

6. How do Christians worship?

Crucifix, p. 119

The Torslunde image was painted in 1561 for a Danish church's altar, but now is displayed in the National Museum of Denmark. One minister is baptizing an infant, one is preaching, and two are communing worshipers. The clergy are wearing different garb, thus suggesting the freedom the Danish church gave to vestments after the Reformation.

Quotes and Images

p. 120: Catherine Bell exemplified the postmodern approach to ritual studies, in stressing the diversity of meaning of even authorized religious ritual. Bell asserted that all ritual demonstrates power relationships, and in Christian ritual, the greatest power in the ritual is afforded to God.

p. 121: Rev. E. D. Neill (1823–1893) reported in the nineteenth century that the rector of the Philadelphia Anglican/Episcopal church tried unsuccessfully to pressure George Washington to commune. Many Deists attended worship to hear the sermon, but did not commune.

p. 122: Peter W. Marty is a Lutheran pastor and journalist.

p. 122: Anne Lamott (b. 1954) is a political activist and author of nonfiction and fiction whose colloquial and comic tone makes her treatments of her Christian faith unconventional.

p. 125: Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a parish of the Premonstratensian order, has a central altar, an immersion font, minimal art, and an entrance walkway lined with small statues of the saints.

p. 126: For Watterson, see comment on p. 39. The idea of worship, of course, is to achieve a higher consciousness.

p. 128: Communion in this church is typical of some churches: the worshipers kneel before the altar to commune. Other common methods include standing around the altar, lining up in a cue, or receiving the bread and wine in the pew.

p. 129: Justin, martyred in 165, was a layman who wrote to the Roman Emperor this the earliest extant description of Christian Sunday worship. It has been much quoted in the last century by liturgical reformers. Students can be asked to see the similarity between what Justin describes and what many churches practice today.

p. 130: One of the best known of all Christian songs, “Amazing Grace” was written by John Newton (1725–1807), first a master of a slave-trading ship, and later an Anglican priest who worked among the poor. He joined with William Wilberforce to abolish Britain’s slave trade: note the film suggestion for chapter 9.

p. 131: Some churches continue to perform baptisms in running water. Some clergy liken their chosen river to the Jordan River, in which Jesus was baptized.

p. 132: Nora Gallagher is an American Episcopalian who writes in memorable prose about her religious faith.

p. 133: This calendar of festivals and seasons is common in Western churches, and some denominations that previously did not keep such a calendar recently introduced some of it.

p. 134: Some localities with a majority Hispanic population continue the Holy Week processions called *Semana Santa*. Organizations of men or women, wearing robes, carry on their shoulders on the city streets, which are sometimes carpeted with flower designs, immense platforms on which are life-sized scenes from the passion of Christ. At least in some countries, the processions are so religiously significant that the Easter services diminish in importance.

p. 138: Musicians are aware of the genre of the concert mass, which generally follows the five musical pieces of a medieval Roman Catholic mass.

Suggestions, p. 139

2. The best study of the snake-handlers is Dennis Covington’s *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995).

6. Paul tells the Christian worshipers in Corinth that their fellowship at the meal must always be in remembrance of the death of Christ and must avoid society’s distinctions between rich and poor.

7. The Armenian-American author and army veteran William Saroyan (1908–1981) published “Resurrection of a Life” in 1935. In the story, the protagonist recalls the poverty of his childhood and his selling newspapers in 1917 that celebrated the slaughter of 10,000 “Huns,” that is Germans, in World War I. As he nears his own death, he recalls Bible readings from Sunday worship and the lines from thirty-three

hymns that he would have sung in church, albeit without faith. Discussion of the story can focus on the meaning of Saroyan's title and the role that the rituals of worship can play, even for those who doubt.

8. The novel *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* (1967, 1973), written by Margaret Craven (1902–1980), narrates a year in the lives of Kwakiutl villagers on the western coast of Canada. The First Nations people faithfully attend all the worship conducted by the Anglican priest, while also continuing their traditional storytelling and communal rituals. The priest is beloved by the villages in part because he does not object to this dual ritual practice.

9. The 1989 film *Romero* is, as movies go, an accurate depiction of the ministry and eventual assassination of Oscar Romero (1917–1980) as Roman Catholic archbishop of San Salvador during the harshest period of the country's political oppression. Named as archbishop because he appeared to be a mild man who would rock no boats, he became a determined advocate of liberation theology and spoke publicly and often for the rights of the poor and the end of violence. Discussion of the film can attend to the film's depictions of worship, as well as to the scene when the soldiers shoot up the tabernacle.