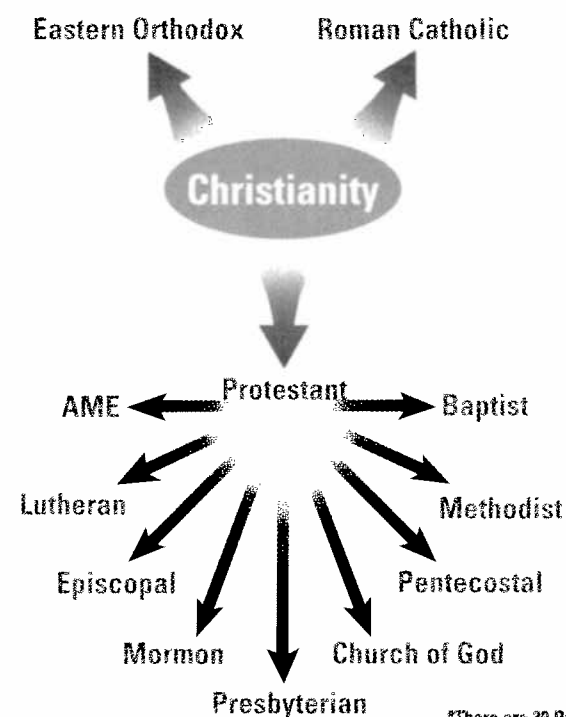


Christianity

Christianity is the largest religion in the world, with about 1.9 billion followers. It is based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Most Christians are members of one of three major groups: Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Eastern Orthodox. Christianity teaches the existence of only one God. All Christians regard Jesus as the son of God. They believe that Jesus entered the world and died to save humanity from sin. Christians believe that they reach salvation by following the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Major Christian Sects



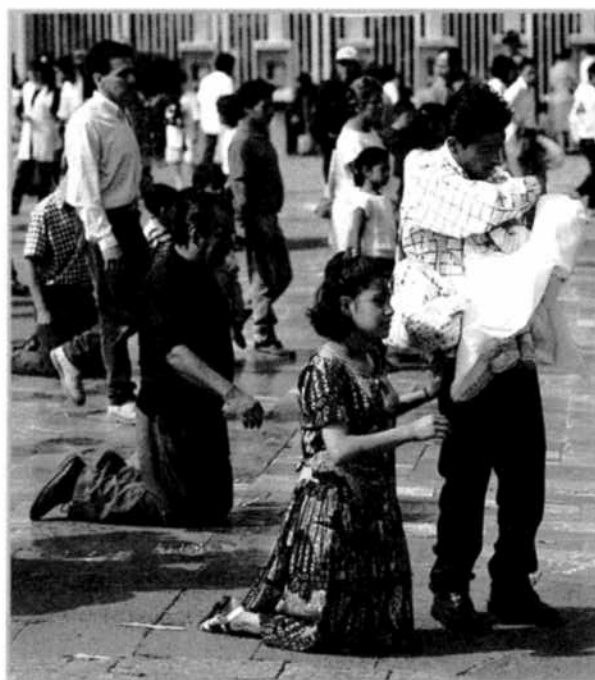
*There are 30 Protestant denominations of over 400,000 members in each in the United States alone.

Chapter Connection

To learn about the Protestant and Catholic Reformations, see sections 3 and 4 of Chapter 1.

Ritual

Each year, hundreds of thousands of Christians from all over the world visit the Basilica of Guadalupe in northern Mexico City. The church is considered the holiest in Mexico. It is near the site where the Virgin Mary, believed to be the mother of Jesus Christ, is said to have appeared twice in 1531. Out of deep respect for Mary, some pilgrims approach the holy cathedral on their knees.



Worship

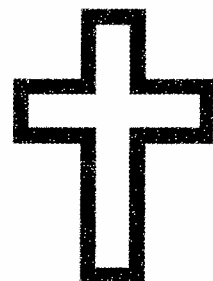
Christians worship in many different ways. Pictured here is a Protestant worship service in the United States. Most Protestant services share several basic features. The service includes praying, singing, reading from the Bible, and a sermon by a minister. The laity, or church members who are not ministers, participate extensively in the service. Some services include baptism and communion.

Leadership

In some Christian churches, the person who performs services in the local church is known as a priest. Shown here is a priest of the Ethiopian Christian Church holding a picture of the Virgin Mary with her infant, Jesus. These priests, like those in other Christian sects, perform such duties as presiding over the liturgy, as well as over marriages and funerals. Rules of behavior for priests differ throughout the Christian world. For example, priests with the Ethiopian Church may marry, while Roman Catholic priests may not.

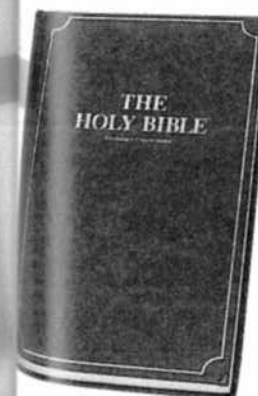


ICONS, TEXTS & SYMBOLS



The Cross

The cross, a symbol of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, represents Jesus' love for humanity in dying for its sins.



The Bible

The Bible is the most sacred book of the Christian religion. It is divided into two major parts. The Old Testament focuses on Jewish history and religion. The New Testament describes the teachings of Jesus Christ.

A Cross of Palms

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week in the Christian calendar. On this day, palms are distributed in remembrance of the palms laid before Jesus' feet as he entered Jerusalem days before his death.