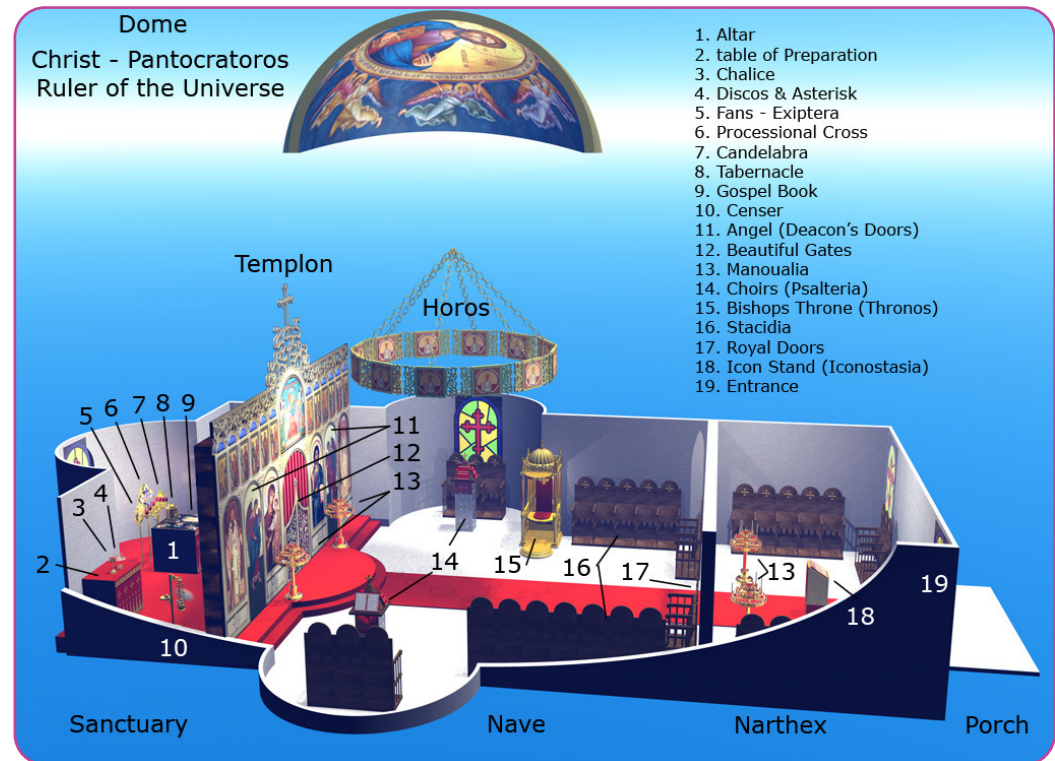


Figure 4.2: The interior of a typical Orthodox Church ("Eastern Orthodox Church Architecture", Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_church_architecture#/media/File:Orthodox-Church-interior.jpg)

A typical Orthodox Church is divided into three distinct parts: the entrance (narthex), the church proper (nave), and the sanctuary (altar) and is usually built with its sanctuary facing east.

The **narthex** connects the church to the outside world. People entering the church usually light candles in candle holders, the *manualia* (.....) and show respect to the icon that stands on the *iconstand* (.....). Orthodox Christians light candles as an act of prayer and remembering the words of Jesus Christ who said: "I am the light of this world". In ancient times the narthex was the place for the catechumens, of those people, namely, who wanted to become Christians and received instruction of the Christian faith before getting baptized. In traditional Orthodox churches, people can enter the church proper through the *Royal Doors* (.....).

The **nave** is the main and, therefore, the biggest part of the Orthodox church. The word probably comes from the Latin word 'navis' that means the ship. The Church is a ship that sails with the members of the congregation in the stormy sea of this world. The captain of this ship is Jesus Christ who in the Orthodox Church is represented by the local bishop. Therefore, his *throne*

(.....) stands on one side of the wall. Even when the bishop is absent from the congregation his throne reminds the members of the church of his spiritual leading role. Along the walls and in the centre of the nave there are pews where people can sit during the worship. In some Orthodox traditions, though, there are only **stacidia** (.....), high-armed chairs along the walls of the nave. The walls and the ceiling are covered with icons depicting holy women and men (saints) as well as stories from their lives or the Holy Scriptures. Orthodox Christians do not worship icons. They kiss them and cross them when they approach them to show their affection and respect to the persons depicted. Saints, and most prominent among them the Mother of Jesus Christ, the **Theotokos**, are regarded as examples for the Orthodox Christians to follow. Close to the sanctuary, there are two stands for the choir (.....). The hymns of the Orthodox worship are sung alternately, reminding the fact that worship is a dialogue and not passive participation.

Above the nave in the dome, there is the icon of Jesus Christ as the Ruler of the Universe (**the Pantokrator**). The dome symbolizes the divine world whereas the rest of the church the created world and the earth. The construction of the church, therefore, aims at showing that both the spiritual and the material world meet in the church and that those who enter it to worship experience this encounter. A huge chandelier called **Horos** or **Polyeleos** usually hangs from the dome.

A tall screen separates the proper church from the sanctuary. It is called **iconostasis** or **templon** (.....). Ancient churches did not have this wall. It was introduced around the 14th c. On this screen, large icons of Jesus Christ, Theotokos or various saints are placed. It does not only separate the holiest part of the church from the rest of the building but at the same time, it connects them through the icons that use material elements (wood, colours) to depict the spiritual and holy. Three doors allow entrance to the sanctuary: the central one is called **Beautiful Gates** (.....) used only by the priest and the one on the left the **Deacons' Gates** (.....) used only by deacons and auxiliary staff.

The **altar** (.....) stands in the middle of the **sanctuary**. It is the holiest place in the church. On it, a copy of the Gospel book (.....) and some liturgical vessels are placed. On the left (north) side of the sanctuary, there is the **Table of Preparation** (.....) where the gifts brought in Eucharist are prepared.

Not only the texts of worship and the Church Fathers but also those of the Scriptures provide certain ethical guidelines for the conduct of Christians. The following text from the letter to the Christians of Rome by Saint Paul is a good example of this.

Romans 12:9-10.13-21

4.3.2 EXERCISE:
SAINT PAUL AND THE
ETHICS OF LOVE

Fill the gaps of the text with the missing words provided.

peace, right, proud, bless, friend, evil, need,

Love must be sincere. Hate what is (1); cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Share with the Lord's people who are in (2) Welcome others into your homes.

(3) those who hurt you. Bless them, and do not curse them. 15 Be joyful with those who are joyful. Be sad with those who are sad. Agree with one another. Don't be (4) Be willing to be a (5) of people who aren't considered important. Don't think that you are better than others. Don't pay back evil with evil. Be careful to do what everyone thinks is (6) If possible, live in (7) with everyone. Do that as much as you can. My dear friends, don't try to get even. Leave room for God to show his anger. It is written, "I am the God who judges people. I will pay them back," says the Lord. Do just the opposite. Don't let evil overcome you. (8) evil by doing good.

4.4 GLOSSARY

Almsgiving

Offer to those in need material help as a gift.

Anointment

The application of holy oil in a religious ceremony.

Ascete

A person who leads a life of self-denial and austerity for religious reasons.

Bishop

The highest spiritual leader for the Orthodox Christian communities in a certain geographical territory that is usually called 'diocese'.

Congregation

A group of people gathered for religious worship.

Consecrate

Make or declare something sacred (holy).

Deacon

From the Greek word "diakonos" (helper). A member of the lower rank of Christian ministers (the other two being priest and bishop).

Divine Liturgy

The most important worship event in the Orthodox Church during which Eucharist is celebrated.

Eucharist

A ceremony during which the bread and wine are consecrated and are consumed by those participating in the event who are baptised. Eucharist comes from the Greek word "eucharistia", which means "thanksgiving". Orthodox Christians believe that the wine and the bread are mystically the Blood and Body of Jesus Christ.

Godparents

Those persons that present a child to be baptized and take responsibility to act as their spiritual parents and care for their religious education. They are usually either relatives or friends of the family.

Halo

A golden crown around the face of a saint or Jesus Christ. It indicates holiness and divine glory.

Iconostasis

A high screen covered by icons separating the sanctuary from the rest of the church.

Monk

A member of a religious community of men living a secluded life of poverty, chastity and obedience. The female equivalent is a nun.

New Testament

The second part of the Christian Bible that contains the stories of Jesus Christ, his disciples and teachings deriving from Jesus' life and preaching.

Old Testament

The first part of the Christian Bible that contains the history, teachings, prophecies, and rituals of ancient Israel.

Parish

A small community of Christians that has its own worshipping house (church) and a priest as its head .

Patriarch

A leading bishop among all the other bishops who is also the spiritual father of an Orthodox Church.

sacrament

A religious ceremony that imparts divine grace.

Sanctuary

The most sacred part of the church.

Theotokos

A name of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. It comes from the Greek words "Theos" (God) and "tikto" (give birth) and it refers to the Christian faith that Jesus was not just a man but also the Son of God.



Photo: Annie Spratt | Unsplash

4.5 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

Hello, my name is Eleni and I would like to talk to you about my religious tradition, the Orthodox Church. The name "Orthodox" comes from two Greek words, namely "orthos" (proper, right) and "doxa" (belief or thinking) and it means the right belief or thinking. There are around 260 million Orthodox Christians all over the world. Most of them live in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, as well in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. All Orthodox Christians share the same belief but have different traditions when it comes to rituals, history, and feasts. I am, for example, Greek Orthodox, since I come from Greece but there are also Russian, Romanian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Polish, or Albanian Orthodox to name some of them. The head of each Orthodox Church can be a Patriarch or a bishop but we have also priests in our parishes for our regular rituals and celebrations.

Like other Christians, we believe that God is a Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This Trinity of three distinct persons is at the same time only One God. The true mystery of our God was revealed by Jesus Christ who is the Son that became human. He lived in Palestine in the 1st century of the Christian era, he taught and performed miracles but then he was persecuted and died on the cross for our sins. However, being God he rose from death. His death and resurrection revealed God's love for his world and was the beginning of the Christian Church.

Almost all our rituals take place in our worship houses that are called churches. They have some distinct features with deeper symbolic meanings. The sanctuary is always in the eastern part of the church. Only the priest and those who help him can enter it.

Icons, namely paintings of holy women and men, stories from their lives and our holy book, the Bible, are respected by Orthodox and play an important role in our tradition. They cover the walls of our churches or are painted on pieces of wood. My family has two such icons at home that belong to the family for many generations. They are placed in the small icon corner that is used for prayer in my family house. My mother usually takes care that the oil lamp that hangs in front of them is always burning. Icons are usually called the books of all believers, especially of those who cannot read. They remind us in a simple way of the sacred stories and persons of our faith. Our holy book, though, is the Bible or the Holy Scripture. It consists of two parts, the Old and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains 49 books and the New Testament 27. Passages from them and especially the New Testament are read in our worship. In the Greek Orthodox Church, they are usually read in ancient Greek, which makes it sometimes quite difficult to understand. My aunt, however, gave me a nice translation of the New Testament last year and I have spent some time reading it. It is certainly a fascinating book!

One of the most important symbols in our faith is the cross that reminds us of Jesus Christ's sacrifice and God's love. We usually wear it around our neck. We also often cross ourselves, especially during worship or when praying. With our joined three right-hand fingers that symbolize the Holy Trinity, we touch our forehead, below the chest, the right side of the chest and then the left. This is at the same time a gesture of prayer and blessing.

Orthodox Christians usually pray at the beginning and the end of the day. One of our favourite prayers is the Prayer of the Lord, a short prayer that Jesus Christ taught to his disciples and is recited ever since in our worship gatherings but also during prayer at home.

The Orthodox Church has many feasts that are celebrated throughout the year. Some feasts have fixed days in the year and some others that change the date of celebration every year and are called movable. In the period before great feasts, we usually fast, which means that we do not eat certain kinds of food. There are also two regular fasting days in the week, Wednesday and Friday, when we commemorate Jesus' death on the cross. One of the most important fixed feasts in winter is Christmas when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. However, the greatest feast is Easter (or Pascha), a movable feast in spring, celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is one of the most joyous feasts in our tradition. Due to a different calculation system, we celebrate Easter on a different day than other Christian traditions. There is a preparatory Holy Week and at midnight after Saturday, we celebrate Jesus' rising from the dead. Easter Sunday is a day of great joy and family time. We eat together, crack dyed red eggs and greet each other with the phrase "Christ has risen".

Sunday is the holiest day of the week. It is the day when we go to the church to participate in the Divine Liturgy, a special worship gathering. In the Liturgy we celebrate Eucharist, that reminds us of Jesus Christ's last supper with his friends and disciples, his death and resurrection. The gifts of bread and wine are offered and are consecrated. We believe that they are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ spiritually. At the end of the Liturgy, the priest invites the members of the congregation to receive them. Through their consumption we believe that we remain in communion with Jesus Christ but also with the rest of the community. At the end of the Liturgy small pieces of bread are also offered to all participants, a reminiscence of the common meals that ancient Christians held when they met.

Our parish church is very important for our family life not only because of the celebration of great feast and the Divine Liturgy but because some of the most important events of our family life take place there.

Today, for example, my young sister is going to get baptized and become a full member of the Orthodox Church. During the ceremony, she will get her Christian name, she will be dressed in white new clothes and wear a cross. Although in ancient times people were baptized as adults, today in the Orthodox Church children are usually baptized in the early months of their lives. Baptism will be performed by the priest and the godparents of my soon-to-be-baptized sister will be there to help. They will be her spiritual parents and responsible for her growing up following the teachings of the Orthodox Church. My sister will be called Sophia, after one of my grandmothers. During the ceremony, the priest will immerse my sister three times into the water of the font in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, a symbol of dying and being reborn into a new life following the example of Jesus Christ who died and was risen from the dead. No surprise that this is an important day in our family. After the ceremony, we will celebrate with a large dinner and music and my lucky sister will get a lot of presents!

There are so many things to celebrate as a family, like baptisms, name days but also marriages. My aunt Maria married two months ago and it was really a big event with relatives coming from all over the world to be present in the ceremony that took place in the church. The priest exchanged the wedding rings three times in the fingers of the young couple. Number three is important in the Orthodox Church because it refers to the Holy Trinity. He also placed the wedding crowns on their heads and led them around the table, in a dance that symbolizes their joyful beginning in their common life. The priest also held the cross in his hand that stands for the difficulties that they have to face together.

Well, life and death are a cycle as my grandmother Eleni says. As a family, we celebrated happy events but also the death of some dear friends and relatives. We had to say our goodbyes to my grand-grandfather Nikos some years ago. It was a difficult time for us all. When the casket was placed in the earth the priest poured olive oil and wine in the shape of a cross three times and threw some wheat seeds on it. The priest explained that like the seeds that are buried in the earth to grow and come into light in spring so the dead will rise at the end of the days. Orthodox people believe that death resembles a kind of a long sleep from which all dead will wake in the Second Coming of Jesus. Till then we have to remember them with love. Memorial services are very important, then, and are held on certain days of the year. Women bring sweets and boiled wheat to the church on these days and the family offers almsgiving in the memory of the dead. We are sad but at the same time we hope to meet them again and we never stop to love them.

Women participate in all worshipping events in our church, clean it or volunteer in the social work of our parish by preparing meals for the poor or visiting families in need. Although we are regarded equal members of the community we are not allowed to become priests or have some other public role in the life of the community. It is a pity but as it is often said this is a matter of tradition and history. Well, tradition is a very important aspect of our lives and it can encompass many aspects of our religious life; teachings but also common practices and customs. Since the Orthodox Church believes that it is the continuation of the early Church, tradition is of great importance. However, especially young people think that some things that older people call "tradition" could certainly change according to contemporary needs.

As members of a religious community but also of society we are expected to live according to our faith and also act in ways that reflect this faith. Loving God and our neighbour (either Christian or non-Christian) is the highest command and besides our regular worship and participation in Eucharist, we have to show our love and solidarity to other human beings but also our respect to the rest of God's creation. Almsgiving then but also a life of humility and careful and respectful use of goods are some of the most important practical aspects of Orthodox life. As the priest in our church usually says in his preaching being Orthodox does not only mean keeping the proper faith but also living according to this faith.

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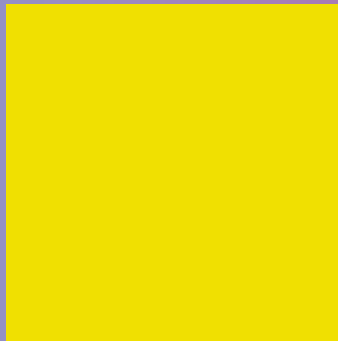
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5



PROTESTANTISM

PROTESTANTISM

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Protestantism is the second-largest Christian tradition, with a total of 800 million to 1 billion adherents. It is however not a uniform tradition and consists of many different subdivisions in movements, organizations, and churches. Protestantism started out as a movement wanting to reform the Western Church in the 16th century. The movement eventually led to a split in the Church. Protestantism differs from other traditions in its emphasis on salvation by faith alone and the bible as the only authority for teaching and life. Within Protestant theology, these emphases have led to a focus on the individual's relationship with God.

Protestantism holds that the church is always critically examining itself in the light of God's word and always needs to seek the language and form that meets the demands of the times. This has led to the continued emergence of new movements and Churches that each have their own focus. Calvinism and Lutheranism quickly developed into prominent branches of European Protestantism. In the early years of the United States, many Protestant believers, especially persecuted minorities, settled in these new areas. In the United States and abroad, renewal movements such as the Great Awakening led to the emergence of the evangelical movement. This movement, which places great emphasis on a personal and enthusiastic faith, rapidly spread across the world. The Pentecostal movement, with a lot of emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, emerged from that movement. Protestantism also led to the development of global missionary and evangelistic movements in the 19th and 20th centuries (e.g., the Lausanne Movement). The ecumenical movement, which seeks visible unity among all Christian traditions, also developed in the 20th century, especially under the impetus of Protestantism.

5.2 FOCUS

In this lesson, we decided to give space to diversity within Protestant churches and traditions in addition to the main similarities.

The following themes are discussed in this lesson:

- The role woman in the church
- The meaning of the bible
- The meaning of Jesus
- Pentecostalism



Figure 5.1
Statue of Martin Luther
Source: © Pxhere

5.3 CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

5.3.1 STRUCTURE

This lesson consists of an introductory video, in which some aspects of Protestantism are discussed. Thereafter a number of exercises follow. The first exercise contains questions aimed at helping students better understand the content of the video. These questions are followed by several in-depth exercises aimed at making the students think more deeply about what it means to be a Protestant and also let them reflect on what all these lessons tell about themselves. The second exercise examines what it means to be a Protestant in practice. The third exercise allows students to further reflect on what Protestants believe by discussing the five Solas. The fourth exercise focuses on the discussion about the role of men and women in the church. The fifth and final assignment is about the Pentecostal movement.

5.3.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

The introductory questions at the beginning of the lesson can be addressed in class. In addition, several images could be shown of the diversity within Protestantism. Another option is to create a mind map together with the students.

5.3.3 WATCHING THE VIDEO

The class watches the brief video of Hannah's description of Protestant Christianity and are asked to answer the questions of exercise 1.

5.3.4 EXERCISES

Exercise 1: Understanding the letter

1. Hannah was talking about prayer. Which statement is consistent with what she said?
 - a. Protestants only pray at fixed times of the day.
 - b. Prayer is a way for Protestants to communicate with God.
 - c. Prayer plays a minor role in the Protestant church service.
 - d. Protestants only pray together with others.

The correct answer is b. The other answers are intended to highlight the contrast with other worldviews. Although there are traditions of prayer at fixed times, this is not the general standard and primary practice within the Protestant tradition.

2. Select everything important in a Protestant church service

- a. Penance
- b. Eating together
- c. Icons
- d. Rituals
- e. Music and singing
- f. The Bible
- g. Prayer
- h. Being together
- i. Dancing
- j. j. Kneel down
- k. Meditation
- l. Sitting still

The correct answers are music and song, the Bible, prayer, being together. All answers, except eating together and icons, can partly be found within modern Protestant churches.

3. For each statement, indicate whether it is true or false:

- a. Protestants usually believe that the Bible is the word of God. - TRUE
- b. Protestants believe there are three Gods. - NOT TRUE
- c. All Protestants believe that a pastor should always have a degree. - NOT TRUE
- d. The Sunday church service plays an important role in Protestantism. - TRUE
- e. Personal faith is important to Protestants. - TRUE
- f. In Pentecostalism, they believe that the Holy Spirit is irrelevant today. - NOT TRUE

4. What are two forms of baptism and what is the difference?

_____ Baptism and the _____ baptism

The correct answer is infant and believers' baptism. The difference between the two forms is the latter focuses on personal faith commitment as a prerequisite to baptism. Consequently, there is typically also a difference in the age when baptism takes place.

There is also a difference in the exact meaning, but this is not discussed in the video.

5. In her story, Hannah talks about herself, her parents, sister, brother, classmate, uncle and aunt. All of them are Protestants, but they don't always agree in their beliefs. Fill the correct person for each descriptions of a person.

Correct answers:

Believes that Jesus is an example and that the Bible serves as a source of inspiration.	Sister
Attends a church where choosing to follow Jesus marks an important moment through baptism.	Classmate
Likes more modern music in the church and finds churches that differ in form and style from his own church very interesting.	Hannah
Attend a church where experiencing the holy spirit is important.	Uncle/Aunt
Finds it important to practice his faith together with others and has not so much with the individual focus of many churches.	Brother
The Bible is the word of God for them and they use it to make life decisions.	Parents

Exercise 2: Faith in Practice

For many Protestants, the concept of personal faith is very important. If you look at the story, what does this personal faith look like in the life of a Protestant?

The following aspects should be considered:

- Communicating with God
- Following Jesus
- Reading and studying the Bible
- Attending church
- Being baptized
- Participating in the lord's supper
- Praying daily
- Singing

What does faith or searching for meaning in life look like for you?

This question is asked to let students reflect on their own faith practices.



Figure 5.2
Source: © Pxhere

Exercise 3: Doctrine of the Faith

The five solas of the Reformation are five principles that describe what Protestants in the 16th century considered important, formulated in Latin. Although these principles were central during the birth of Protestantism, there has been much discussion about them in the past 2 centuries. Protestants differ in their valuing of the different principles today.

<i>Solā Scriptura</i> Only through Scripture	Protestants have traditionally believed that one can only know God with certainty through the Bible. The Bible is therefore considered the Word of God.
<i>Solā Gratia</i> Only by grace	Important to Protestants is the belief that not the works of men but only God's grace can save someone. Grace is getting something that one doesn't deserve.
<i>Solā Fide</i> Only by faith	This principle implies that people become justified in God's eyes only by faith in Jesus. This principle is in line with the Sola Gratia because it emphasizes that righteousness is not due to human actions.
<i>Solus Christ</i> Only Christ	This principle means that only Jesus plays the crucial role in salvation and can bridge the distance between humans and God. For Protestants this also means that Jesus can be worshipped as he is the Son of God.
<i>Solī Deo Glōria</i> Glory to God alone	This means that everything people do should be for the glory of God and not for their own honor.

What do you notice about the five principles? What do these principles reveal about Protestants?

The following observations can be made:

- These principles clearly show the central place Jesus takes.
- The emphasis on the absence of a role for humans in their own salvation.
- The reverence for God that is shown.
- The important role the bible has.
- The emphasis of faith as the central to salvation.

These principles reflect what is important to many Protestants. What principles would you set for yourself as important for your life and/or faith? Why do you think this is important?

The purpose of this exercise is that the students reflect on what they consider important in their life. This can be based on a religion, moral principles or on what drives their motivation and purposes. The students are encouraged to discover that formulating central principals can show what a person really values.



Figure 5.3
Engraving of John
Wesley preaching to
native American Indians
Source: Wikimedia
Commons

Exercise 4: Contemporary developments - gender

The Bible speaks of men and women in a number of places. These Bible texts are not only about the relationship between men and women, but also about the role of women in the church. This is a topic discussed in many different Protestant churches. The Bible text below often plays an important role in the discussion.

Ephesians 5:21-33:(NIV)

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Read the following 2 quotes about the role of women:

"Men and women, though equal in essence, were designed for different roles. Women are in no sense intellectually or spiritually inferior to men, but they were quite clearly created for a distinctive purpose. In the economy of church and family, the Bible says women should be subordinate to the authority of men. Yet scripture also recognizes that in a completely different sense, women are exalted above men - because they are the living and breathing manifestation of the glory of a race made in God's image." ~ John F. MacArthur Jr.¹

"If a woman is held back, minimized, pushed down, or downplayed, she is not walking in the fullness God intended for her as his image bearer, as his ezer warrior. If we minimize our gifts, hush our voice, and stay small in a misguided attempt to fit a weak and culturally conditioned standard of femininity, we cannot give our brothers the partner they require in God's mission for the world. " ~ Sarah Bessey²

MarcArthur and Bessey represent two different camps within Protestantism. The first, John MacArthur, believes that men and women have different but complementary roles in the world. The second Sarah Bessey believes that men and women are equal in the roles they are allowed to fulfill.

Compare the quotes with the Bible text. What questions do you have about this Bible text? Do you think these questions are easy to answer?

Sample answer: In the first quote, it is the uniqueness of the woman and the added value it has to the world. The second quote calls on women to show their full potential.

The discussion about gender roles is very sensitive, and often focuses on discussions of how the Bible should be interpreted. For some protestants this discussion impedes on the principle of Sola Scriptura. The discussion can lead to frustrations, anger and even churches that split. Are there discussions you have in life that conflict with your principles of Exercise 3? How do you deal with them?

This exercise is focused on letting students reflect on their own conflicts. The goal is to make students understand some of the underlying conflicts in a person that often fuel discussions within religions.

¹ John MacArthur, Twelve Extraordinary Women: How God Shaped Women of the Bible and What He Wants to Do with You (Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson Books, 2005), 8.

² J Sarah Bessey, Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible's View of Women, First Howard Books trade paperback edition. (New York: Howard Books, A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc, 2013), 80.

Exercise 5: Contemporary developments - Pentecostal movement

Pentecostalism is a fast-growing movement within Protestantism. This movement has experienced strong growth, especially in South America and Africa. Pentecostalism can be described as a movement of energy and strength. The working of the Holy Spirit is central. This means that supernatural experiences are often emphasized by Pentecostals. Consider, for example, divine healing and prophesying. Pentecostalism gives much value to the experience of people. Living with the Holy Spirit then means personally and physically experiencing the Holy Spirit.

An important concept to talk about is *supernatural*. It refers to everything that does not fit into our common perception of the laws of nature. This is a very important concept in the Pentecostal movement. Below is a black and white photo of people praying for divine healing for a woman in a wheelchair. Not all Protestants necessarily believe in God working in supernatural ways. Some may believe that the miracles in the Bible were supernatural, but do not believe that supernatural events occur in our time.



Figure 5.4
Laying on of Hand in the
Church of God in Lejunior
Kentucky on 9 May 1946
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#)

A frequently described supernatural experience is prophecy. Prophecy means passing on a message from God that says something special about the world, the direction of the church, or people's lives. In Pentecostalism, this is a common practice, but in Protestantism as a whole, there is a great deal of disagreement on this subject. Many Protestants do believe that God can speak to a person's heart, but they do not believe in prophetic messages supposedly given to some people.

**Why does the concept of prophecy lead to discussion within Protestantism?
Use the principle of Sola Scriptura from Exercise 3 in your answer.**

This is a tricky question for students to answer. The correct answer is that there is a tension between receiving personal insights and having the Bible as the supreme source of authority. If you give authority to a prophecy, the authority of the Bible is affected and with it the basis of Protestantism.

What is your view on the concept supernatural?

The purpose of this question is to let the students reflect on their stances on a central topic within Pentecostalism, namely the supernatural.



Figure 5.5
The Apostolic Faith
Mission on Azusa
Street, considered to
be the birthplace of
Pentecostalism
Source: Wikimedia
Commons

5.4 DIDACTIC SUGGESTIONS

5.4.1 EXERCISE: THE BIBLE

The Bible consists of the New and Old Testament. For Protestants, only 66 books are part of the canon. For many Protestants these 66 books are inspired. This means that God has led authors in what to write down when they wrote these books. Protestants have a deep respect for the contents of the Bible, yet many believers do not hesitate to ask questions about the Bible.

How would you describe the role that the Bible plays in Protestantism?

The correct answer is that the Bible plays a central role in the authority for faith issues. Furthermore, the bible has been given a more central place above traditions and church authority in most protestant churches.

How do you deal with the holy book in your religion? / What sources do you use that tell you something about how to live?

The purpose of these two questions is to help students reflect on the role of a sacred book in their own lives.

5.4.2 EXERCISE: THE MODERN CHURCH

The students are instructed to watch clips of 4 different types of church services on YouTube. These are, for example a Reformed, a Lutheran, a Pentecostal or Charismatic and Mennonite church service. The students are instructed to look at the differences and the similarities between the different church services.

Examples of churches are:

- Reformed: Reformed Congregation, Église Réformée de France,
- Lutheran: *Svenska kyrkan, Chiesa Evangelica Luterana in Italia, Vereinigte Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands*
- Pentecostal / Charismatic: *Hillsong Europe, Kościół Zielonoświątkowy w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Ελευθέρα Αποστολική Εκκλησία Πεντηκοστής*
- Mennonite: *Konferenz der Mennoniten der Schweiz, Association des Églises Évangéliques Mennonites de France, General Mennonite Society*

5.5 GLOSSARY

Bible

The Bible is the sacred book of Christians. It is composed of two parts: the Old and the New Testament. The Bible is actually a collection of various types of books, such as poetry, narratives, visions, and numerous other genres. To Protestants, the Bible is made up of 66 books.

Baptism

Baptism is a ritual that symbolizes the purification of a person and his/her admission into the church. In some churches, a baptism involves sprinkling water on the head, usually of a baby. In other churches, an (older) person is completely immersed in water.

Church

Church is a term that is used in several ways. It can be used to refer to a community of believers that are engaged in activities with one another. In addition, the term church can be used to describe the community of all believers in the world. Finally, the buildings that are built specifically for Christians to gather on Sundays are also called a church.

Pastor

A pastor is a person who leads a Protestant church community. In some denominations, this person must undergo training before they are allowed to do so.

Faith

Faith is a strongly held belief and trust in a thing or person. In Protestantism and Christianity in general faith is put in Jesus and God.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is one of the three persons in the Trinity. Pentecost celebrates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church.

Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a sacred act that Christians perform in all traditions perform. It consists of eating bread and drinking wine. By consuming bread and wine believers remember that Jesus died to save humanity. According to the Bible, Jesus himself instructed his followers to perform this act regularly.

New Testament

The New Testament are the 27 books of the Bible written after the life of Jesus.

Old Testament

In the Protestant Bible, the Old Testament contains 39 books which were all written before the time of Jesus.

Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism is a movement within Protestantism that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit through people.

Salvation

The word 'salvation' means that someone is saved from harm. In Protestantism the term is used to indicate that a solution has been provided so that people can bridge the distance between mankind and God.

Sermon

A sermon is a speech by a pastor on a Bible text with the aim of teaching people about Christian faith and life.

Sola's

The Solas are a set of principles that make clear what Protestants in the 16th century, and often still today, consider important in their religious life

Trinity

The Trinity is a central doctrine within Christianity. This teaching states that there is one God who consists of three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

5.6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

Hello, I am Hannah, and I come from a Protestant family. I want to tell you about what that means for me. Protestantism arose about 500 years ago because people did not agree with the course of the 'Western' church. An important moment was when Martin Luther drew up a list of 95 points of the practices of the church of that time which he believed were not in line with the Bible.

Let me tell you more about my life as a Protestant. When I wake up, I often try to do a quick prayer. My father has always made it clear that prayer is important because it is a way to communicate with God.

Faith is especially important to us. We Protestants emphasize that God asks us to put our faith in Jesus, rather than try to live perfect lives. For most protestants, this faith is more than just saying you believe that Jesus has once walked on earth. It means that you trust him as someone who loves you and wants the best for you, also today. We call this personal faith. Such faith should also be visible in what someone does in their life.

Oh, maybe I should have started with telling something about Jesus. Just as in other Christian traditions, Jesus is at the center of Protestantism. In the Bible we read that Jesus walked on this earth, was crucified, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Traditionally, Protestants believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that he did all this to save humankind. My sister, however, thinks Jesus is important, but she sees him only as an exemplar whose life shows how we can live together lovingly.

What we believe about Jesus comes from what we find in the Bible, which is a holy book to us. For this reason, we read a section of the Bible at dinner every day. My parents also go to church for a Bible study every week. There, they reflect on the Bible together with others. When they encounter a problem in life, they often seek for guidance in the Bible, because

they believe the Bible is the word of God. My sister disagrees with this. According to her, the Bible is just a book of humans, but it may serve as a valuable source of inspiration for life.

Every Sunday we go to church, where we sing songs, listen to a sermon, and pray together. My brother no longer attends church with us. He thinks that in traditional protestant churches, people are too much focused on themselves and on their salvation. He says he can experience what we do in church at home also by watching a church service. According to him, he can live out his faith better by being focused on others. He does a lot of volunteer work, such as helping a family of refugees who recently moved to our village.

The sermon is an important and big part of the church service for us. A lot of time is allocated to the sermon in my church, but I know of other churches where sermons are much shorter. The sermon is always about a Bible text that is applied to the Christian life. We call the person who leads the church the pastor or preacher. Our pastor is a nice man, who had to study for 6 years before he was allowed to lead our church. I also went to the church of a classmate a couple of times. In her church people are allowed to speak who have not studied but believe that God commissioned them to speak in churches.

The pastors in our church are always men. Women are not allowed to become a pastor and therefore cannot lead a church service. My father says this is what the Bible teaches us. In our church, there was a discussion about this three years ago and it was decided not to change anything about it. My sister was one of those who disagreed. She therefore went to another church. According to her, it is not at all in the Bible that women should never preach. She also thinks that this belief is outdated.

Another important part of the church service is singing together, which gives us a means to worship

and praise God. In our church, this is done under the guidance of an organ. My mother likes this very much. I find it a bit old-fashioned myself. What I like better is the band with guitar, drums, and keyboard in a classmate's church.

Another element in our services we consider important is the Lord's Supper. In some churches, this is even more important than the sermon. In my church, we celebrate this once a month during a church service. The Lord's Supper involves remembering what Jesus did for us and consists of eating bread and drinking wine. The bread represents the body of Jesus and the wine the blood of Jesus. Jesus himself said that his followers should do this regularly to remember him. By consuming bread and wine, we remember that Jesus died to save us.

During a vacation in South America with my uncle and aunt, we visited a church that was nothing like ours. There was a lot more singing and a lot of dancing. They also spoke in a strange language. My uncle called it "speaking in tongues." They also prayed for people while laying hands on them. My uncle told me this is a Pentecostal church. He said that Pentecostals consider it important to listen to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power of God who works through people. Protestants believe with other Christians that there is one God, but he exists of three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I don't understand this well, but it is called 'the Trinity.'

A ritual that is important to us is baptism. This ritual symbolizes the purification of a person and the admission into the community of God. In our church we administer what is called infant baptism, in which water is sprinkled over a baby's forehead. In my classmate's church, on the other hand, they believe that a person should not be baptized until they make a conscious decision themselves to be baptized. This is called believer's baptism and happens later in life and the person is fully immersed in water. Both forms are usually done while proclaiming

the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Faith in God, central in Protestantism, is not just saying you believe but also showing it in rituals and in living as a follower of Jesus. This means that we must act loving and caring for each other and the world as Jesus did.

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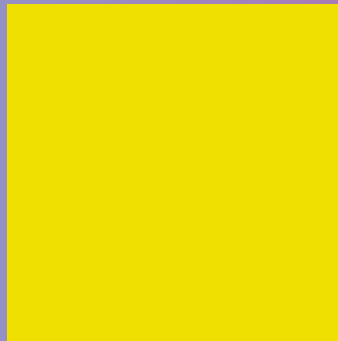
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6



ETHICS

6.2 ETHICS, MORALITY AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

The term “ethics” comes from the Greek word “ēthikós”, which is a variant of “êthos” and primarily refers to our moral character, that is to the persons that we are or aspire to be. Another term for ethics is morality as in when we say that somebody did something that was morally right or morally good. Ethics is the foundation of our relationship to ourselves and the world around us. The purpose and role of ethics have always been the preservation of the human being as a person, human dignity, and the conditions for leading a good life. Today, the current culture in which we live is characterized mainly by pluralism. We have to deal, with crises and turmoil that we are experiencing, with the increasing interconnectivity of the world (globalization) and our dependency on one another. Our cultures are often characterized by the “relativization” of values, which is fundamentally an expression of diminished confidence in society and the loss of confidence about the answers to our existence’s fundamental questions. Ethics protects and sustains the humanity of our existence, both in ourselves and in others. We always live in relationship with others, namely in a relationship of mutual giving and receiving. Therefore, acknowledging our dependence on others and caring for others is essential (Ethics education resources, 2021).



Figure 6.2
Parthenon
Source: © Pixabay /
Pexels.com

This relational and communitarian nature of ethics is fundamental and requests reflections on justice, solidarity, compassion, and cooperation. Dialogue should build on openness, mutuality, and reciprocal recognition. These aspects are essential for ethics education, since its primary goal is to encourage and grow such a dialogical and emphatic stance. One should not stress only basic ethical norms (such as dignity, respect for life, non-violence, solidarity), but also virtues that are at the heart of each individual and can emerge on society's level (e.g., courage, civility, justice, humility, etc.). The dialogical nature of ethics and ethics education invites us to be open in the process of mutual growth and learning (Ethics education resources, 2021).

6.3 BASIC ETHICAL CONCEPTS

6.3.1 GOOD AND BAD

The terms “good” and “bad” are most commonly used as evaluative classifications of things, situations, persons and their characters. In this sense, judgments about something being good and bad are value judgments or evaluations. Ethical evaluations are of key importance for ethics, since they determine what our lives should be focused on (what we should strive to achieve and what to avoid or prevent). In evaluating things, we distinguish between things that are good in themselves or intrinsically valuable and things that are merely instrumentally good (e.g., in the sense that they help us achieve what is good in itself). For example, money is only instrumentally valuable, while the pleasure of listening to a wonderful concert that I bought the tickets for is intrinsically valuable. In modern times, many ethical puzzles and problems stem from the fact that individuals often mistake something that is merely instrumentally good for being intrinsically valuable. An important concept is also the concept of the common good, which exceeds the sum of the good of all individuals in society. Greek philosopher Aristotle claimed that happiness is the ultimate value that all human beings aspire after.

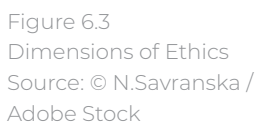
6.3.2 VALUES

Values are things that we value relatively permanently and firmly, and, in this way, they guide our interests and actions. Values are things that we as individuals or as a society set as aims or guidelines for our lives (e.g., wellbeing, health, knowledge, virtue, freedom, safety). We strive to realize them. The fundamental values of ethics are the elements that are important for human life, dignity and the preservation of common humanity. Given the acceptance and universality of values, we can talk about the values of the individual, societal values, and universal values. Axiology as a discipline of ethics systematically investigates values.

6.3.3 MORAL RIGHTNESS, WRONGNESS, AND THE CONCEPT OF DUTY

Moral rightness and moral wrongness are usually understood as evaluative classifications of actions or acts, for example, when we say that we acted rightly or that a certain act was wrong. In a slightly different vocabulary, we often talk about morally obligatory actions, impermissible actions, and permissible actions. Our duty is primarily to perform morally obligatory actions and abstain from doing impermissible ones. To have a certain duty means, in the most direct sense, to be bound by a binding ethical requirement. If we have a certain duty, then we must do so unless there are other reasons that would prevent us from doing so or justify a different course of action. Ethical principles and rules are an important part of ethics and their observance protects the conditions of human existence and common humanity. Moral principles are usually more general (e.g., “Respect the freedom, autonomy, and equality of people”), and moral rules are more

Moral principles and rules can be understood in several ways. The most fundamental is the understanding of moral principles as moral criteria or standards. The principles and rules thus understood set out the ethical criteria for our conduct and the judgment of that conduct; they define what is right and what is wrong. Closer to everyday morality is another way of understanding moral principles and rules, i.e., as guides in our decision-making and action. Their value lies in their usefulness as reliability of guidance regarding what to do.



6.3.4 VIRTUES

Virtues are morally valuable qualities of our character, dispositions for action and personality traits. The opposite of virtues are flaws or vices. Moral virtues include honesty, kindness, compassion, civility, generosity, and courage. Not all personality traits of an individual are also moral virtues (or vices), e.g., introversion, sociability, sense of humor, etc. These traits are part of our character but have no inherent moral significance, since they are mostly not under our control. Virtues include several components, namely cognitive, emotional, motivational, and action-focused. This means that, for example, an honest person is first convinced that a lie is something bad (cognitive component). Then such a person is appropriately emotionally oriented in the sense that he is deterred from lies and liars, while having a positive attitude towards honest actions and persons (emotional component). Next, an honest person is also motivated not to lie (motivational component). And, finally, such a person must act in accordance with this virtue, e.g., avoid lying (the action-focused component).

6.3.5 DIGNITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Dignity is a concept that obtained its ethical significance fairly recently. It can be defined as a basic, inherent, and inalienable value that all people have on the basis of their humanity. It is often regarded as the basis for basic entitlements and human rights of each individual. Dignity is therefore associated with an inalienable status that belongs to all human beings, regardless of their characteristics and circumstances. The dignity of each individual protects against interferences or types of improper treatment that would interfere with their dignity (e.g. degrading treatment, torture, etc.) or situations in which he may find himself (e.g. extreme poverty, slavery, etc.). Human dignity in the modern world is often understood as a civilizational and ethical foundation of legal norms, especially human rights. These, on the other hand, can be understood as the minimum conditions for providing or for protection of the dignity of the individual. Dignity, therefore, justifies the latter (in the ethical and legal sense), grants them inalienability from the point of view of the holder of these rights, and therefore it can be understood as the foundation of freedom of decision and action to the limit, without interfering with the freedom and rights of others.



Figure 6.4
Human Rights
Source: © STOATPHOTO /
Adobe Stock

Therefore, dignity is also a common concept in the most important legal documents. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948) derives from the following statement: “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” and its Article 1 states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” Similarly, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (EU 2012) sets out in its preamble dignity as the foundation of all human rights: “The peoples of Europe, in creating an ever closer union among them, are resolved to share a peaceful future based on common values. Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law.” and its first article is: “Human dignity: Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected”.

6.4 ETHICAL THEORIES AND VIEWS ABOUT MORALITY

There are three main types of ethical theories: deontological ethics, teleological ethics, and virtue ethics. Each of them sees a different moral concept as the fundamental one. Deontological ethics puts the concept of duty in the center, teleological ethics sees value as fundamental, while virtue ethics stresses the dimension of a person's character.

Deontological ethics (from the Greek word *déon* – duty, what is binding, proper or right) emphasizes that the moral status of actions is determined by the type of action (and not, e.g., by the value of its consequences). For example, deceit and stealing are morally wrong actions, no matter the consequences. This means that we must act in accordance with general moral principles that specify some types of actions as wrong and others as right. Such principles impose duties on us. A typical representative of this type of ethical theory is Immanuel Kant with his ethics of duty, which is based on the categorical imperative *“Act only according to that maxim of action whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law”*, or in its alternative formulation, *“Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in another, always as an end and never as only a means to an end.”*

Teleological ethics (from the Greek word *télos* – purpose, aim or goal) centers on the claim that the moral status of an action gets established in relation to good, i.e., a desirable end to be achieved or value. In its most common form, it states that the moral status of a given action is determined by the value of its consequences. Its central moral advice is thus *“Act in such a way that your action will lead to the most good or the best consequences.”* The key question that is inherent in this is which things have value. There are several kinds of teleological ethical views (e.g., hedonism, eudemonism) and among them utilitarianism is surely the most widely held. Its most notable representatives are Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Utilitarianism claims that the morally right action (duty) is the action that brings about the most utility (value), while this is usually understood in terms of net surplus of pleasures over pain, happiness, or well-being of individuals. An action is morally right if it tends to promote happiness or pleasure and morally wrong if it tends to produce unhappiness or pain.

The third form of ethical theory is virtue ethics. If the first two types of ethical theories put actions at the forefront, virtue ethics emphasizes our character or what kind of person we should be. The moral status of actions is determined by the virtues or virtuous character from which those actions are performed.

Virtues are human morally important qualities, dispositions for action or personality traits. They are closely related to human character and can be understood as excellencies. The opposite of virtues are vices, flaws or shortcomings. For example, moral virtues are honesty, kindness, compassion, courtesy, generosity and so on. Virtues include several components, namely cognitive, emotional, motivational, and action-oriented. Morally correct are those actions that are the result of or originate from our virtuous character. The founding fathers of virtue ethics are Plato and Aristotle.



Figure 6.5
Gratitude
Source: © sosiukin /
Adobe Stock

The dispute over which ethical theory is most plausible exceeds the purposes of this shallow module on ethics; but still, these theories and the differences between them can be very useful in discussion about ethical questions with students. Often our ethical views are pre-reflective, conditioned by our own tradition or culture or based on our gut reactions, so the perplexities of a given action, person or situation that we are evaluating escape us. The core views embedded in the three basic moral theories can help us to evaluate actions, persons or situations. In the student's book some of the concepts and theories are presented using some key philosophers that shaped our ethical thinking (Socrates, Aristotle, Kant, Mill, etc.).

6.5 ETHICS EDUCATION*

The significance of ethics education is highlighted in the 1996 UNESCO report on education for the 21st century. “In confronting the many challenges that the future holds in store, mankind sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempts to attain the ideas of peace, freedom and social justice. The Commission does not see education as a miracle cure or a magic formula opening the door to a world in which all ideals will be attained, but as one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war” (Delors et al. 1996).

Ethics education encompasses all dimensions of education and the educational process, which are directly or indirectly associated with our lives’ ethical dimensions. Ethics education may be a tacit part of the educational processes and often remains unconscious or unreflected. It can be planned, designed, controlled, and monitored with suitable educational methods and tools. It, among other things, centers on promoting ethics and values (justice, fairness, dignity, inclusiveness, human rights, etc.) as part of education, creating and sustaining a respectful attitude towards others, encouraging the positive development of character, building capacities for thoughtful and informed moral judgment, etc. Education as a process is inherently value-laden. This concerns what is conveyed (content), as well as the way it is conveyed (methods), the consequences of it (educational outcomes), and the relationships that are formed in the educational context. “Education implies that something worthwhile has been intentionally transmitted in a morally acceptable manner” (Peters 1970, 25). Ethical education takes this implicitly contained ethical dimension, reflects upon it, and sets it as an explicit aim. Education, especially early education, is one of the most significant elements in the development of autonomous, caring, resilient individuals. Ethical education can play an imperative part in nurturing such an individual (Strahovnik 2018; 2016).

* Different terms are used to designate this domain, including ethics education, moral education, values education, education for values, character education, etc.

"The oftmentioned goals of ethical education are the following: (i) to promote ethical reflection, attentiveness, autonomy, and responsibility in children as well as all other members of the educational community being established in a given educational setting; (ii) to enable children to examine and understand important ethical principles, values, virtues, and ideals, and to equip them with intellectual and moral abilities (critical thinking, reflection, comprehension, appreciation, compassion, valuing, etc.) needed for responsible moral judgment, decision-making, and action; (iii) to guide children to explore different values, different dimensions of values and different moral justifications on the basis of these values and combine them into a guiding unity; (iv) to focus children towards the commitment to the recognized basic values and the fundamental meaningfulness of life, while at the same time cultivating their self-image and the feeling of self-worth; (v) to enable children to overcome any possible prejudices, biases, discrimination, and other unethical attitudes and practices, and at the same time help them to create an appropriate, respectful attitude towards themselves, others around them, society and the environment, (vi) to promote cooperative, collaborative behaviour and to deepen the motivation for creating a group, class, or school environment as a genuine ethical community; (vii) to build character (including intellectual and moral virtues) of children in a way that will enable them to achieve a morally acceptable, flourishing and personally satisfying good life (the ancient ideal of eudaimonia), and (viii) to develop and reflect on how to situate children and ourselves as members of local and global communities with one of the tasks being that of contributing to them" (Strahovnik 2018, 13, cf. Strahovnik 2016).



Figure 6.6
Manifestation
Source: © Brett Sayles /
Pexels.com

Such a broad understanding of ethical education was, among others, advocated by John Dewey. According to him the general goal of education is “the formation of a cultivated and effectively operative good judgment or taste with respect to what is aesthetically admirable, intellectually acceptable and morally approvable” (Dewey, 1980, 262). Furthermore, “[o]ne purpose of moral education is to help make children virtuous – honest, responsible, and compassionate. Another is to make mature students informed and reflective about important and controversial moral issues. Both purposes are embedded in a yet larger project – making sense of life” (Nord and Haynes 1998).

6.5.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO ETHICAL EDUCATION

There are several methodological approaches to ethics education. These range from a rather direct transfer and integration of values through the contents in the educational process, school practices or policies, to more open and reflective approaches such as philosophy with children and critical thinking. Some methodologies focus on individual aspects of morality (the ethics of care approach, an empathy-based approach, ethical education focused on cognitive moral development, character education, an infusion approach, etc.). Others emphasize ethical education through ethical action(s) (experiential learning, learning through research, community-oriented projects and activities, etc.) (Strahovnik 2018).

There are also proposals that ethical theory itself is the foundation for ethics education must be centered around it. Warnick and Silverman note that “[a]nother way of looking at ethics education, a favourite among traditional philosophers, is to see professional ethics education as an opportunity to learn about philosophical theories of ethics. Under this approach, the students are taught one or more ethical theories (usually utilitarianism, Kantian deontology, or care theory) and are then taught to apply these theories to resolve, or at least inform, ethical dilemmas” (2011, 274).



Figure 6.7
Source: © Min An /
Pexels.com

In the recent period, there have been movements towards multi-dimensional, holistic, and integrative approaches that combine both traditional educational goals and recent findings of moral psychology and other sciences (Silcock and Duncan 2001). When it comes to content, comprehensive ethical education includes both personal and social values. The diverse methodological approaches involve students and teachers or educators and the whole community and other institutions as agents of ethical education (Strahovnik 2018).

Such integrative approaches can attain the indispensable balance between individual and societal aspects of ethics education. “As Socrates would have it, the philosophical examination of life is a collaborative inquiry. The social nature of the enterprise goes with its spirit of inquiry to form his bifocal vision of the examined life. These days, insofar as our society teaches us to think about values, it tends to inculcate a private rather than a public conception of them. This makes reflection a personal and inward journey rather than a social and collaborative one and a person’s values a matter of parental guidance in childhood and individual decision in maturity” (Cam, 2014, 1203; cf. Strahovnik 2018).



Figure 6.8
Source: © Pixabay /
Pexels.com

6.6 GUIDANCE FOR ASSIGNMENTS AND DISCUSSION WITH STUDENTS

There are five educational assignments, activities, or prompts for this shallow module in the Student's book. Some assignments are related to the scenario of the video animation. This section elaborates on them and provides to you as a teacher some additional ideas and resources for how to utilize them as part of the educational process. Four optional or additional assignments – labeled as A, B, C, and D – are elaborated in the section below and you can use them. (In parentheses there is an indication of the approximate time that students need to complete the assignment).

Assignment 1 (3-5 minutes): This assignment is focused on the reflection about values, their importance in our lives, and our situatedness in the wider environment (social, natural, spiritual, etc.). The aim is first to motivate students to reflect upon values and then use their moral sense in combination with creative imagination to draw out our mentioned situatedness in relation to values. In the follow up activities, you can use discussion to highlight the individual choices of values, justification for choosing them, differences between the students' choices and to search for a possible unity among them. Also, the drawings can be put on display and you can further use them in discussion on other themes and topics. (Part 2* of the assignment is optional).

Assignment 2 (5 minutes): The assignment is a follow up to the prompt already present in the animation video about the role models for students in today's society. In virtue ethics the stress is neither on the list of moral rules that one must obey nor on the list of values that one must pursue, but on the question of the person one should become. Within such an approach, moral education essentially involves the use of role models. You can further supplement this assignment with a follow-up discussion focusing on the choices of students.

Assignment 3 (3-5 minutes): The fourth assignment includes a famous quote attributed to Socrates: "The unexamined life is not worth living". The main aim of the activity is for students to reflect on it and develop their own interpretation.



Figure 6.9
Statue of Socrates
Source: © anastasios71 /
Adobe Stock

Assignment 4 (5-8 minutes): The assignment is designed to give students the opportunity to reflect upon the universality of ethics and uses the example of Kant's categorical imperative. It is related to the topics of human dignity and human rights, you can follow up with a discussion of human rights and their interrelatedness with ethics.

Assignment 5 (5 minutes): This assignment uses some of the aspects of utilitarianism to motivate students to recognize and appreciate the importance of our similarities and interconnectedness with animals, to understand the unity of the ecosystem and its moral importance, and to be able to reflect on our own, human perspective in light of the topics that are discussed in animal ethics. You can expand it with further activities, which you can find in the Ethics Deep Module that deals with our relationship with the environment.

6.7 OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

Optional assignment A (10 minutes): is linked to Assignment 1. Instructions for students: use a blank piece of paper to draw yourself (roughly in the middle of the provided space, your drawing may be more schematic than realistic) and the world around you in a way that you can use the values you have chosen above as part of the picture. Write the values into the drawing, e.g., if a clean environment matters to you, you can draw a river or a forest and write down “clean environment” between you and the forest. Or, if you value justice, draw where justice is important. The same value can be used more than once.

Optional assignment B (8-10 minutes): is linked to the section about moral rightness and wrongness. The assignment is intended to foster an understanding of the concepts of right, wrong, and duty in relation to moral dilemmas. The use of cases, whether real or imagined, is prominent in ethics education. A case is presented, usually in the form of a dilemma, and students are then asked to analyze it from several perspectives. Two goals are inherently presupposed in this. First, in this way students can more easily bridge the gap between ethical theory and practice in the sense that they can try out different approaches to the situation and see which one is more fitting. Secondly, such use of cases increases engagement and gives students an opportunity to more fully invest themselves in the situation; all of this then enables a cultivation of moral reasoning that is sensitive to context and related to actual experience.

In discussion, you can use the following questions:

- What are the morally relevant features (reasons) involved in the case?
- Which one of these features is most important?
- Are there any clashes between these features? How should the clash be resolved?
- Are there any similar or analogous cases for comparison?
- How do we morally evaluate these other cases?

Discussion should be open and several alternative solutions can be established (Strahovnik 2014). In the assignment below the moral dilemma story comes from research into moral development by Lawrence Kohlberg.

Instructions for students

What you are about to read is a moral dilemma story. Read it, think about it carefully and answer the questions posed below. (You can answer only some of them.)

Heinz's wife is dying from a particular type of cancer. Doctors say that a newly developed drug might save her life. The drug had been discovered by a local pharmacist and Heinz tried desperately to buy some, but the pharmacist was charging ten times the money it cost to make the drug and much more than Heinz could afford. Heinz visits everyone he knows to borrow the money, but he could only raise half the money. He goes to the pharmacist and explains his situation, asking him to sell him the drug for what he can afford. The pharmacist refuses. Heinz is desperate and later that day he breaks into the pharmacist's store and steals the drug.

Is this situation fair? Should Heinz have stolen the drug? Was that the right thing to do? Why or why not? Should Heinz be punished for what he did? If something is against the law, does that make it also morally wrong? Should people generally do everything they can to avoid breaking the law?

Optional assignment C (5 minutes): is linked to the section on Plato. This assignment is related to one of the oldest ethical questions or concerns, i.e. why be moral. It focuses on the issue of what is the motivation for being ethical and why motivation matters at all. The story of the Ring of Gyges (Plato) is used as a starting point. You can further supplement the activity with a follow-up discussion, but remember that there are no right or wrong answers. It is also apt to include experiences that the students have from their own lives. Another possible topic for discussion is how do we know what motivates others around us and how confident we can be in ascribing motives to other persons.

Instructions for students

Think about the mentioned story of the ring of Gyges. What would you do if you were in possession of such a ring for a period of time and why? Would you try to act ethically or not care about this at all?

Optional assignment D (5-7 minutes): is linked to Assignment 1. This assignment focuses on Aristotle and eudaimonistic ethics, which stresses the concept of happiness (flourishing, well-being) and the good life. You can further supplement this activity with a follow-up discussion focusing on the answers/choices of students.

Instructions for students

In the space below write down 5 essential things that (for you) constitute happiness or a happy life and 5 things that such a life should exclude.

+	-
+	-
+	-
+	-
+	-

6.8 GLOSSARY

Care ethics/ethics of care: a moral theory that takes caring about individuals as the central ethical consideration that provides the basis for thinking about our duties and values.

Categorical Imperative: a supreme principle of morality according to Kant, which requires that we act only on those maxims that we can will to be universal laws or, in another formulation, requires that we treat humanity, in ourselves and in others, always as an end in itself, never as a mere means.

Character education: is a specific form of ethics education, focusing primarily on character development, e.g., development of moral virtues, habits and other aspects of character, which then translates into morally desirable or appropriate behavior.

Deontology/deontological ethics: an ethical theory that takes the notion of a duty as a fundamental ethical concept.

Dignity: basic and special, inalienable value that all people have on the basis of their humanity. It is often regarded as the foundation for basic entitlements and human rights of each individual.

Duty: an action that is morally required or morally right as opposed to actions that are wrong or morally impermissible.

Ethics education: ethics education represents all aspects of the process of education, which either explicitly or implicitly relate to the ethical dimensions of life and are such that can be structured, guided and monitored with appropriate educational methods and tools.

Ethics: a reflective system of values, principles, virtues, and ideals that shape our lives and determine the basis for the relationships that we form with others as well as ourselves. It is the primary subject of moral philosophy as an academic discipline.



Figure 6.10
Ethics Word Cloud
Source: © canbedone /
Adobe Stock

Human rights: basic rights that belong to every human individual (or a group of individuals) solely on the basis of being human. They protect their basic interests and safeguard the possibility of leading a good and meaningful life (e.g. right to life and liberty, right to privacy, right to fair trial, freedom of religion, etc.).

Moral principle/rule: a statement that sets conditions under which an action is right or wrong or something is good or bad. A moral rule could either be a moral standard or a guide on how we should act.

Philosophy with children: philosophy for/with children primarily denotes a set of methods devised to encourage and cultivate critical thinking and reflective understanding in children. The key stress is on critical thinking, i.e., thinking that is based on the use of reason, is guided in an appropriate manner by (good) reasons as opposed to, e.g., uninformed desires and inclinations, prejudices, fears, etc., and which helps a person answer questions about what to believe and what to do.

Utilitarianism: a moral theory that claims that the morally right action (or our duty) is the action that brings about the most utility/value (usually understood in terms of net surplus of pleasures over pain, happiness, or well-being of individuals).

Value/worth: concerns the goodness and badness of persons and the goodness and badness of character traits and associated motives of persons.

Values: are important, deep-rooted, pervasive and lasting beliefs, attitudes, ideals, and attachments which are usually shared by the members of a given community and concern what is good or bad.

Virtue(s) and vice(s): a virtue is a praiseworthy or commendable character trait such as courage, benevolence, charity, and humility (as opposed to vices as blameworthy trait such as dishonesty, cowardice, vanity, cruelty, chauvinism, etc.). Character traits are dispositions to act, feel, and think in certain ways. Aristotle understood virtues in relation to his principle of the Golden mean, that is, as a mean between two extremes.

6.9 SCENARIO OF THE VIDEO

Hello! My name is Iris. Ethics forms the basis of my daily conduct and my orientation in the world. The word “ethics” comes from the Greek word “ēthikós” or “ēthos” and refers to our moral character, that is to the persons we are or aspire to be. Ethics investigates which things are valuable, important, meaningful. And it guides me on how to act and behave. It is a part of my everyday life.

When I am with my friends and schoolmates, I try to treat everybody else as I would like to be treated by them. This certainly makes sense. I learned in an ethics class that this is called the Golden rule and that it is very ancient, present in all cultures. It means showing respect for others and caring about each other. In my school class we have also written down a code of ethics in which I took a great part and which I am enthusiastic about following. It unites us together as a class, importantly, each and every one of us needed to accept it. I am always trying to be fair, caring, and cooperative. I also strive to obey laws and rules and to improve myself.

When I am playing football with my friends, we all aim to play fair. Of course, there are football rules. But these rules are not enough for a fun game that everybody would enjoy. Fair-play or good sportsmanship means showing respect for others in the game, cooperation and fellowship, having a team spirit and not focusing on winning for the sake of winning or ridiculing the side that loses. You have to play the game fair. Just following the rules of the game or the decisions of the referees is not enough. I don't like it when somebody cheats or fakes a foul, and the referee does not see this. What is important is that we shake hands at the end of each game.

Fairness is not important only in sports, but it is the basis of how we live together as a society. This is what is called justice. Our common institutions and practices must be just. A court, for example, should treat everybody the same, since we are all equal before the law. This last thought comes from

the Chinese tradition and Athenian democracy tradition. In present times it is most often a part of the constitution or the basic legal document for a state. There the most fundamental rights of every citizen are written. Human rights are related to what is called dignity. Dignity is a fundamental value of an individual and the absolute status that belongs to all humans. The dignity of each individual protects against interference and all forms of unworthy treatment, like for example, torture and humiliation, and it speaks against human circumstances such as slavery and extreme poverty.



Figure 6.11

Poverty

Source: © Milan Rout / Pexels.com

Last month in our school, we learned about children rights written in The Convention on the Rights of the Child. We made large colorful posters and described each right in our own words. My task was to present the right to food, clothing, and a safe home. Many kids do not have access to such basic things, and it is our duty to try to help them. I read some of their stories. The difficulties they are facing and the conditions they are living in made me sad and angry. And our society here lives in affluence, so we take some things for granted. My grandmother is a retired theatre actress and she grew up in great poverty. Our family thus decided to organize and stage a theatre play in the local park, and the money collected went for famine relief charity. I forgot some of my lines, but we all laughed. We also handed out leaflets through the entire town about ways to give. All members of my family helped me with this and we made some new friends in our neighborhood.

My mother is a medical doctor and researcher. She tells me that each time she wants to study a disease, she needs the permission of an ethics committee. That is important since such a committee is there for the protection of the most vulnerable ones and to guard their rights. In my boy scout group, we have a similar committee. At meetings, we sometimes decide how to solve disputes and whether one acted in a way contrary to being brave, noble, and caring. We vote and each member has the same say as any other, even though some leaders are older and more experienced. It is always important to vote and decide as you think is right.

I like holidays, especially Christmas and New Year season holidays. All the family comes together and we enjoy a shared meal, play games and tell stories. We exchange gifts. My grandfather always tells how giving and receiving is the most universal activity and how it is important that we are humble, generous and thankful. It is a ritual of a sort. And it is a bond with family and friends. I am most thankful that the whole family is together.

What I most look forward in school to is the Nature and environment week celebrating Charles Darwin day. We pack our things and go camping somewhere, learning about the surrounding nature and its importance. Last year we camped at the riverbank, and every day we walked for hours picking up the trash from the river and its surroundings. At the end, we collected more than a ton of trash. The river area looked completely different, more beautiful and healthier. We saw fish, bees, butterflies, dragonflies, turtles, and even otters. On the last day we together created a charter of the rights of animals. We wrote down what would they expect from us and how they can be preserved for future generations.

And I can now sum up, what I think is the most important for leading an ethical life. Ethics is not just following customs or the law, and it is not just about following one's feelings. Something is not good or right just because we like it, and if we disapprove of something, that does not mean that it is wrong. Ethics means thinking carefully about what is right and what is wrong and acting accordingly. And it extends beyond us humans and includes taking into consideration other fellow beings and the Earth as a whole, not merely because it sustains our life, but because it is valuable as such.

6.10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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