

Preparation for the Gospel

Name: _____

An all-too-common claim that regularly surfaces today is that because there are so many different religions in the world, certainly none of them could be the sole true religion. That kind of relativism, or indifferentism, says that each religion is as valid as another. The Catholic Church, however, professes a firm belief that she alone possesses “the fullness of the means of salvation”¹ (CCC 816) and “the fullness of grace and truth” (CCC 819).

How, then, are Catholics to see non-Christian religions? Are all religions aside from Christianity completely false? Consider the following paragraphs from the *Catechism* and answer the questions that follow.



Catechism of the Catholic Church, 843

“The Catholic Church recognizes in other religions that search, among shadows and images, for the God who is unknown yet near since he gives life and breath and all things and wants all men to be saved. Thus, the Church considers all goodness and truth found in these religions as ‘a preparation for the Gospel and given by him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life.’”²

The Catholic Church acknowledges elements of truth that can be found in other religions. **What are some elements of truth that other religions share with Catholicism that you can think of?**

The Catholic Church sees in these shared elements of truth “a preparation for the Gospel.” **Consider one of the elements you just named. How can that truth help prepare people to receive the Good News of Jesus?**

¹ *Unitatis Redintegratio* 3 § 5.

² *Lumen Gentium* 16; cf. NA 2; *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 53.



Catechism of the Catholic Church, 845

“To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity together into his Son’s Church. The Church is the place where humanity must rediscover its unity and salvation. The Church is ‘the world reconciled.’ She is that bark which ‘in the full sail of the Lord’s cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world.’ According to another image dear to the Church Fathers, she is prefigured by Noah’s ark, which alone saves from the flood.”³

The Church Fathers compared the Church to a ark, or ship, that keeps us safe in the world. How can we encourage others to “come aboard”?

³ St. Augustine, *Serm.* 96, 7, 9: PL 38, 588; St. Ambrose, *De virg.* 18, 118: PL 16, 297B; cf. 1 Pet 3:20–21.

Beauty Will Save the World

Name: _____

In his *Letter to Artists*, Pope Saint John Paul II emphasized the great need for beauty, especially the beauty that comes from art:

My hope for all of you who are artists is that you will have an especially intense experience of creative inspiration. May the beauty which you pass on to generations still to come be such that it will stir them to wonder! Faced with the sacredness of life and of the human person, and before the marvels of the universe, wonder is the only appropriate attitude.

From this wonder there can come that enthusiasm. . . . People of today and tomorrow need this enthusiasm if they are to meet and master the crucial challenges which stand before us. Thanks to this enthusiasm, humanity, every time it loses its way, will be able to lift itself up and set out again on the right path. In this sense it has been said with profound insight that “beauty will save the world.”¹

Beauty is a key to the mystery and a call to transcendence. It is an invitation to savour life and to dream of the future. That is why the beauty of created things can never fully satisfy. It stirs that hidden nostalgia for God which a lover of beauty like Saint Augustine could express in incomparable terms: “Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you!”²

Artists of the world, may your many different paths all lead to that infinite Ocean of beauty where wonder becomes awe, exhilaration, unspeakable joy.³

What reaction do you notice within yourself when you encounter something beautiful, such as a great work of art, a sunset, or a beautiful piece of music?

What does that reaction tell you about the “hidden nostalgia for God” (“nostalgia” can also mean “longing”) that Pope Saint John Paul II spoke about?

¹ F. Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, Part III, chap. 5.
² *Confessions*, 10, 27: CCL 27, 251.
³ Pope Saint John Paul II, *Letter to Artists* (April 4, 1999), 16.

How can you add beauty to the world around you?
