

BASE CAMP

**A LIFE NIGHT
ON ORGANIZED RELIGION**

QUICK GLANCE

ABOUT THIS LIFE NIGHT

Our culture has a curious relationship with religion. It's deep in the DNA of our country and an important part of the lives of countless individuals. At the same time, it's viewed by many as the root of some of the worst evils, another human institution full of corruption and hypocrisy, or simply an obstacle to an authentic relationship with God. The truth is that religion is absolutely essential to our identity as human beings. In this Life Night, we'll redeem the negative connotation sometimes associated with the word "religion" and help teens embrace it as a natural and beneficial aspect of their lives.

MAIN POINTS

1. Engaging in religious practices in a community has been an important part of human life across cultures and throughout history.
2. Although our faith is personal, it is not completely private. We bear witness to our faith through our public worship and commitment to religious practices.
3. Being part of a religious community enables us to benefit from the encouragement, support, teaching, and example of others. Our shared religious practices also strengthen our ties with God.

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 18:20 | Acts 2:42, 46-47 | Hebrews 10:23-25

CATECHISM

44 | 760 | 875 | 1140 | 2095 | 2105 | 2467

KEY TERMS

Community | Faith | Religion

SAINTS

Pope St. John Paul II | St. Ignatius of Loyola

RESOURCES

Articles

Mark Stibich, PhD, “Why Is Religion Important?” (verywellmind.com)

Jon Sorensen, “Responding to ‘Spiritual but Not Religious’ Christians” (catholic.com)

Handout

“Reflection on Religion”

Music

Spotify: “LS - To the Heights”

GOAL

The goal of this Life Night is to break the negative connotation sometimes associated with the word “religion” and help teens embrace religion as a natural and beneficial aspect of their lives.

ENVIRONMENT

This Life Night continues to build on the “To the Heights” environment. See the Getting Ready section for more details.

GATHER

Set Up Camp

Small groups work together to create a miniature campsite out of various materials. This activity gives group members a chance to work together and express their creativity while tying into the theme for the Life Night.

PROCLAIM

Talk: Base Camp

This talk begins by acknowledging that religion is a fundamental part of human life. It reminds teens that faith is personal but not private and is strengthened and purified through religious practices. After addressing the benefits of religion for us, it closes by encouraging teens to embrace religion as a way to honor God and see the Catholic Church as the one true religion established by Jesus.

BREAK

Reflection on Religion and Small Group Discussion

Teens take a moment to reflect on their perception of and experiences with religion. These reflection questions are the basis for the content discussed in small groups, enabling teens to process their thoughts in a community of their peers.

SEND

Our Father Reflection

The large group gathers to pray and reflect on the words of the Our Father. Acknowledging the words and praying together as one body helps teens be aware of their connections to one another and the ways their prayer, example, and faith support each member of the family of God.

NOTES

GETTING READY

LIFE NIGHT DATE: _____

FOUR WEEKS BEFORE

- Read through the entire Life Night.
- Pray with the Scripture and Catechism references.
- Consult the Resources suggestions.
- Select a presenter for the Proclaim and contact them this week.
- Send the Proclaim Teaching Guide to the presenter.

TWO WEEKS BEFORE

- Assign core members to the tasks on the Core Meeting Worksheet.
- Check in with the Proclaim presenter and ask for an outline and slides, if applicable.
- Schedule practice time with the presenter if needed.

ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Distribute the Life Night outline to the core members.
- Pray with the core members over the Life Night.
- Review the highlights of the Life Night.
- Explain the core assignments.
- Encourage the core members to review the discussion questions and pray for their small groups.

THE WEEK OF THE LIFE NIGHT

- Advertise the Life Night on the parish youth group's social media channels.
- Schedule the Parent Letter email as a follow-up to the Life Night.
- Make a plan for the Life Night Environment using the suggestions below.
- Gather the supplies needed for the Life Night.
- Inform core members of their roles during the session and provide them with the required materials and instructions.
- Download, print, and make copies of the "Reflection on Religion" handout found online at lifeteen.com.
- Pray for the teens who will be present and experience the Life Night.

THE DAY OF THE LIFE NIGHT

- Test all audio-video elements of the Life Night.
- Decorate the youth room using the Environment instructions below.
- Project an Environment image found online at lifeteen.com.
- Play the "LS - To the Heights" Spotify playlist as teens gather.

ENVIRONMENT

Reference the previous Life Night environments in this Life Night Planning Guide to ensure you have all the necessary pieces for the “To the Heights” campsite environment:

Display the mountain backdrop, fake trees, and fire pit. Set up a large tent with sleeping bags inside. Lay out roasting sticks and campfire supplies. Place camping chairs around the “fire.” Turn on the twinkling string lights above the campsite.

In addition, for this Life Night:

Place a small camping table near the tent. Lay out a topographic map on top of the table alongside a radio and some walkie-talkies. Add a lantern and headlamp somewhere in the campsite.

SUPPLIES

	Pretzel sticks
	Marshmallows
	“Reflection on Religion” handout, one per person
	Writing utensil, one per person
	Slides for the “Our Father”

LIFE NIGHT PLANNER

SCHEDULE

TO-DO

ROOM LAYOUT

CORE MEETING WORKSHEET

Use this outline for your core team meeting before the Youth Mass. The core meeting follows the Gather-Proclaim-Break-Send structure.

CORE MEETING START TIME: _____

GATHER

- Begin with a brief social time and rapid high points/low points of the week from each core member.
- Pray with your core team and include one of the Scripture passages from the Life Night.

Scripture choice: _____

PROCLAIM

- Review the Life Night outline.
- Assign core members to the tasks for this Life Night and write their names in the Core Assignments chart on the next page.

BREAK

- Review the Life Night small group questions with a core member discussion. Spend about 15 minutes on this section.
- Take questions.

SEND

- Conclude the meeting with a Hail Mary.
- Set up final details for the Life Night.
- Arrive early to the Youth Mass to greet teens as they arrive.

CORE ASSIGNMENTS

Setup	1.	2.	3.
	4.	5.	6.
Check-In	1.	2.	3.
Audio-Video			
Opening Prayer			
Set Up Camp Judges	1.	2.	3.
Proclaim Presenter			
Closing Prayer			

NOTES

GATHER

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER 5 min

Gather in the main meeting space and welcome the teens to the Life Night. Introduce any teens attending for the first time, and begin in prayer.

SET UP CAMP 15 min

Divide the teens into small groups. Give each group a package of marshmallows and a bag of pretzel sticks. Explain that groups will have a set amount of time to create a miniature campsite using the provided materials. Each group chooses an environment for their campsite, such as woods, mountains, desert, beach, etc. The campsite must include at least the following items:

- Tent or other shelter
- Campfire
- Camping chair
- Surrounding environment (trees, wildlife, water, rocks, etc.)

Encourage teens to be as creative and intricate in their designs as possible. Select a panel of core members to serve as judges and determine the winning team.

SUGGESTION

The pretzel sticks and marshmallows are suggestions for building materials. You can substitute or add any common materials you have in abundance around the parish. The more materials the teens have to work with, the more interesting and creative the campsites can be.

PROCLAIM

GETTING STARTED

This Teaching Guide is not just an outline; it's a tool to help you craft a powerful and personalized talk that will leave a lasting impact. Whether you use any suggested media or find your own, make sure it's visually engaging, attention-grabbing, and thought-provoking. Consult the Going Deeper section at the back of this resource and highlight the points that most resonate with your teens. Whenever presenting in front of a group, use a Bible or Catechism to read any passage rather than a digital copy or paper printout.

Beyond these guidelines, the most important thing is to be yourself and let the Holy Spirit guide you. Practice your talk, pour your heart into it, and trust that your authenticity and humility have the power to make a difference in the lives of these teens. If possible, record yourself giving the Proclaim and make notes on what you can improve or avoid. This guide is just the beginning — the rest is up to you!

MAIN POINTS

1. Engaging in religious practices in a community has been an important part of human life across cultures and throughout history.
2. Although our faith is personal, it is not completely private. We bear witness to our faith through our public worship and commitment to religious practices.
3. Being part of a religious community enables us to benefit from the encouragement, support, teaching, and example of others. Our shared religious practices also strengthen our ties with God.

KEY TERMS

Community - A group of people who share attitudes, interests, and goals and feel a sense of fellowship with one another. Christian community is found within the context of the Church. (**CCC 771, 805**)

Faith - Both a gift from God and a human act by which the believer gives personal adherence to God, who invites his response, and freely assents to the whole truth that God has revealed. (**CCC 26, 142-143, 150**)

Religion - A set of beliefs and practices followed by those committed to the service and worship of God. The first commandment requires us to believe in God, to worship and serve him, as the first duty of the virtue of religion. (**CCC 2084, 2135**)

Main Point 1:

Engaging in religious practices in a community has been an important part of human life across cultures and throughout history.

Begin by asking the teens to name as many religions as they can think of. See how many distinct religions the group can collectively identify.

- There are many different religions in the world. Though they differ in their beliefs and practices, they all testify to humanity's innate sense of the supernatural and the need to respond to it.
- Religion is considered universal. It has been present in some way in every culture across time. It doesn't matter what continent, time period, or culture you look at, religion is present in some capacity.
- We shouldn't pass over this point too quickly. Some people claim that religion is a completely man-made construct invented to control people's behavior or that it is a sort of self-delusion that helps us understand the world. However, the fact that it is present everywhere humans are present suggests that it is an essential part of who we are. (**CCC 28**)
- This fact alone doesn't necessarily mean that any one religion is true, but it does point to an important reality about human beings: we are religious creatures. The Catechism states it like this:

CATECHISM

Project and read the following from **CCC 44**:

“Man is by nature and vocation a religious being. Coming from God, going toward God, man lives a fully human life only if he freely lives by his bond with God.”

- There is something in our nature that leads us to believe in the supernatural. We have an innate sense of spiritual realities, a need to worship, and a desire for public demonstrations of our shared beliefs.
- Religion is a uniquely human phenomenon. No other creature on earth exhibits religious behavior.

They don't ask questions about the origins of the universe, the purpose of life, or their place in the cosmos. The capacity to ask these religious questions is part of what makes us human.

- Today, religion often has a negative connotation. Some people associate the word with oppression, abuse, ignorance, misogyny, and other disagreeable things, and often with good reason. However, while it is true that religion has the ability to be abused, that does not mean that religion is inherently wrong or bad. (**Going Deeper #1: “The Evils of Religion”**)
- You will find corruption in every human institution, whether it's politics, school, religion, or anything else. The problem is not the institution; the problem is us. We are sinners, and any *human* institution will be affected by the reality that *humans* are sinners and have the capacity for evil. We shouldn't abandon religion because of the potential for it to be used for evil. If anything, we should embrace it, knowing that something is wrong with *us* and religion offers a remedy.
- Religion has played a fundamental role in human life for thousands of years. It provides much-needed structure and meaning to our lives. From ancient civilizations to the modern day, this relationship with the supernatural has shaped who we are and what we do.
- As Catholics, we believe that this universal desire for religion points to the reality that we come from God. As his creatures, we intuit a need to live in relationship with him. We respond to this religious impulse by seeking God and publicly living out our relationship with him.

Main Point 2:

**Although our faith is personal, it is not completely private.
We bear witness to our faith through our public worship and
commitment to religious practices.**

Ask the teens who among them has been to a professional sports game or concert. Allow one or two of the teens to share where they went and what the experience was like.

- Think for a moment about the phenomena of sports games, concerts, and other similar gatherings. You can sit at home by yourself and watch any game or listen to music without anyone else around. What's the allure of attending these events?
- We are social creatures. Our experiences are enhanced when done with others who share a similar appreciation for what we care about. Being at a concert with a thousand other fans who know all the words and love the music is way different than listening to a song alone. Cheering for your team in a packed stadium of 90,000 people has a different feel and effect than watching the game in your home by yourself. Being part of a greater whole with shared values and shared intentions elevates our experience and satisfies a social need.

- The same is true for our relationship with God. One of the benefits of religion is that it provides a shared space for us to express our love and devotion to God. We gather in a community and collectively learn about and worship God together.
- Our faith is not meant to be just a private affair. Our relationship with God has both a private and public dimension. Being part of a religion bridges the gap between what we claim in private and what we live in public.
- When we gather together on Sunday, we give a common witness to the Catholic faith. We worship God as a community. Our presence at Mass is a message to the world that God is real, and we want to honor him with our lives.
- As disciples of Jesus, each of us has a duty to make the faith visible in the world. The way we live bears witness to the truth of the gospel and the presence of God. One of the ways we do this is through our commitment to religious practices. When we make the Sign of the Cross before blessing our food, attend Mass weekly, or hold our rosary as we quietly pray, we are bearing witness to our relationship with God and its importance in our lives. These simple acts are ways of evangelizing. (**CCC 2467**)
- We also ought to work so that the principles of our faith become manifest in the world around us. When you stand up for a classmate who is being bullied, refuse to participate in an immoral activity your friends are doing, or speak out against evils like abortion, you are letting your private beliefs have a public effect. (**CCC 2105**)

Main Point 3:

Being part of a religious community enables us to benefit from the encouragement, support, teaching, and example of others. Our shared religious practices strengthen our ties with God.

- The benefits of religious practice extend beyond merely the need to gather together with shared goals and behaviors.
- Religion brings with it a sense of accountability. When I publicly and consistently attend a certain religious service, it implies that, in some sense, I adhere to the beliefs of that religion. This creates a sense of accountability to act in accordance with the tenets of that religion. I can lean on others to help me live out what we are all publicly professing.
- Beyond that, being in union with other believers of the same religion helps strengthen my own belief. I benefit from the support and example of others. This is why community is so important.
- If you've ever been part of a sports team, band, dance group, or other community working toward a common goal, you've probably experienced the motivating power of a community. When you're exhausted from practicing and don't want to keep going, knowing that others are working toward the

same goals and putting in effort can give you new energy. You aren't just working for yourself. You're part of a greater whole, and the example of others who are putting in the effort helps you to do the same.

- This is also the case in our spiritual lives. When life gets busy, you encounter suffering and trials, or you are faced with doubts about your faith, it helps to have a community to fall back on. When you belong to a group, their witness, prayers, wisdom, and encouragement can help you weather the trials and difficulties of life and remain faithful even when it's hard.
- It's not uncommon to hear people say they are "spiritual but not religious." In other words, they believe in the supernatural and may even have some sort of personal relationship with the divine, but they don't adhere to any one religion.
- As harsh as it sounds, this phrase conceals the truth that your religion is actually just focused on yourself. Rather than commit to one religion, this mindset takes what the person likes from each religion to form something that works best for them. It is tailored to suit their preferences and desires rather than aimed at the truth God has revealed about himself through the Church.
- On the other hand, religion keeps us from following a self-fashioned relationship with God. When it's just us and God, God starts to reflect more of what we want him to be than what he actually is. Religion helps us adhere to beliefs and standards that we don't create. It breaks us out of our own individualistic view of the world, helps us see the greater whole, and causes us to place our trust in an authority greater than ourselves.
- This is a great benefit of our shared faith community. We learn from the experiences of people who have gone before and thought through the tough questions. We access the truth about who God is and who we are, and we are guarded by the wisdom of others when our own thinking is misguided.
(CCC 875)
- Religion does not remove the personal aspect of faith. We are each called to have a personal relationship with God. He works and moves in our lives in a unique way. We engage in different kinds of prayer, follow different paths in life, serve in different capacities, but we all share the same home.
- When you're out hiking for a few days, it's common to have a base camp. It's the place from which all the other activities originate. You can go out on the trails, knowing you have a safe place to return, be refilled, and connect with others.
- The Church is our base camp. It's the place we all congregate. It's where we're restocked, fed, and prepared for the many different missions we're sent on in life. It's where our personal faith flourishes in community. Without the base camp, it's easy to feel alone and lost in the woods.
- More than that, religion exists because it's God's idea and desire for us. From the dawn of human history, God has been calling people together in community to worship him. Throughout the Old Testament, he continued to work with and expand his chosen people through individuals like Abraham, Moses, and David. He invites us to worship him through the Church in communion with others.

(Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 19:3-6, 2 Samuel 7:8-16)

- The virtue of religion is part of the cardinal virtue of justice, which seeks to give everyone what is due to them. God created us and continues to sustain the entire world. He is the source of everything good and all the blessings in our lives. For this reason, it is right and just that we show him honor and devotion both privately and publicly. The virtue of religion disposes us to do this. (**CCC 2095**)
- Religion reminds us that we are part of something greater than ourselves. When we look at the world, we intuit that we are not the beginning and end of the universe. Something greater exists. Religion is how we give expression to this conviction.
- Throughout history, God has been at work in the world. The human race has given expression to its inner quest for God through the various religions. Even with all of their faults, these religions testify to our need for God and our connection to the supernatural.

(Going Deeper #2: “Saint Paul at the Areopagus”)

- As Catholics, we believe that there is ultimately one true religion. The God whom all religions are seeking came to the world as a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. The Church he established is the one true religion. (**Going Deeper #3: “What About Other Religions?”**)
- The Catholic Church is the guardian of the truth about God made known to humanity by Jesus Christ. It clarifies and corrects the truths that humanity as a whole expresses through religious practices.
- Through the Church, we come to know the truth about God and ourselves. Being united to the Church founded and sustained by Jesus enables us to live as members of his body, receive his grace, contribute to his mission, and worship God as members of his family.

BREAK

REFLECTION ON RELIGION 5 min

Give each teen the “Reflection on Religion” handout and a writing utensil. Invite them to take five minutes to review the questions and write some of their thoughts. This activity gives teens time to process the material for the small group discussion and will help facilitate conversation. After five minutes, send the teens into small groups to discuss the questions on the handout.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION 20 min

The core member begins in prayer and initiates a small group discussion. Use the following questions from the “Reflection on Religion” handout as a guide, but be aware of where the Holy Spirit leads the discussion. Take your time and don’t feel rushed to cover all the questions.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What do you think of when you hear the word “religion”?
2. Why do you think some people embrace religion and others do not?
3. What religious experiences have you had, or what religious events have you attended?
4. Is religion important to you? Is it important to your family? Why or why not?
5. Do you see any benefits to religion? If so, what are some of them?

SEND

OUR FATHER REFLECTION 10 min

Gather everyone back in the main meeting space. Introduce the prayer experience with the following or similar words.

One benefit of religion is a shared tradition of religious practices. Prayers, rites, and devotions are passed from one generation to the next and preserved throughout the centuries. For Christians, one of these treasured traditions is the “Our Father” prayer. Jesus himself taught this prayer to his disciples as an example of how to pray, and it has become one of the most well-known prayers in history.

In this prayer, Jesus shows his disciples the importance of recognizing their connection to one another. He didn’t teach them — and by extension us — to say “my Father,” but “our Father.” Our relationship with God isn’t just personal; it’s lived in the context of the Church. In God, we are all united. Together as the Church, we make up God’s family, and we are encouraged to be mindful of one another in our lives and in the way we pray.

As we take some time to meditate on this prayer together, pay attention to the words. Acknowledge that you are not one person praying this alone, but part of a greater whole gathered together in God’s presence. We are focused not just on ourselves, but on the community. As we pray together as one body, think about how we are connected to each other and how our prayers, example, and faith support each member of the family of God.

Pray the “Our Father” together, pausing after each line for a short time of meditation. Project the words so the teens can follow along if needed. The teens will likely try to pray at the pace used at Mass, so encourage them to slow down and follow the leader’s pace for this activity.

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.

Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS 5 min

Make announcements for your program, then dismiss the teens.

AFTER THE LIFE NIGHT

Most core members are tired at the end of the session, but be sure to do two things upon the completion of a Life Night.

FIRST, CLEANUP

Try to foster a spirit of teamwork and generosity among your core team. One of the fastest ways to a divided core team is for one or two members to neglect cleanup. No one is done for the night until everyone is done cleaning up. If a core member is not helping clean up, presume goodwill on their part. If it becomes a consistent problem, address it with them rather than letting issues fester.

Be mindful of any relational ministry that may be happening or teens that need to talk. Sometimes, teens can be deeply moved by a Life Night and may need to continue to process with a trusted adult. During cleanup, your team should continue to be available and interruptible for any teens. You never want to shove teens out the door for the sake of cleaning up.

SECOND, EVALUATE

After all the teens have left, appreciate what God has accomplished through the Life Night. Share any praise reports. Identify who or what needs follow-up. Set a timer and invite the group to share in these five categories of the Life Night: Pros, Cons, Questions, Comments, and Concerns. Remind the core team that evaluations are intended to improve the teens' experiences at Life Teen and are not critical judgments of a youth minister's or core member's performance. As you discuss, encourage the core team to consider each of the Life Night movements of Gather, Proclaim, Break, and Send, or pass out/ email the evaluation forms. Conclude your time together in prayer and praise to God.

LIFE NIGHT EVALUATION

On a scale of 1-10, how well did this Life Night accomplish the goal we set?

GOAL

The goal of this Life Night is to break the negative connotation sometimes associated with the word “religion” and help teens embrace religion as a natural and beneficial aspect of their lives.

Did not accomplish

Nailed it

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What was the strongest aspect of this Life Night?

Gather

Proclaim

Break

Send

Environment

Optional: Please explain further.

What kind of follow-up do we need to do after this Life Night?

What can we improve for future Life Nights? How can we accomplish this?

GOING DEEPER

BASE CAMP

A Life Night on Organized Religion

#1: The Evils of Religion

Religion has been at the root of many evils throughout history. People have used their religious beliefs as justification for immoral actions. Evils committed in the name of religion or by religious people are particularly abhorrent precisely because most religions, like Christianity, are supposed to help fix what is wrong about human beings. The message and the actions contradict one another, with the actions typically far outweighing the value of the message. For example, we preach about a loving God who died for us, yet we are willing to go to war with others for religious reasons. We exhort others to care for the needy, yet religious leaders abuse children and others who are vulnerable. Faced with these evils, it is understandable why some people have a harsh view of religion.

As Catholics, we have to acknowledge the evils committed in the name of religion. At the same time, we also need to own the good done in the name of religion. It is typically less noteworthy and gets little attention, but the sacrifices offered by countless faithful who try to love their neighbors are a powerful testimony of the best parts of religion. Our Church is the most charitable organization in the world. The number of hospitals, schools, homeless shelters, pregnancy centers, soup kitchens, and other charitable activities organized by the Catholic Church is astounding.

We should also look to the saints. While religious evils testify to some of the worst parts of human nature, the saints give witness to who we can be when we live from a place of communion and trust in God. Their charity, wisdom, selflessness, holiness, and impact are proofs of the good fruits of religion.

#2: Saint Paul at the Areopagus

Summarize the account of St. Paul at the Areopagus from **Acts 17:22-31**.

So Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for

'In him we live and move and have our being';

as even some of your poets have said,

'For we are indeed his offspring.'

Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead.'

Saint Paul offers us an effective example of how to address people of other faith backgrounds. He acknowledges that God has been working in the lives of the Athenians. He affirms their religious beliefs, noting that they intuit something true about the universe even if they don't fully understand it. He then goes on to say that what they search for has been fully revealed in Jesus. He does not denigrate their religion; rather, he points to the greater reality for which they are searching. In the same way, in conversations with people from other religions, we should try to acknowledge the truth and authentic good they have found while simultaneously pointing to the fullness of truth revealed by Jesus. (**CCC 843**)

#3: What About Other Religions?

As Catholics, we believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven. There is no salvation outside of his name. If Jesus didn't come in the flesh, die for our sins, resurrect from the dead, and ascend into heaven, then there would be no hope for our own salvation, resurrection, and entrance into heaven. We can think of Jesus as a bridge that connects us to God. Apart from him, we have no access. This is why the Church proclaims that there is no salvation outside of Jesus.

At the same time, the Church holds that anyone who honestly seeks God in the circumstances of their lives and, through no fault or negligence of their own, does not know Jesus or his Church, is still capable of being saved. Even so, this only happens through the merits won for them by Christ, though they may not explicitly call upon his name.

The Church also teaches that there are aspects of truth and goodness in other religions. For this reason, we should respect and uphold those elements of truth found in other religions and see them as preparations for receiving the gospel.

However, that aspects of truth and goodness can be found in other religions is not an excuse not to share the gospel. Rather, it should spur us on to greater evangelization. By God's grace, we know Jesus Christ, who is the source of salvation and life for every human person. We should proclaim him boldly to the world as the answer to all of humanity's questions and the only source of ultimate fulfillment. (**CCC 816, 843, 846-848, 2104**)