

## HANDOUT: CHRISTIANITY FACT SHEET

**Founded/Created:** 30 CE (crucifixion of Jesus)

**Adherents:** 2.1 billion — 1.13 billion Catholics; 225 million Orthodox; 970 million Protestants

**Ranking:** First; the most populous religion on earth. Catholicism alone would be second, behind Islam

**Prophets:** Jesus of Nazareth, called Jesus Christ

**Texts:** Holy Bible, a collection of books organized as Hebrew and Christian Scripture

**Clergy:** The Pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church; the Patriarch of Constantinople is the head of the Orthodox Church; Protestant denominations do not have comparable heads. Catholic and most Protestant denominations are typically but not universally hierarchical. Training, advancement, and selection/assignment of clergy vary widely among denominations.

**Symbols:** Cross, crucifix

### **Terms and Fundamental Precepts:**

*Jesus is Divine, the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior*—belief among traditional Christians in Jesus being the true Son of God, whose sacrifice made possible human salvation

*Trinity*—doctrine of one God in three parts: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Not taught by Jesus but introduced by the Church in the third century CE. Historically, Unitarians were those who believed in the divinity of Jesus but rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, averring instead the unity of God

*Virgin Birth*—doctrine that Mary, mother of Jesus, became pregnant through an act of God, without her ever having sexual relations

*Resurrection*—doctrine of Jesus's return to life three days after his crucifixion and death

*Easter*—festival celebrating the resurrection of Jesus

*Ascension*—festival celebrating the physical rising of Christ's body to heaven, forty days after the resurrection

*Pentecost*—festival fifty days after Jesus' resurrection (ten days after Ascension) when the Holy Spirit descended into the disciples who preached in tongues (the language of whoever they were talking to, whether they knew the language before or not) and baptized thousands of new believers in one day

*Eucharist, Communion, Lord's Supper*—sharing of bread and wine, in worship, symbolizing the body and blood of Jesus Christ

*Reformation*—16th century events in Western Europe in which the Christian Church split into Catholic and Protestant denominations

*Martin Luther*—German monk and reformer who launched the Protestant Reformation in 1517

*The Pope*—Head of the Catholic Church. There has been a continuous succession of Popes since the Apostle Peter

*Papal Infallibility*—Roman Catholic doctrine that the Pope is incapable of error or deception in religious matters. Papal infallibility is considered a gift of God

*Saints*—(in Catholicism) people who led exceptionally holy lives and are believed to have performed miracles are canonized by the Catholic Church. Catholics pray to saints, especially Mary, mother of Jesus, as well as to God and Jesus

*Intercessory Prayer*—prayer which requests divine action or intervention. Catholics believe saints as well as God and Jesus respond to intercessory prayer

*Satan/the Devil*—the malevolent entity who seeks to lead humans astray and separate them from God

*Sin*—transgression of divine law, especially consciously

*Confession*—process whereby a Catholic confesses sins to a priest, expresses remorse, is assigned penance, and is absolved (forgiven) of the sincerely confessed sins

*Grace*—the freely given favor and love of God, especially the gift of forgiveness for sin. In Catholic and other Christian doctrine, humans are born with sin, and need God's grace to achieve salvation

**Shared with Unitarian Universalism:**

- Concept that individuals are responsible for their behavior
- Belief in the equal worth of every person
- Importance of treating others well, as one wishes to be treated
- Actively working to relieve suffering of the less fortunate
- In *Singing the Living Tradition* (Boston: UUA Publications, 1993), many readings and hymns are from the Christian tradition.

### **Unitarian Universalist Christians:**

Unitarianism and Universalism both started as Christian faiths. Most of the founding figures of Unitarian Universalism considered themselves Christian, although by definition at odds with traditional Christianity. Universalists—by not believing in eternal hell—and Unitarians—by not believing in the Trinity—were and are not considered Christian by doctrinaire Christians. See the [UU Christian Heritage](http://www.uuchristian.org/) (at [www.uuchristian.org/](http://www.uuchristian.org/)) page.

## **HANDOUT: PATRON SAINTS**

One unique feature of Catholicism is its saints. Thousands of people have been sainted by the Catholic Church, meaning they are officially recognized as exemplars of Christian faith, having exhibited the power of God in their lives in remarkable ways. Saints are thought to be accessible to believers through prayer, and are considered to be guardians of specific groups of people. Often Catholics will have a patron saint whose life or works they feel drawn to, but they may also pray to other patron saints for certain reasons (for example, praying to St. Francis to help a sick pet). Here is a small sample of patron saints.

<b>Accountants</b>	<b>St. Matthew</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>St. Genesius</b>
<b>Archaeologists</b>	<b>St. Helen</b>	<b>Animals</b>	<b>St. Francis of Assisi</b>
<b>Art</b>	<b>St. Catharine of Bologna</b>	<b>Athletes</b>	<b>St. Sebastian</b>
<b>Bee Keepers</b>	<b>St. Ambrose</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>St. John Bosco</b>
<b>Brides</b>	<b>St. Nicholas</b>	<b>Cancer Patients</b>	<b>St. Peregrine Laziosi</b>
<b>Children</b>	<b>St. Nicholas</b>	<b>Clergy</b>	<b>St. Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows</b>
<b>Comedians</b>	<b>St. Vitus</b>	<b>Cooks</b>	<b>St. Thomas the Apostle</b>
<b>Earaches</b>	<b>St. Polycarp</b>	<b>Falsely Accused</b>	<b>St. Raymond Nonnatus</b>
<b>Girls</b>	<b>St. Agnes, St. Maria Goretti</b>	<b>Grandparents</b>	<b>St. Ann, St. Joachim</b>
<b>Greetings</b>	<b>St. Valentine</b>	<b>Impossible Causes</b>	<b>St. Frances Xavier Cabrini</b>
<b>Internet</b>	<b>St. Isidore of Seville</b>	<b>Jewelers</b>	<b>St. Eligius</b>
<b>Journalists</b>	<b>St. Frances de</b>	<b>Learning</b>	<b>St. Ambrose</b>

	<b>Sales</b>		
<b>Lost items</b>	<b>St. Anthony of Padua</b>	<b>Lovers</b>	<b>St. Valentine</b>
<b>Monks</b>	<b>St. John the Baptist</b>	<b>Painters</b>	<b>St. Luke</b>
<b>Philosophers</b>	<b>St. Catherine of Alexandria</b>	<b>Physicians</b>	<b>St. Luke, Sts. Cosmas, Damian</b>
<b>Pilots</b>	<b>St. Therese</b>	<b>Poets</b>	<b>St. Columba</b>
<b>Politicians</b>	<b>St. Thomas More</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>St. Lawrence</b>
<b>Race Relations</b>	<b>St. Martin de Porres</b>	<b>Savings</b>	<b>St. Anthony Claret</b>
<b>Scholars</b>	<b>St. Brigid of Kildare</b>	<b>Scientists</b>	<b>St. Albert the Great</b>
<b>Teachers</b>	<b>St. Gregory the Great</b>	<b>Teenagers</b>	<b>St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Maria Goretti</b>
<b>Television</b>	<b>St. Clare</b>	<b>Veterinarians</b>	<b>St Eligius</b>
<b>Waiters, Waitresses</b>	<b>St. Martha</b>	<b>Workers</b>	<b>St. Joseph</b>
<b>Writers</b>	<b>St. Francis de Sales</b>		

## **HANDOUT: PARABLES**

*From Christian scripture, New Revised Standard Version.*

### **1. Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32)**

"He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.'

### **2. House upon the Rocks (Matthew 7)**

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!"

### **3. Parable of the Weeds (Matthew 13: 36-43)**

"Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field. He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!'"

### **4. The Physician (Mark 2: 15-17)**

"And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax-collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax-collectors, they said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax-collectors and sinners?' When Jesus

heard this, he said to them, 'those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.'

#### **5. Light under a Bushel (Mark 4:21-23)**

"He said to them, 'Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand? For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!'"

#### **6. Dinner Guest (Luke 14: 16-24)**

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for everything is ready now." But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my apologies." Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies." Another said, "I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come." So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame." And the slave said, "Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room." Then the master said to the slave, "Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner."

#### **7. A Friend at Midnight (Luke 11: 5-13)**

"And he said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, "Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him." And he answers from within, "Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything." I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

'So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the

child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

#### **8. The Lost Coin (Luke 15: 8-10)**

"Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

#### **9. A King Plans for War (Luke 14: 31-33)**

"Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."

#### **10. The True Vine (John 15: 1-10)**

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."



## HANDOUT: BEATITUDES

From Christian scripture, New Revised Standard Version.

A	B
Blessed are the poor in spirit:	for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they that mourn	for they shall be comforted
Blessed are the meek	for they shall inherit the earth
Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness	for they shall be filled
Blessed are the merciful	for they shall obtain mercy
Blessed are the pure in heart:	for they shall see God
Blessed are the peacemakers	for they shall be called the children of God
Blessed are the peacemakers	for they shall be called the children of God
Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake	for theirs is the kingdom of heaven
Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.	Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

### Matthew 5

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

# **HANDOUT: PENTECOST AND DAMASCUS**

## **Part 1: Pentecost**

The most sacred season of the Christian liturgical year surrounds the story of the resurrection of Jesus. Holy week, the week before Easter, chronicles Jesus' triumphant return to Jerusalem, his Last Supper with the Apostles, his betrayal by Judas, his trial and his execution on Good Friday. On Easter Sunday, the third day after his execution, Jesus rose from the dead and resumed teaching the Apostles for the following forty days. Forty days after Easter, he rose bodily to heaven as the Apostles watched. This day is known as the Ascension. Ten days after the Ascension, fifty days after Easter, is one of the most important days in the Christian calendar: Pentecost (meaning "fiftieth day").

In the liturgical calendar, Pentecost is as important as Christmas and nearly as important as Easter. Christmas was the birth of the Savior; Easter was his victory over death. Pentecost was the gift of faith, the power to believe and trust in God's preeminent love as expressed through sending to humankind his son, Jesus.

The family and friends of Jesus were together in Jerusalem. Jesus had risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, and said they would hear from him again. But it had been ten days and they were feeling lost and sad.

Suddenly, the spirit of God descended into them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in unknown languages. Bystanders, people from many different countries, heard the disciples and understood them. They were amazed because everyone in the area was hearing the same story... but in their native tongues. It was as though a language translator program was being used. The disciples themselves were amazed. One of them, Simon Peter, realized this was the work of the Lord. He addressed a huge crowd gathered outside, speaking of Jesus Christ and the need to repent. Three thousand souls converted to Christianity in that public square in Jerusalem and were baptized in a single afternoon. This is an important milestone in the birth of Christianity. Many disciples went forth to preach about Jesus. Peter was important: he eventually went to preach in Rome and is considered the father of the Catholic Church.

## **Part 2: Damascus**

It was also necessary to spread the word widely. In later chapters of Acts we hear of another important disciple. A man named Saul, who was persecuting Christians, was journeying to the city of Damascus to capture Christians and bring them before the courts. While on the road to Damascus, he had an encounter with Jesus that left him blind. After 3 days, Jesus spoke to a believer named Ananias and said he would work through him to cure Saul's blindness. Ananias was afraid because he knew Saul was searching for Christians to arrest, but he did as Jesus instructed and cured Saul in Jesus's name. Saul became a believer, was baptized, and started to preach about Jesus. He changed his name to Paul (remember prophets from the Hebrew Scriptures who changed their names after conversion?) and went on missionary trips to spread Christianity far beyond Jerusalem. Particularly, Paul felt inspired to convert Gentiles (non-Jews). Paul's actions were other milestones on the path to the founding of the Catholic Church. The phrase, "road to Damascus" has come to mean a dramatic, insightful turning point in someone's life.

## ACTS 2

Acts 2: 1-24, 32-33, and 36-47, New Revised Standard Version.

Here is an excerpt of the scriptural story of Pentecost:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

"In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.

And I will show portents in the heaven above

and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

'You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear...

Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.' And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds\* (at javascript:void(0);) to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home\* (at javascript:void(0);) and ate their food with glad and generous\* (at javascript:void(0);) hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

## **HANDOUT: 25 LARGEST CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES, 2012**

[The 2012 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches.](#) *Used with permission.*

1. The Catholic Church
2. The Southern Baptist Convention
3. The United Methodist Church
4. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
5. The Church of God in Christ
6. National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.
7. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
8. National Baptist Convention of America
9. Presbyterian Church (USA)
10. Assemblies of God
11. African Methodist Episcopal Church
12. National Missionary Baptist Convention of America
13. Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.
14. The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (LCMS)
15. Episcopal Church
16. Churches of Christ
17. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
18. Pentecostal Assemblies of the World
19. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
20. American Baptist Churches in the USA
21. United Church of Christ
22. Baptist Bible Fellowship International
23. Christian Churches and Churches of Christ
24. The Orthodox Church in America
25. Jehovah's Witnesses

## HANDOUT: CALVINISM VERSUS HISTORIC UNIVERSALISM

### CALVINISM

Humans are inherently sinful and depraved

God arbitrarily chooses who will be saved

Christ died only for the chosen

People can choose to follow God only if they are already chosen

The chosen cannot be damned no matter how badly they behave; those not chosen can never get to heaven no matter how well they live

God's nature is unknowable

Holiness and happiness have no connection

### HISTORIC UNIVERSALISM

Humans are flawed but not inherently depraved. All should be loved, respected, and forgiven because they are loved by God

God saves everyone, without exception

Christ came to save everyone

All people can choose to follow God through the teachings of Jesus.

All people will ultimately join God in heaven. Living a "bad" life will be punished, but God is merciful and forgiving. Good works do matter.

God's nature is love

Holiness and happiness are inseparable



## **HANDOUT: NICENE CREED**

1975 Ecumenical Version, published by Prayers We Have in Common and adopted by the Roman Catholic Church and many mainstream Protestant denominations.

NOTE: "Ecumenical" means pertaining to the whole Christian Church; promoting or fostering Christian unity throughout the world. It does not include non-Christian faiths.

Nicene Creed

"We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty

maker of heaven and earth,

of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God,

eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God, Light from Light,

true God from true God,

begotten, not made,

of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation

he came down from heaven:

by the power of the Holy Spirit

he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end  
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of Life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

NOTE: "catholic" here, with the lower case "c," means universal, involving all, pertaining to the whole Christian body or church. Capitalized, "Catholic" refers to the Roman Catholic Church.