First Days:  Seasonal Religious Diversity Celebrations

Summer Stories
Exploring the tradition of stories in various world religions and in our daily lives.
Presentations: June 21-22, 2011
First Day of Summer: June 21, 2011
Religion

Religion can be explained as a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.

www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions
Diversity

• The fact or quality of being diverse; difference
• A point or respect in which things differ
• Variety or multiformity
  • [The American Heritage College Dictionary]
JHMI Core Values

• Excellence & Discovery
• Leadership & Integrity
• Diversity & Inclusion
• Respect & Collegiality
Baha’i’

- 7 million worldwide
- About 1.2 million in the United States
- The writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are regarded as Divine Revelation.
- The writings of Abdu'l-Bahá are recognized as sacred.
- The scriptures of other faiths, which include the teachings of previous Manifestations of God (such as Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad) are also regarded as Divine Revelations.
- The Qur'an is recognised as fully authoritative and the Judaeo-Christian Bible as substantially authentic.
Buddhism

• Worldwide, 360 million
• About 1.5 million in the United States

• There are a large number of religious texts and scriptures in Buddhism. They are basically divided into the following two categories...

  **Canonical Texts**
  Also known as the *Sutras* (in Sanskrit) or *Suttas* (in Pali), these texts are considered to be the actual sayings of Lord Buddha.

  **Non-canonical Texts**
  These texts consist of a range of observations on canonical texts, discourses on the Dharma and the compilations of quotes, histories, grammars, etc.

Dharma day is usually celebrated with readings from the Buddhist scriptures, and is an opportunity to reflect deeply on their content.
Cao Dai

• Worldwide, about 3 million
• About 25,000 in the United States

• The Tây Ninh Holy See has been the main source for orthodox Cao Dai scriptures since the establishment of the religion in 1926. Since 1927, the Tây Ninh Holy See has been the sole source for Cao Dai scripture. Most official religious documents were delivered to the leaders of Cao Dai through séances between 1925 and 1929.

• Scriptures were written in Vietnamese. The Thánh Ngôn Hiệp Tuyên (Compilation of Divine Messages) is a work that collects together important messages received by Cao Dai leaders through séance. Another important work in Cao Dai is the Religious Constitution of Caodaism (Pháp Chánh Truyền), which delineates religious organizational structure.
Christianity

• 2.1 billion worldwide
• About 225 million in the United States
• The Bible is not just one book, but an entire library, with stories, songs, poetry, letters and history, as well as literature that might more obviously qualify as 'religious'.
• The Christian Bible has two main sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament.
• The Old Testament is the original Hebrew Bible, the sacred scriptures of the Jewish faith, written at different times between about 1200 and 165 BC.
• The New Testament books were written by Christians in the first century AD.
Hinduism

• 900 million worldwide

• About 1 million in the United States

• Unlike most other religions, Hinduism has no single founder, no single scripture, and no commonly agreed set of teachings. Throughout its extensive history, there have been many key figures teaching different philosophies and writing numerous holy books.

• The main Hindu texts are the **Vedas** and their supplements (books based on the Vedas). Veda means “knowledge”. These scriptures do not mention **Hindu**, but many scriptures discuss **dharma**, which means “code of conduct, law, or duty”
Islam

• 1.5 billion worldwide
• About 1.6 million in the United States
• The Qur'an is the holy book for Muslims, revealed in stages to the Prophet Muhammad over 23 years.
• Qur'anic revelations are regarded by Muslims as the sacred word of God.
• The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by God in Arabic.
Jainism

- 4.2 million worldwide
- About 75,000 in North America
- Lord Mahavir's preaching was methodically compiled by his followers into many texts. These texts are collectively known as **Agams**, the sacred books of the Jain religion. Hence, the Jain religion does not have one sacred book, but it has many books compiled by many followers.
- They were compiled into twelve separate parts, known as the dwadashangi (twelve parts).
Judaism

- 14 million worldwide
- About 4 million in the United States
  - The Torah is the first part of the Jewish bible. It is the central and most important document of Judaism and has been used by Jews through the ages.
  - Torah refers to the five books of Moses and the Jews believe that God dictated the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai 50 days after their exodus from Egyptian slavery.
  - The Torah is written in Hebrew, the oldest of Jewish languages.
  - The Torah is the first section or first five books of the Jewish bible. However, Tanach is more commonly used to describe the whole of Jewish scriptures. This is an acronym made up from the first letter of the words Torah, Nevi im (prophets), and Ketuvim (writings).
  - The Talmud is the comprehensive written version of the Jewish oral law and the subsequent commentaries on it. It originates from the 2nd century CE. The word Talmud is derived from the Hebrew verb 'to teach', which can also be expressed as the verb 'to learn'
Paganism

- 1-4 million worldwide (the number is unclear)
- About 600,000 in the United States
- Paganism includes many pantheistic (many gods) religions such as Native American, Wicca, Asatru, and Egyptian and Greek ancient religions.
- During a typical Pagan rite, any or all of meditation, chanting, music, prayer, dance, the pouring of libations, recitations of poetry and/or the performance of sacred drama, & the sharing of food and drink may occur.
- Wicca is a Pagan mystery religion venerating the Divine in nature. Its religious traditions include folklore and most practitioners draw their inspiration from the 'Book of Shadows', a book of rituals.
- Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of American Indian religious traditions is the extent to which they are wholly community based and have no real meaning outside of the specific community in which the acts are regularly performed, stories told, songs sung, and ceremonies conducted.
Shinto

• 4 million worldwide
• 1,500 in North America
• The holy books of Shinto are the *Kojiki* or 'Records of Ancient Matters' (712 CE) and the *Nihon-gi* or 'Chronicles of Japan' (720 CE).
  • These books are compilations of ancient myths and traditional teachings that had previously been passed down orally
  • These books are not exclusively Shinto and they have moral and political purposes.
Sikhism

- 23 million worldwide
- Approx 80,000 in the United States
- The Sikh scripture is a book called the **Guru Granth Sahib**.
- The 10th Sikh Guru decreed that after his death the spiritual guide of the Sikhs would be the teachings contained in that book, so it now has the status of a Guru, and Sikhs show it the respect they would give to a human Guru.
- During worship, a large feather is waved over the book as it is read.
Zoroastrianism

• Worldwide, about 190 thousand
• About 10,000 in North America

• The Zoroastrian book of Holy Scriptures is called the Avesta.
• The Avesta can be roughly split into two main sections:
  – The Avesta is the oldest and core part of the scriptures, which contains the Gathas. The Gathas are seventeen hymns thought to be composed by Zoroaster himself.
  – The Younger Avesta - commentaries to the older Avestan written in later years. It also contains myths, stories and details of ritual observances
Acknowledgements

• Religious Diversity Slideshow production team
  – Michelle Aguilar
  – Alicia Bordley
  – Christine Hostetter
  – Roger Maranan

• References
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