

### POPULATION IN THE WORLD:

~2.3 billion

### POPULATION IN CANADA:

~22,000,000 or ~67.3% of Canadians

### HISTORY:

The faith of Christianity, one of three Abrahamic faiths (the other two are Islam and Judaism), is based on the life, teachings, death and resurrection of a man known as Jesus Christ. According to Christian sacred scripture, called the Bible, Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judaea. He was conceived to Mary, a young unmarried virgin, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Though not much is known of Jesus' childhood, the Bible says that Jesus was about 30 years old when he was baptized by John the Baptist—the event which marks the beginning of his ministry. It is believed that his ministry lasted approximately three years.

Jesus, understood by Christians to be the Son of God, shared the urgent message of God's justice, mercy, love and generosity. As a healer and wisdom teacher, Jesus challenged traditional ways and angered many leaders, particularly the Roman authorities. They eventually charged him with sedition and executed him. He was nailed to a cross, an act known as crucifixion (a common practice in the Roman Empire). Shortly after his execution, Jesus' beloved followers experienced his living, physical presence, and they joyfully proclaimed that he was raised from the dead. Resurrection is central to the celebration of Easter, and is highly symbolic for Christians.

Today, some sources would identify three major branches of Christianity: the Catholic Church, the Orthodox churches, and Protestant churches and movements. Other branches include Anglicanism, Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism, and historic peace churches like those of the Quakers and Mennonites. These broad streams consist of many diverse communities of interpretation that have developed over the centuries. As with other religious traditions, communities of interpretation within Christianity continue to emerge today.

### FORMAL PLACE OF WORSHIP:

Church (also understood as an institution or an assembly of the baptized gathered for worship)

### SACRED SCRIPTURE(S):

Bible

- The Bible (not one book but an entire collection) has two sections, commonly called the Old Testament and the New Testament; the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible, is the sacred scripture of Judaism.
- The New Testament comprises 27 books falling into two major categories: the Gospels and the Letters.
- The Gospels included in the traditional collection portray the life and teachings of Jesus; these four books (known as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) provide distinct perspectives on Jesus' life.

### SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES:

- Christianity is a monotheistic faith: followers believe that there is only one God.
- Three dimensions of God—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—are often referred to as the Trinity. Jesus, as Son of God, is understood to reveal God in human form.
- Through trust in Jesus and the significant meanings of his life, Christians experience a "right" relationship with God.
- Christians can get to know God through God's grace: divine love, power and generosity.
- Prayer is an important dimension of Christian faith. Prayer can be formal or informal. It can be based on community and ritual; it can also be personal and spontaneous. Some Christians at times direct their prayers through an intermediary such as a martyr or saint.
- The Eucharist, meaning thanksgiving, is a rite performed in commemoration of the Last Supper shared by Jesus and his disciples, prior to Jesus' death. Wine and bread have deep significance.

### OTHER IMPORTANT TRANSLATIONS:

- "Christ" comes from the Greek word *Christos*, meaning Anointed One; akin to the Hebrew word *Messiah*.
- The word "Gospel" comes from the Greek word *evangelion*, meaning good news.

### REFERENCES:

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- Statistics Canada – National Household Survey: [statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/130508/dq130508b-eng.htm](http://statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/130508/dq130508b-eng.htm)