

**Christianity and Islam**

**Christianity**

 It belongs to the world´s most widely spread religions.

 Christianity developed out of Judaism in the 1st century CE in the Roman province of Judea. The founder of Christianity is Jesus Christ – the **Messiah**, the redeemer, the **Son of God**.

 Christianity is a monotheistic religion where the Lord and the Ruler over the world is **God** in whom the three persons are comprised – **Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**. God cares for the people, he is merciful, does not rule over the people and is not pleased when they suffer.

 **The Bible** is the sacred book in Christianity. It consists of two parts:

**Old Testament –** based on the JewishPentateuch- describes the history of the Jewish nation

**New Testament –** contains the life and the deeds of Jesus Christ, 4 canonical gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of Paul, Revelation to John

 Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, began his ministry thanks to John the Baptist who baptised him. He preached publicly, taught – his followers were the **12 Apostles**, he cured, did miracles. He did not recognize the division of social classes which was met with opposition from representatives of the Jewish religion and at the same time he incensed the religious leaders. He was handed over to the Roman governor of Judaea Pontius Pilate, crucified (that is why the cross is the main symbol of Christian religion besides the dove, the boat, or the fish) and buried in a tomb. He was raised from the dead; he kept on appearing and preaching for 40 more days. As his main follower he chose **Peter** (the rock), who is considered the first bishop, pope.

 In Rome the Christians were prosecuted, tortured and killed, until 313 when emperor **Constantine I** issued the **Edict of Milan** that made Christianity equal to other religions. Subsequently, in 380, Christianity became the Roman state religion.

 The Medieval era was rather turbulent also within the Church. The year 1054 was the year of the **East – West Schism**, when the Church was divided to **Western Church** – Rome was the centre, Latin was the language, the head was the Pope; and **Eastern Church** – Constantinople was the centre, Greek was the language and the emperor was also the head of the Church = **Monophysitism**. The **Investiture Contest** – or the conflict between the Church and the state over the ability to choose and install bishops was also going on. The French King Philip IV the Fair transferred the papal court to the **Enclave of Avignon** to have the Pope under his control. Phenomenon of several papacies was created which came to an end in 1414 - 1418 with the **Council of Constance**. The end of the Middle Ages is marked with the **Reformation movement** - M. Luter, J. Calvin, U. Zwingli and the following **Anabaptist movement.**

 **Papacy**

  **The Pope** is the representative of Jesus on earth. Peter is considered the first Pope, one of the 12 apostles. He was chosen by Jesus himself to be his successor. In Antiquity the main seats of the important patriarchs/bishops were **Constantinople, Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria**. In the 5th century the **Roman Bishop** became the superior. He accepted the name **papa = father**.

 Until these days there have been 226 popes. The present pope is Pope **Francis**. The process in which a pope is elected is called a **papal conclave**. It is a gathering of the College of Cardinals who are locked in the **Sistine Chapel** until a new pope is elected. The public is informed whether the new pope has been chosen by using smoke released from the chimney of the Chapel. If **black smoke** is released the pope has not been elected, if the **smoke is white**, the Catholic Church has found its new representative.

**Islam**

 It originated in the 7th century CE and so is the youngest monotheistic religion. In many aspects it follows Christianity and Judaism. The founder of Islam was the **Prophet Muhammad** and the God is **Allah**. The word **Islam** means total surrender to the will of God, the followers are **Muslims** - those who surrender.

 The holy book of Islam is the **Quran** containing 114 chapters – **suras**. It is the transcription of words and ideas that were revealed to Muhammad as the Prophet by the archangel Gabriel during his revelations. The Quran is the main source of faith in which Muhammed´s teachings and practices called **sunnah,** are equally important.

Muhammad was born in Mecca; he was a politician. After the first revelations he began to spread his thoughts and teaching publicly. However, he didn't find a positive response due to polytheistic religion of the Arabs. In 622 the situation escalated and Muhammad had to leave Mecca, which is considered an important milestone that marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar – **Hijra**. He left for Medina where he had much better conditions for teaching and spreading the new monotheistic religion. In 630 he returned to Mecca, the capital of Islam. After his death, disagreement broke out over who his successor would be. Due to the disagreement the Muslims began to divide into two groups the **Sunnis** and the **Shia**.

The main symbols of Islam are the crescent and star.

**It is the duty of every Muslim to abide the 5 Pillars of Islam**:

1. Shahada - the assertion of faith, one God, one Prophet
2. Salah – prayers performed five times a day
3. Zakat - alms giving or charity
4. Sawm - fasting during the month of Ramadan, from dawn to sunset each day
5. Hajj – pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during one´s life

**Comparison**

 Both Christianity and Islam have common origin, the prophets of both religions are the descendants of Abraham. They are monotheistic, although enforcement of Christianity was easier because Jewish religion is also monotheistic. However, Arabs were polytheistic. They believe in God, but Christianity confesses the Trinity and the divinity of Christ whereas Islam only Allah. They see spiritual purification in their prayers. Both recognize the lent, although it is much stricter in Islam (Ramadan) then in Christianity. They believe in Resurrection, the Judgement Day or the Last Judgement, they refuse the reincarnation. Killing somebody is considered a great sin in both religions, however the Christians lead the crusades and the Muslims the Holy War – jihad. Infidelity is also considered a sin; in Islam a man can have up to 4 women if he can support them financially. Christianity rejects polygamy. They both recognize the intimate relationship only between husband and wife.

 **There are many differences between the Christianity and Islam:**

**Christianity:** - Jesus – the Son of God, Messiah, performed miracles, was crucified

* God is merciful, isn't pleased when people suffer
* Faith in the Holy Trinity and the Son of God
* Spiritual hierarchy and political representation - Vatican
* Forgiveness of sins through confession
* Monogamy
* Pilgrimages aren´t obligatory
* Bible - comprehensible, more authors

**Islam:** - Mohamed - politician, prophet, died a natural death

* Faith in Allah only – the one and only incomparable God
* Choice of people who preach and lead the prayers
* Forgiveness of sins only through an exemplary moral life
* Possible polygamy
* Obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during one's life
* Quran – more difficult to comprehend, one author