Religion and the University

What makes students that are alone at college decide to go to church? What makes them decide not to go? What are some of the main reasons why they do not go to church? These questions are the many questions that this paper will address? With these questions, there are going to be students, myself, and my sister who are going to be answering these questions throughout the paper. There are two main religions that are here on campus, and they are Christianity and Catholicism, which are basically the same, and Islam. When students that are raised from a religious family go off to college, do they still go to church?

Christianity and Catholicism are the main religion that many students were raised as. Jesus was a religious Jew who was born into a carpenter’s family. He spent his early years in Nazareth. He was baptized in the Jordan River by his cousin John the Baptist when Jesus was thirty years old. Jesus began his mission of religion, but he stressed mainly on loving God, who to him was Abba. He told listeners that if they follow God, all their sins would be forgiven. With his powerful faith in God, he was able to heal the mentally or physically sick. He attracted men and women to be his followers, and he picked twelve men to be his apostles. He referred to himself as the ‘Son of Man’ or the ‘Son of God’, and many of his followers believed in him as the ‘Son of Man’ or the ‘Son of God’. He came to Jerusalem during Passover to celebrate the freedom of the slaves from Egypt. When he got to the city, he said that his authority came from God. He challenged the authorities of the Temple about the trade of the pilgrimage. He told his disciples that his death was near because he was trying to stick up in what he believes in, and that is faith in God. At his last supper, he told his disciples to repeat his actions in the future, washing each
other’s feet and eating bread and drinking wine to remember him by. Jesus’ one apostle, Judas, showed him to the Temples authorities and said to them that they could quietly arrest him. When Jesus was shown by the senior priests, Jesus did not accept their command, and Jesus was brought to Pontius Pilate, who thought that he was not a bad person. He was sentence to crucifixion and was nailed and raised on a cross. Despite of his crucifixion, some of his followers believed that God raised him from the dead (Bowker ed. & Edwards 232-233). Learning about Jesus is an important part of Christianity and Catholicism that students should know about.

The Christian Church in the Roman Empire was remarkable. “In 303 CE, Christians probably represented less than a tenth of the Empire’s population and, in his effort to unity under a strong environment, the Emperor Diocletian made them the target of systematic persecution” (Bowker ed. & Edwards 238). In 313 CE, the religion was declared lawful and by 325 the Emperor Constantine said that he won victory in the wars of his time for Christ and made his position stronger by becoming the patron of the Catholic bishop. Christianity was given great privileges, and was on its way to be the only official religion in the Empire (Bowker ed. & Edwards 238). The strength of the church happened in the 360s by the Emperor Julian. He forced that the traditional religion must have features that would be imitated that will keep the Church successful. There must be leaders that will match with the bishops. There should be clearer authority that must be given the stories of gods. The people of the church should be involved more by using the sermons and the hymns, and the church should be involved in more charitable work, for the Christians who were active in taking care of others and the sick. The sharing of the bread and the wine in the Eucharist was a celebration in the Church of the crucified and the crowned of Jesus, and it took place every Sunday. Worshipping the Church and Jesus gave a new life to new people (Bowker ed. & Edwards 238-239). The strength of the church is what kept the religion on
campus still going. If there were no continuation of the church, there would not be any Christian
churches on campus for students to go to.

The reforming of the Church in the Middle Ages had many movements. Many women
became nuns and were living convents. Monks protested against wealth that the Benedictine
monasteries, but later they became rich and practiced in agriculture. Friars belonged to Franciscan
and the Dominican tried to remain poor like their founders, Francis of Assisi and Dominic, but
people kept on giving them money because they viewed friars as preachers. The Franciscans and
Dominicans provided teachers at the universities for medieval religion. In medieval religion there
were many great names such as Anselm, Abelard, and Aquinas. Anselm said that the justice of
God was of good reasoning’s and that Christ had been born and crucified to pay the punishment
which sinners owed to God. Peter Abelard criticized cruel actions that were in traditional doctrines
and also said that Christ had lived and died to get sinners to love God. Aquinas taught that the
bread and wine in mass were Christ’s body and blood as a substance and not as a physical
appearance. (Bowker ed. & Edwards 250). A guy by the name of John Carroll was committed to
organize the American Catholic Church in 1789. He did whatever he could with his power. He
made sure that there would be resources for educating lay leaders and clergy. He worked on
Georgetown Academy to build up the number of American Catholics, but he knew that he would
need a lot more academies. He wanted training for young people who wanted to be priests, even
though there was a shortage of priests. The Catholic Church wanted men also to be obedient to
both civic and religious announcements without any questions about it. During these years the
Catholic Church was everything. Bishops and priests were in control of parishes, but traditions did
not mean much to the people who funded their children to have the right teachers to teach them
education about the Catholic Church (Walch 30-31). Without big leaders of the church, there would not be any interests and popularity in religion and churches today.

Today, the campus has one big Catholic Church that students go to, and it is called St. John’s Catholic Chapel. It has been part of the community since 1927. It is dedicated for spiritual needs for students, faculty, and staff at the University of Illinois and Parkland. There are many different hours where students can go to church here at St. John’s Church. On Sunday’s, they have church at 9:00 a.m., which is Spanish, then 12:05 p.m., 5:00 p.m., and 9:00 p.m. The rest of the week they have masses on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday at 12:05 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., and on Tuesday’s and Thursday’s, there are mass at 12:05 p.m., 5:00 p.m., and 9:00 p.m. St. John’s also has many activities through the church, such as retreats and student groups where students could be able to keep their faith strong while they are at college (St. John’s Catholic Chapel).

Islam is another major religion on the campus. It is a great way to know about the religion and the beliefs and traditions in this religion. In or around 570 CE, in Makka, Muhammad was born as an orphan and was brought up in a Bedouin family. When he got older, he spends time in a cave reflecting and meditating. Around 610 CE, he got a message from a being that said ‘Recite! In the name of the Lord’. At that time, he knew that he was sent to his people in Makka to warn them about the Day of Judgment. He would preach on the streets of Makka and encourage people the duty of justice and taking care of the poor. The people of Makka were not surprised with this message, and they thought that Muhammad was a threat. After awhile they started to follow him and trust him. Muhammad received these messages that were being sent to him by what he called One God. These messages were memorized and put in the Qur’an (Bowker ed. & Johnstone 275).
Without big leaders, such as Muhammad, the Muslim religion and mosques would never be built up like they are today here on campus and the rest of the world.

The spread of Islam was described as religion and state. In Western tradition there was no separation between religion and politics. Andalus, an Iberian peninsula, became a power of Muslim from the mid-eighth century until the eleventh century. During that time, Muslim armies were moving into Asia and to the borders of India. By 732, a century after Muhammad’s death, they reached the farthest they could reach. The whole population that the army got did not became Muslim at once, but the culture, language, and legal structure made the Islam society (Bowker ed. & Johnstone 290). The spread of Islam is what made the mosque and religions are of what they are today on campus. Without the many things that happen in history, religion wouldn’t be important today and there would not be any students practicing their specific religion.

The main mosque on campus is called the Central Illinois Mosque and Islamic Center. It has many congregational prayers times. It starts from the 5:00 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. There are many organization and activities that are located at the mosque where the Muslim students can be involved in on campus. Such organizations they have are Muslim Students’ Association (MSA/UIUC), Council on American Islamic Relations, and Intercultural Friendship Foundation. Muslim Students’ Association is a social group on campus where they focus on brotherhood and sisterhood. Council on American Islamic Relations is an organization that focuses on justice and mutual understanding. Intercultural Friendship Foundation was founded in 2001 and its focus is to promote dialogue, friendship, and learn more about other people background (Central Illinois Mosque and Islamic Center). These organizations could help Muslim students be able keep their faith strong.
There are many students who do practice their religion, and there are many students who practice their religion also get tormented on campus. Many Muslim students who practice their religion at college are sometimes discriminated by other students. When a Muslim student is walking down a street, other people always tend to think that they are a terrorist. “They lived in relative obscurity in this country until they were unwillingly thrust into the spotlight after September 11, 2001” (Muslim Students Experience of Discrimination, Ideals). Some Muslim’s are dressed a certain way that make them discriminated. “A stereotypical Muslim man has brown skin, a dirty beard, a turban or another head covering, and wears long robes, while a stereotypical Muslim woman has her body covered with loose clothing and dons the hijab. On the basis of all or any of these physical characteristics, one can be identified and targeted as a Muslim” (Muslim Students Experience of Discrimination, Ideals).

In the “Muslim Students Experience of Discrimination” research paper 13 Muslim women and 2 Muslim men got interviewed. The Muslim women and men said when they would walk down the street and other people would yell racist and vulgar things at them. For example one interviewee said, “The most recent, I was walking down Green Street and as I was crossing the street, some guy in his car yelled out at me and called me Osama, 3 times, made some threats, and then he called me a Wench…Occasionally, I’ll be driving and people will flick me off and people have yelled out for me to go back home and stuff” (Muslim Students Experience of Discrimination, Ideals). Another Muslim student said, “You always get comments when you’re walking around. ‘What is that thing on your head?’ If you’re out late at night, sometimes people yell things from their cars, but you get kind of immune to it after enough times” (Muslim Students Experience of Discrimination, Ideals). With these incidences happening to these students, I get mad at these other people who say these mean and vulgar things. The Muslim students are
following their religion, and they should not be tormented on following of what their beliefs and traditions are in their religion.

I surveyed several people on my floor in the dorm to see what they think of my topic of religion. Half of the people responded to my survey and half did not. Half of the people who responded to survey said that they were born in a religious family, and they still go to church when they are at college. The other half said that they were raised in a religious family, but they do not go to church. A few people who responded to the survey said that some reasons why students don’t go to church is because they are waiting to deal with religion later in life, having too many unanswered questions about religion, or students only went to church is because their parents made them go, but since they are off at college they don’t think they have to go. What the survey showed was that there are half of the students on campus that still goes to church when they are off at college.

My sister, Denise, is very passionate about being Catholic. She goes to church every Sunday and prays. My sister made many good points of her experience of religion when she was at college by herself. She said, “I thought it was a lot easier because I felt that when I was at home, I was more forced to go to church. But when I was at school, I went because I wanted to go. Um…I felt like church was a place where I could make my faith stronger. Um…It was a place where all my stress went away from the academic life. It was nice to go to church because St. John’s was a very beautiful church. It was also really cool that at St. John’s the people there participated in the songs and the prayers, whereas at home at Sacred Heart, people there just listen and not participate as much. So that also made it easy to go to church because it was fun that people at St. John’s actually like to participate in being part of the mass. That made it easier to participate in the mass at St. John’s than at Sacred Heart, even though I still do participate at the
mass at Sacred Heart. I don’t care what people think of me if I participate and sing in mass. That is what people should do when they go to mass. Mass is a place to worship and pray to God, and that is what I do at church” (Interview, March 15, 2008).

Like my sister, I think that going to church is very important. I think that being on my own at college makes it easier to go to church because I also felt like I was forced to go to church when I was at home. I love dressing nice and casual for church and being able to participate in the mass. The church is very beautiful, and I love seeing the architect of it. The last reason why I go to church is because it is relaxing, and it gets me away from the school and stress life. My sister and I think alike, and that is why we pretty much have the same answers on why we go to church. We were raised to be religious, and we both wanted to continue being religious when we went off to college.

According to Erik Nagel and Sandra Sgoutas-Emch state, “In another study focusing on the influence of religion on young adult’s health behaviors, Wallace and Foreman (1998) found religious youth less likely to engage behaviors that might compromise their health including the use of marijuana and more likely to perform health promoting behaviors such as exercise and eating a healthy diet…Health beliefs have been found to dramatically influence health behaviors and therefore may impact overall health (Furnham, 1994). For example, a study by Willis, Wallston, and Johnson (2000) found that individuals who believe that chance or fate is influential in their health were more likely to smoke and drink heavily” (Nagel & Sgoutas-Emch, 2007). With this research, Nagel and Sgoutas-Emch wanted to see if health behaviors such as alcohol and drugs affect going to church. On campus, many students’ health behaviors such as drinking and using drugs affect students not going to church. Everyone who responded to my survey said that one of the reasons why students do not go to church is because students stay out too late the night
before, and they are too tired to wake up and go to church. My sister said, “At times, when I had a long night of going out before and had minimal sleep, it was hard to get out of bed to go to church, but once I got there, it felt good and I liked it. I think that if I didn’t go to church every Sunday, I would feel very guilty and felt like I did something” (Interview, March 15, 2008). Sometimes I felt the same way as any other student on campus, and that is being out late the night before, and then the next morning being too tired to go to church, but I urged myself to go to church knowing that I would feel great once I got there. I know that if I didn’t go because of being out late the night before, I would feel guilty, and I would be mad at myself.

The other reason that I thought why students do not go to church is because maybe there are not enough churches on campus. The only reason why I thought that having not enough churches on campus could be a problem is because I felt like there were not enough Catholic churches on campus. When I surveyed students on my floor at the dorms, they all said that that wasn’t a problem of students going to church, and many of the students that said that they were born in a religious family and still go to church said that there were plenty of churches from their religion on campus.

I learned from this project that learning and refreshing about my religion is a great way to keep my faith strong and learning about another religion is a great way to know what other people go through in their religion. There are many reasons why students do not go to church, and the main reason is because of students’ behavior of drinking and doing drugs. Even though that is mostly true, there are other students that need time to think of what religion fits them. They have too many unanswered questions about their religion, and that is understandable for being a reason of not going to church. At first I judged people for not going to church, but now after doing this project that they have a good reason why they don’t go. My sister said, “Well I don’t like to judge
people who do not go to church. I think it is really up to them whether they should go to church or not. But there are also people that I know who go to church sometimes or rarely at all, and they still have a strong faith towards their religion. There are people who may not go to church as much, and their actions improve for that. There are many people who do not go to church and still have similar actions of what Jesus did. They try and want to help other people out who are less fortunate or in danger. So I think that people could also have a strong faith in their religion outside of the church by their actions” (Interview, March 15, 2008). I learned from the people and my sister who participated in this project that people could still do generous and kind actions like Jesus, even if they do not go to church.