

### Religious Experiences

- it is an encounter with the divine.
- the person who has a religious experience is called the '**experient**' (having experience)
- refers to a subjective (based on personal opinions) encounter or interaction with a divine or transcendent (beyond or above the range of normal) reality that is often described as a profound (intense) or transformative spiritual event.
- fundamental aspect of many religious traditions and is often seen as a means of accessing spiritual or divine truths.
- it plays a crucial role in shaping religious beliefs and practices, as well as the formation of personal and communal identities.
- can have a significant impact on individuals, leading to personal transformation, psychological benefits, and a sense of connection to something greater than oneself.
- they can also have broader social and cultural implications, shaping the beliefs, values, and behaviors of individuals and communities.
- can also be a source of conflict and division.

### Types of Religious Experiences

1. **Mystical experiences** (union with deity) (mahiwaga) refer to a feeling of unity or oneness with the divine or transcendent reality.
  - this type of religious experience is often characterized by a sense of awe, peace, and interconnectedness with all things.
  - can involve wider concepts such as nature or universal reality.
2. **Visionary experiences** involve receiving a message or vision from a divine or transcendent reality.
  - these experiences are often characterized by vivid and intense sensory experiences, such as seeing bright lights or hearing voices.
3. **Conversion experiences** involve a profound and transformative shift in religious beliefs or worldviews.
  - this type of religious experience can be sudden or gradual and often involves a deep sense of conviction and commitment to a particular religious tradition or set of beliefs.
4. **Near-death experiences** refer to a type of religious experience that occurs when an individual is on the brink of death or has a close brush with death.
  - this experience is often characterized by a sense of peace, love, and unity, as well as encounters with deceased loved ones or spiritual beings.

## Nature of Religious Experiences

- a. Are deeply personal, subjective events that individuals claim to have with a divine or spiritual entity.
  - often result in significant emotional or psychological changes.
- b. Scholars note two main forms of religious experiences.
  - mystical experiences often involve a sense of oneness with the divine,
  - numinous (strong religious quality) experiences invoke feelings of awe, fear, and fascination in response to the divine.
- c. Many people who undergo religious experiences report a deep sense of peace, joy, and unity.
  - Some even claim to have received special knowledge or insights during the experience.
- d. Verification is a key issue in religious experiences.
  - Critics argue that because these experiences are highly personal and subjective, they are difficult to verify objectively.
- e. The impact of religious experiences can be profound, often resulting in life-altering changes.
  - Some individuals may experience a shift in their beliefs, behaviors, and actions following their encounter.
- f. Conversion experiences are a specific type of religious experience where an individual's faith or belief system is radically changed.
  - This change can occur suddenly or over a long period and often results in dramatic lifestyle changes.

### 4 Essential Characteristics of a Mystical Experience, According to William James

1. **Ineffability** (the experience cannot be fully expressed) – incapable of being expressed or described in words
2. **Noetic quality** (the experience provides insights unachievable by human intellect)
3. **Transiency** (the experience is temporary) – the state or fact of lasting only for a short time.
4. **Passivity** (the individual experiences a loss of control during the experience).

### 3 Basic Elements of Religious Experiences

1. the personal concerns, attitudes, feelings, and ideas of the individual who has the experience.
2. the religious object disclosed in the experience or the reality to which it is said to refer
3. the social forms that arise from the fact that the experience in question can be shared.

## **Character for the Month of April**

### ***Forgiveness***

- the action or process of forgiving or being forgiven
- conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they deserve your forgiveness.

### ***Compassion***

- sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others
- compassion implies pity coupled with an urgent desire to aid or to spare

## **Gods**

### ***Yahweh***

- is the name for the God of the Israelites, representing the biblical pronunciation of “YHWH” the Hebrew name revealed to Moses in the book of Exodus.
- Hebrew doesn't have vowels in their words
- YHWH – some read it as "YeHoWaH" (or transliterated into "Jehovah": the Y makes a "J" sound, and the W makes a "V" sound). Others read it as "YaHWeH."
- in the third century B.C., the Hebrew Scriptures (what we know of as the Old Testament) were translated into Greek, translated YHWH as Kurios, which translated into English is "Lord."

### ***Jesus Christ***

- religious leader revered in Christianity, one of the world's major religions.
- Christ was not originally a name but a title derived from the Greek word christos, which translates the Hebrew term meshiah (Messiah), meaning “the anointed one.”
- the Central Figure in Christianity
- His life, message, and ministry are chronicled in the four Gospels of the New Testament.
- Also known as Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Anointed One, or the Messiah of Israel.
- He is Immanuel (of Emmanuel from the Greek), meaning “God with us.”
- He is the Son of God, the Son of Man, and the Savior of the World.
- Jesus was a first-century Jewish carpenter from Nazareth in Galilee. He became a master teacher who performed many miracles of healing and deliverance.
- He called 12 Jewish men to follow him, working closely with them to train and prepare them to carry on the ministry. According to the Bible, Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word of God, fully human and fully divine, Creator and Savior of the World, and the founder of Christianity.
- He died on the Roman cross to give his life as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world to accomplish human redemption.
- He resurrected three days after his death, appeared to his disciples, and then ascended into heaven.
- Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea and grew up in Nazareth in Galilee.

- His life and death provided the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. The Bible teaches that humankind was separated from God through Adam's sin but was reconciled back to God through Jesus Christ's sacrifice.

- In the future, Jesus Christ will return to earth to claim his Bride, the church. At his Second Coming, Christ will judge the world and establish his eternal kingdom, thus fulfilling messianic prophecy.

### ***Allah***

- According to the Islamic statement of witness, or shahada, “There is no god but Allah”.
- Allah is the standard Arabic word for God and is used by Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews as well as by Muslims.
- The association of the word specifically with Islam comes from the special status of Arabic as the language of Islam's holy scripture, the Qur'ān:
- Since the Qur'ān in its original language is considered to be the literal word of God, it is believed that God described himself in the Arabic language as Allāh.
- Muslims believe he created the world in six days and sent prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and lastly Muhammad, who called people to worship only him, rejecting idolatry and polytheism.
- The Qur'an refers to Allah as the Lord of the Worlds.
- Allah is also the Master of the Day of Judgment, when the good, especially believers, will be sent to their heavenly reward, and the wicked, especially unbelievers, will be dispatched to hellfire.
- Allah is not a trinity of three persons and has no son who was incarnate (made flesh) as a man.

### ***Buddha***

- is the individual whose teachings form the basis of the Buddhist tradition.
- the founder of Buddhism, one of the major religions, and he is one of the many epithets of a teacher who lived in northern India sometime between the 6th and the 4th century.
- The title Buddha was used by a number of religious groups in ancient India and had a range of meanings, but it came to be associated most strongly with the tradition of Buddhism and to mean an enlightened being, one who has awakened from the sleep of ignorance and achieved freedom from suffering.
- born the son of the king Shuddhodana of the Shakya clan, whose capital was Kapilavastu. Shortly thereafter, his mother, the Queen Maha Maya, dreamed that a white elephant had entered her womb.
- Ten lunar months later, as she strolled in the garden of Lumbini, the child emerged from under her right arm. He was able to walk and talk immediately.
- A lotus flower blossomed under his foot at each step, and he announced that this would be his last lifetime.
- The king summoned the court astrologers to predict the boy's future. Seven agreed that he would become either a universal monarch or a Buddha;

one astrologer said that there was no doubt, the child would become a Buddha.

- The prince enjoyed an opulent life; his father shielded him from exposure to the ills of the world, including old age, sickness, and death, and provided him with palaces for summer, winter, and the rainy season, as well as all manner of enjoyments.
- At age 16 he married the beautiful princess Yashodhara.
- When the prince was 29, however, his life underwent a profound change. He asked to be taken on a ride through the city in his chariot.
- The king gave his permission but first had all the sick and old people removed from the route. One old man escaped notice. Not knowing what stood before him, the prince was told that this was an old man.
- The first trip was followed by three more excursions beyond the palace walls. On these trips he saw first a sick person, then a corpse being carried to the cremation ground, and finally a mendicant seated in meditation beneath a tree.
- Having been exposed to the various ills of human life, and the existence of those who seek a state beyond them, he asked the king for permission to leave the city and retire to the forest.
- The father offered his son anything if he would stay. The prince asked that his father ensure that he would never die, become ill, grow old, or lose his fortune. His father replied that he could not. The prince retired to his chambers, where he was entertained by beautiful women. Unmoved by the women, the prince resolved to go forth that night in search of a state beyond birth and death.
- Before the prince left the palace, he went into his wife's chamber to look upon his sleeping wife and infant son.
- The prince left Kapilavastu and the royal life behind and entered the forest, where he cut off his hair and exchanged his royal robes for the simple dress of a hunter. From that point on he ate whatever was placed in his begging bowl.
- Over the next six years, the prince studied meditation and learned to achieve deep states of blissful concentration.
- The prince vowed that he would sit under a tree and not rise until he had found the state beyond birth and death.
- On the full moon of May, six years after he had left his palace, he meditated until dawn.
- Mara, the god of desire, who knew that the prince was seeking to put an end to desire and thereby free himself from Mara's control, attacked him with wind, rain, rocks, weapons, hot coals, burning ashes, sand, mud, and darkness.
- The prince remained unmoved and meditated on love, thus transforming the hail of fury into a shower of blossoms.
- Mara then sent his three beautiful daughters, Lust, Thirst, and Discontent, to tempt the prince, but he remained impassive.
- The prince sat in meditation through the night.
- Buddha, remained in the vicinity of the tree for up to seven weeks, savoring his enlightenment.

### ***Brahman and Brahma***

- Two characters in Hindu religion and philosophy.
- Brahma refers to the four-faced God described in the religious texts of Hinduism
- Brahman is the Supreme Entity described in the Upanishads.
- It is the Brahman that is said to manifest itself into this universe.
- Brahman projects this universe and withdraws it back unto it during the time of deluge.

### ***Brahma***

- the Hindu creator god.
- Brahma was born from a golden egg and created the earth and all things on it and he then created good & evil and light & dark from his person.
- He is assigned the duty of creating living beings.
- He is also called as the writer of destiny of people.
- Brahma is said to be the originator of the four Vedas.
- Saraswati is his consort or wife.
- Sage Narada is said to be his son. Narada is a staunch devotee of Vishnu.
- There is no temple built for the four-faced Brahma.
- is described in the mythological works as the God who is seated on the lotus. He is portrayed with a beard too.
- the Hindu creator god.
- Brahma was born from a golden egg and created the earth and all things on it and he then created good & evil and light & dark from his own person.
- is usually depicted as having four faces, symbolic of a wide-ranging four-square capacity
- He also created the four types: gods, demons, ancestors, and men.
- cannot be seen with the naked eye. It can only be experienced.
- is the supreme controller. It manifests and controls the world.

### **Filipino Religious Practices and Rituals (Christianity)**

#### ***Sto. Nino***

- A small statue of the child, Jesus, given by Magellan in 1521
- Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan presented this small sacred image, along with other religious gifts to the Cebu chieftain's principal wife, Hara Amihan, to celebrate their realm's conversion to Catholicism.
- The elaborately dressed, carved wooden figure, believed to be of Belgian origin, traveled with Magellan on his voyage of discovery and conquest from Spain to the Philippines, making this the oldest Catholic object in the islands.
- (CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art Digital Edition) After Magellan's death at the hands of angry locals in April 1521, the little image of Jesus disappeared until 1565, when it was rediscovered by returning Spaniards.
- When Miguel Lopez de Legazpi and his troops landed on the island of Sugbu (former name of Cebu) on 28 Apr 1565, they burned down the whole settlement they found there to drive all residents out

of the land. The statue of the Santo Niño was discovered among the ruins by Juan de Camus, one of Legazpi's sailors.

- The icon was wrapped in white cloth and kept inside a Spanish-crafted wooden box. The image's survival from destruction by fire and its discovery were considered miracles, and Legazpi decreed the propagation of the devotion to the Holy Child.
- The image was then entrusted to the Augustinian Missionaries and six years after, a church was built on the site where it was found. This church was named after the Holy Name of Jesus and is considered to be the first Christian church ever built on the Philippines (Florendo 2001, 27).
- Basilica Minore del Santo Nino is the first church ever established in the Philippines in 1525 after the second attempt by the Spaniards to "Christianize" the country.
- allegedly built on the spot where the image of the Santo Niño de Cebú was found during the expedition of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi.
- According to the account of Magellan's chronicler, Antonio de Pigafetta, a beautiful image of the Holy Child with other images was presented to Hara Amihan, the wife of Rajah Humabon of Cebu as she was baptized with the Christian name Juana.
- Juana was brought to tears as she beheld the image and thus asked that the image be left with her (Bautista 2001, 14-15). This account extended to tales of Juana leaping and dancing the sulog (the dance of the tides) along with her handmaidens as she took possession of the Santo Niño.
- Her reaction marked the warm reception and adoration the Filipinos have since accorded the Santo Niño. Juana's jubilant acceptance of the image of the Holy Child has since been regarded as having given birth to the Sinulog dance
- The Sinulog festival, a celebration that honors the feast of the Holy Child of Cebu annually every second Sunday following the feast of the Epiphany. The Sinulog dance and festivities are punctuated with shouts of "Viva! Pit Senyor!" as the Holy Child is referred to by devotees as "Senyor Sto. Niño" (Florendo 2001, 57-9, 109).

### ***Black Nazarene***

- The Black Nazarene refers to a life-sized, dark-colored statue of Jesus Christ that was brought to Manila, Philippines, from Mexico on May 31, 1606, by the first group of Augustinian Recollect friars sent by Spain.
- The image was charred black in a fire that broke out on the ship during its trip to Manila from Mexico. It also survived two great fires that destroyed the Quiapo Church in Manila in 1791 and 1929.
- And it withstood the great earthquakes of 1645 and 1863, as well as the destructive bombing of Manila in 1945 during WWII.
- Every January 9th, the streets of Manila burst into a frenzy of devotion as millions gather for one of the nation's most iconic religious events: The Traslacion or the Feast of the Black Nazarene.
- believed to possess miraculous powers to heal and answer prayers. The statue's distinctive dark

appearance, a result of centuries of candle soot exposure, adds to its mystique.

- The Feast of the Black Nazarene is a profound expression of faith and a testament to the enduring power of religion in Filipino society.
- The devotion to the Black Nazarene runs deep among Filipinos, representing hope, healing, and salvation. It is a tangible symbol of faith and a source of strength during hardships. This annual procession provides an opportunity for devotees to express gratitude for answered prayers and seek guidance from the divine.

### ***Mariology***

- Mariology is the theological study of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mariologists study the life of Mary in scripture and the development of doctrine pertaining to her life and mission. (Dr. Josephine Lombardi)
- The story of Christianity began some two thousand years ago when a young woman of Galilee, after having asked about the meaning and the method, said 'yes' to the message of the angel sent by God.
- Christianity is about Christ, and what is so specific about Jesus Christ is that he is both fully divine and fully human. Jesus is fully divine because he is the son of God.
- Therefore, if we want to understand who Jesus is, in himself and for us, we have to look back at his origins, we have to study God. Since the word for 'God' in Greek is Theos, we have to study theology.
- And Jesus is fully human because he is the son of Mary. The son of Man is the son of that human being who is Mary.
- Therefore, if we want to fully understand who Jesus is in himself and for us, we have to look back at his origins, and to study not only theology, but also Mariology.

## **Character for the Month of May**

### ***Responsibility***

- the opportunity or ability to act independently and make decisions without authorization
- good judgment and the ability to act correctly and make decisions on your own

### ***Enthusiasm***

- a feeling of energetic interest in a particular subject or activity and an eagerness to be involved in it
- great eagerness to do something or to be involved in something.

## **Filipino Religious Practices and Rituals**

### ***Chinese New Year***

- Annual 15-day festival in China and Chinese communities around the world that begins with the new moon that occurs sometime between January 21 and February 20 according to Western calendars. Festivities last until the following full moon.
- The holiday is sometimes called the Lunar New Year

- The origins of the Chinese New Year are steeped in legend. One legend is that thousands of years ago a monster named Nian (“Year”) would attack villagers at the beginning of each new year. The monster was afraid of loud noises, bright lights, and the color red, so those things were used to chase the beast away.
- Celebrations to usher out the old year and bring forth the luck and prosperity of the new one, therefore, often include firecrackers, fireworks, and red clothes and decorations. Young people are given money in colorful red envelopes. In addition, Chinese New Year is a time to feast and visit family members.

### ***Eid Al-Adha***

- (The Feast of Sacrifice) is a major holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide for three to four days.
- Most Muslims will attend the special prayers held at major mosques and Islamic centers in the United States and throughout the world.
- The Feast of Sacrifice originates from the historic event when Prophet Abraham was commanded by God in a dream vision to sacrifice his son, Ishmail. While he was in the act of sacrificing his son, God sent the Angel Gabriel with a huge ram.
- Gabriel informed Abraham that his dream vision was fulfilled and instructed him to sacrifice the ram as a ransom for his son.
- The story is mentioned in Chapter #37 of the Holy Qur'an.
- Eid al-Adha enjoys special significance because the Day of Sacrifice marks the climax of Hajj or Pilgrimage, the fifth pillar of Islam.

### ***Ramadan***

- in Islam, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar and the holy month of fasting. It begins and ends with the appearance of the crescent moon.
- Islamic tradition states that it was during Ramadan, on the “Night of Power”, that God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad the Qur’ān, Islam’s holy book, “as a guidance for the people.
- For Muslims, Ramadan is a period of introspection, communal prayer (ṣalāt) in the mosque, and reading of the Qur’ān. God forgives the past sins of those who observe the holy month with fasting, prayer, and faithful intention.

### ***Eid’l-Fitr***

- Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting
- The festivities start with special prayers at mosques and include other activities such as feasting, exchanging gifts, and visits to family and friends.
- On Eid al-Fitr, Muslims gather for open- air prayers at designated locations across the country. They also take part in special parades, festivals, and educational activities that are organized by local governments.

### ***Diwali – Hinduism***

- (or Dipawali) is India's biggest and most important holiday of the year.
- Festival of Lights

- This festival is as important to Hindus as the Christmas holiday is to Christians.
- The festival gets its name from the row (avali) of clay lamps (deepa) that Indians light outside their homes to symbolize the inner light that protects from spiritual darkness - meaning row of lights.
- The festival generally symbolizes the victory of light over darkness.

### ***Flores de Mayo***

- a daily offering of flowers to Mary, the mother of Jesus, is observed throughout the month of May.
- Typically, the celebration culminates with a Santacruzán, a grand finale that, as its Spanish name implies, ties in a very different theological theme—the discovery of the True Cross by Reyna (Queen) Elena
- That day is celebrated with Mass in the afternoon, followed by a ritual wherein a number of young women designated as Flores de Mayo “queens” look for a hidden Cross, with the finder being designated as Reyna Elena.

## **Prayers, Contemplation, and Religious Pilgrimages**

### ***Prayers***

- an act of communication by humans with the sacred or holy—God, the gods, the transcendent realm, or supernatural powers.
- Found in all religions in all times, prayer may be a corporate or personal
- Prayer is a significant and universal aspect of religion, whether of primitive peoples or of modern mystics, that expresses the broad range of religious feelings and attitudes that command human relations with the sacred or holy.

### ***Contemplation***

- serious and quiet thought for a period of time
- is the practice of being fully present—in heart, mind, and body—to what is in a way that allows you to creatively respond and work toward what could be.
- For many, contemplation is prayer or meditation, a daily practice of deep listening to better connect with ourselves and divine love.

### ***Religious Pilgrimages***

- a journey undertaken for a religious motive
- Pilgrimages are clearly associated with the extraordinary
- Sites of pilgrimage can therefore be seen as places where something extraordinary has happened or (since legends and tales of the miraculous so often are present in the frameworks of pilgrimage) places at which something extraordinary is said to have happened.