



Review Sample Lesson Plan Junior Certificate Section D Part 2 *Student Work*: Awe and Wonder.

*Case Study*: Read a story from *Student Work: Religious Experience*

(Adapted from the *Mystery of God* – Brid Greville page 35)

Present students with the following statement from a Roman Catholic theologian (Dermot Lane, *The experience of God* page 24):

“The underlying characteristic of a religious experience is that individuals find themselves called and drawn into a new relationship with that which is variously termed the Transcendent Other, the Holy and the Ultimate.”

Discuss: In what sense is this statement true / untrue of this case study?

Take feedback and conclude with reference to the following points:

- These are experiences open the individual to that dimension of life, which is called religious
- The religious dimension of human experience may be characterised by its ability to open the individual into a new realm of meaning
- A religious experience brings new meaning because it creates or changes the relationship between the self and the transcendent
- A religious experience affirms the value of life even in the face of great difficulties
- Etc.

*Outcomes*

- Explain why reflection is important in human life, and give three reasons why it can be particularly important in the life of a young person
- Explain what is meant by the term “religious experience”
- Describe the characteristics of religious experience

## **Topic: 2.2 The human being as pray-er**

*Introduction* - examples of the human being as pray-er  
- prayer and the relationship with the divine

Research or present a selection of prayers from major world religions.

Discuss: What do these prayers have in common?

What do these prayers show about the human being as pray-er?

Take feedback and conclude with reference to the following points:

- Prayer can be broadly understood as the human communication with divine or spiritual realities.
- Prayer can take the form of a text or an act of speech but what fundamentally characterises this activity is the move from speaking about the Transcendent in the third person ‘he’ or ‘she’ to addressing the Transcendent in the second person ‘you’.
- Prayer is an activity of the heart and mind in unison directed to the Transcendent as meaningful Other.
- In the major religious traditions prayer can be seen to originate in God for it is God who has first been revealed to us. Prayer is a personal response to this revelation.

## ***The concept of worship and the experience of awe***

Review Sample Lesson Plan Junior Certificate Section E Part 2

Brainstorm / Discuss: What is worship?

Take feedback and conclude that worship is a response on the part of the believer. Through rituals and ceremonies believers respond to the supernatural or divine mystery that they believe envelops them. Such worship is sometimes characterised by a sense of awe – a feeling of being overcome by some reality far greater than humanity and this can give rise to silence, fear or reverence.

Activity: Identify and where appropriate participate in some of the techniques of meditation and prayer used by the major religious traditions.

*Outcomes*

- Present an example of people at prayer which shows
  - The religious tradition with which the prayer is associated
  - The culture with which the prayer is associated
  - The relationship between the prayer and life

- Describe, using evidence from two religious traditions, the importance of prayer in a relationship with God/the transcendent
- Explain what is meant by “worship”
- Describe the importance of the experience of awe for participation in worship

*Resources which teachers have suggested include:*

www.sacredspace.ie

## **Topic: 2.3 Contexts for prayer**

### *Introduction - sacred spaces and times*

Review Sample Lesson Plan Junior Certificate Section E Part 1 or Leaving Certificate Section C 2.3

Assignment: Make a wall chart identifying the key significant dates for the major world religions or review the *Intercultural Calendar*. This calendar highlights all the major religious festivals.

Calendars are available on <http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/> and from Access Ireland, 40-41 Lower Dominick St, Dublin 1 (Tel. 01-8780589; email: [accessireland@connect.ie](mailto:accessireland@connect.ie))

Research assignment: Research the sacred spaces and times of major world religions or significant times in ancient civilisations.

In most of the major world religions a particular day is set aside every week for prayer, worship and ritual (Moslems – Friday; Jews – Saturday; Christians – Sunday; Religious: Sabbath day, holy days, major festivals). The best examples in ancient civilisations concern cosmic / agricultural (The longest and shortest days of the year; new moon, full moon; harvest festivals) and personal / family rituals. In Celtic tradition there were four key festivals associated with four key times: Samhain (1<sup>st</sup> Nov), Imbolg (1<sup>st</sup> Feb), Bealtaine (1<sup>st</sup> May), Lughnasa (1<sup>st</sup> Aug).

Take feedback from the students’ research and discuss: What do these times have in common?

Take feedback and conclude that these are times of such significance that rituals and symbols become associated with them.

Discuss: What are the significant times in contemporary culture?

What are the significant times in your own life?

Take feedback and conclude with reference to some of the following:

- *Personal/Family:* Birth, death, marriage.
- *Contemporary:* Graduation, New Year, major sporting occasions etc.

### *private and communal forms of prayer & places of prayer*

Activity: Research or visit a local sacred place and identify why it is sacred for a religious tradition e.g. Is the place associated with a significant person or event in the history of a religious tradition?

Present students with photographs of sacred places for major world religions e.g. pilgrimages to holy wells, Lough Derg, Croagh Patrick, Glendalough, and Downpatrick in Ireland and great religious centres such as Jerusalem, Mecca and Rome.

Discuss: What do these places have in common?

Take feedback and conclude that prayer can occur anywhere or at any time, but prayer that originates within the worship of a faith community will most often express itself in sacred places and at sacred times. These are places where people gather to pray and celebrate. Sometimes they become known as centres of pilgrimage. There tends to be a heightened awareness of symbol and ritual.

#### *Outcomes*

- Give two examples – from different religious traditions - of a sacred space, and list the features that identify the space as sacred
- Give two examples – from different religious traditions- of a sacred time, and list the features that identify the time as sacred
- Explain the differences between private and communal forms of prayer

## Topic: 2.4 The praying tradition

### *Introduction - examples of traditional prayers associated with the Christian traditions & The origins and meaning of these prayers*

Review Sample Lesson Plan Junior Certificate Section E Part 2

Students participate / observe examples of formal prayers from different denominations within the Christian tradition e.g.

- The Way of the Cross / Stations of the Cross.
- Morning and Evening prayer within the Anglican tradition
- Etc.

Read *Student Work: Visiting The Russian Orthodox Church in Dublin*

*(Adapted from Junior Certificate Religious Education Higher Level Paper 2003)*

Discuss: When do Christians in this denomination gather for this formal prayer?  
What are the origins of this formal prayer?  
What is the meaning of this formal prayer for members of this Christian denomination?  
How has this formal prayer developed within this Christian denomination?

Take feedback from the students' research and conclude e.g. Stations of the Cross are popular due to its simplicity and repetition. The intention is to help those who pray to reflect on the death and resurrection of Jesus etc.

### *Some examples of prayer forms from a variety of other religious traditions*

Present students with examples of prayers from two of the following world religions – Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism and Islam. e.g.

- Prayer Wheel in Buddhism
- Five daily prayers of Islam
- Shema is a central prayer of the Jewish liturgy. The Shema is made up of three biblical passages; Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Deuteronomy 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41. It is recited twice a day, once in the morning and again in the evening.

Discuss: In what ways are these prayer forms similar to Christian prayer?  
In what ways are these prayer forms different to Christian prayer?

#### *Outcomes*

- Give an example of formal prayer from the Christian traditions and in each case
  - Explain when this prayer is usually used
  - Explain how the prayer originated and developed
  - Select a formal prayer from either the Buddhist, Judaic, Hindu or Islamic tradition and compare and contrast it with the Christian prayer

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#### *Resources which teachers have suggested include:*

Collins, P. (2000) *Prayer in Practice*, Dublin: Columba Press

De Mello, Anthony (1986) *Wellsprings: A Book of Spiritual Exercises* Garden City, N.Y : Image Books

### *Assessment Questions*

1. Discuss the reasons why reflection is important in the life of a young person.
2. Give two examples- from different religious traditions – of sacred space, and list the features that identify the space as sacred.
3. Select a formal prayer from one of the following - the Buddhist, Judaic, Hindu or Islamic tradition. Compare and contrast it with Christian prayer.

EXPERIENCE

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- Sense experience or
- Outer experience or
- World of immediate experience

- Depth experience or
- Inner experience or
- World mediated by meaning

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*Depth experience -  
goodness, beauty, love etc.*

*Religious experience -  
cosmic, mystical etc.*

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*Assignment:*

*Complete the diagram by giving another example of religious experience from a world religion you have studied.*

e.g. <i>Religious experience – Judaism</i> Historical experience of Exodus sealed by the covenant on Mt. Sinai, and issuing in the recognition of Yahweh as Creator	e.g. <i>Religious experience – Christianity</i> Historical experience of Jesus as Saviour of the World and the Incarnation of the word of God	e.g. <i>Religious experience –</i>
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(Adapted from Dermot Lane, *The experience of God* page 25)

1. Jim Irwin on the moon:

The first time we could see the whole earth, we saw it as a ball in the sky. It was about the size of a basketball, and the most beautiful thing you could ever want to see in all your life. Then, as we got farther and farther away, it diminished in size. We saw it shrink to the size of a baseball, and then to the size of a golf ball, and finally to the size of a marble, the most beautiful marble you can imagine. The earth is uncommonly lovely. It is the only warm object that we saw on our flight to the moon . . .

During this sort of flight, you are too busy to reflect on the splendour of space or on the secret awakenings that come from the inner flight that takes place at the same time. You have to try to register these experiences and examine them later.

It has been sort of a slow breaking revelation for me. The ultimate effect has been to deepen and strengthen all the religious insight I ever had. It has remade my faith. I had become a sceptic about getting guidance from God, and I know I had lost the feeling of His nearness. On the moon the total picture of the power of God and His Son Jesus Christ became abundantly clear to me. I felt an overwhelming sense of the presence of God on the moon. I felt His spirit more closely than I have ever felt it on the earth, right there beside me - it was amazing. (*To Rule the Night*, Jim Irwin)

2. Jim Bishop, on the birth of his daughter:

At the age of four, I knew that God was everywhere. I spoke to Him, and sometimes He listened with sympathy. It was an unforgettable occasion in boyhood when He did indeed send me a bicycle. As I grew towards manhood, the more I learned, the less I believed in God. I told myself that He had been invented by ancients who feared the eternal darkness of death. Even worse, they had fashioned Him into their likeness. When I was 21, my superior intellect told me that God was a fake.. . Then one day I felt a new experience. I saw the miracle of birth, and it turned my wandering mind around. I had seen babies before, of course, in prams, had cooed at them, chuckled under the chin, observed their gummy grins and hoped they would not cry. But this miracle was Virginia Lee, a child of my own. She was just another infant (an exceptionally beautiful one, to be sure), but so close to me that this time I questioned the birth and life. She was the result of the fusion of two bodies in love, but how did an ovum learn to roll to the womb? What caused spermatozoa to fertilize an egg? And what far-off deity told that ovum to split and split to form a foetus, to devise its own chemical factory and absorb nourishment from its mother? How I wondered, could an infant, unconscious of life and the struggle for existence, fashion the correct number of limbs and toes and fingers and eyes and ears? Did all that do itself? If it was a matter of genes, did they fashion themselves? Maybe they evolved over millions of years. From what? I began to doubt my doubts.

### 3. Starbuck - The Varieties of Religious Experience, William James

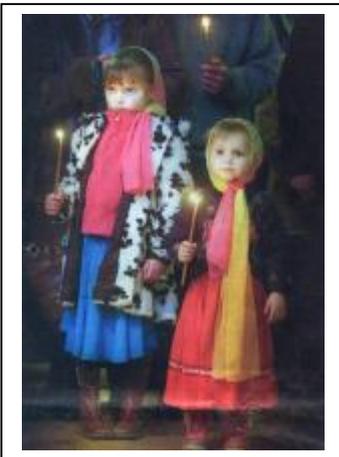
I remember the night, and almost the very spot on the hillside, where my soul opened out, as it were, into the Infinite, and there was a rushing together of the two worlds, the inner and the outer. It was deep calling unto deep - the deep that my own struggle had opened up within being answered by the unfathomable deep without, reaching beyond the stars. I stood alone with Him who had made me, and all the beauty of the world, and love and sorrow, and even temptation. I did not seek Him, but felt the perfect union of my spirit with His. The ordinary sense of things around me faded. For a moment nothing but an ineffable joy and exaltation remained. It is impossible fully to describe the experience. It was like the effect of some great orchestra when all the separate notes have melted into one swelling harmony that leaves the listener conscious of nothing save that his soul is being wafted upwards, and almost bursting with its own emotion. The perfect stillness of the night was thrilled by a more solemn silence. The darkness held a presence that was all the more felt because it was not seen. I could not any more have doubted that He was there than that I was. Indeed, I felt myself to be, if possible, the less real of the two. My highest faith in God and truest idea of Him were then born in me. I have stood upon the Mount of Vision since, and felt the Eternal round about me. But never since has there come quite the same stirring of the heart. Then, if ever, I believe, I stood face to face with God, and was born anew of His spirit.

(Adapted from the Mystery of God – Brid Greville page 35/6)

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*Student Work: Visiting The Russian Orthodox Church in Dublin*

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The Russian Orthodox Church has a community of 850 members in Dublin. Their church in Harold's Cross is the most westerly Russian Orthodox church in Europe. Every Sunday the congregation gathers for worship at the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. As women enter the church they wear scarves on their heads. By the door there is a sign asking people to switch off phones. There is a small table at the entrance where parishioners write petitions on scraps of paper. In the centre of the church there is a lectern bearing an icon with two elaborate brass candleholders on either side. As people enter the church they take candles to light as offerings at the central lectern. They bow and kiss the icon. They touch their foreheads against the icon and some kneel before it and bow their heads to the floor. Some parents lift their children so they too can touch the icon. Small icons sit in simple frames on the

windowsills. As you go into the main body of the church you notice some people going from icon to icon, kissing each, then bowing and praying before them. There is also a long line of people waiting patiently to approach a priest hearing confessions in a corner, as there are no confession boxes in the church. The Sunday service is two hours long and mostly sung. The singing is led by the church Deacon who is described as "the voice of the community". A choir, singing in the balcony, assists him. The congregation stands throughout the ceremony. There are no seats in the church except for one or two pews around the walls. The priest celebrates the liturgy behind a large wooden screen on which are painted icons of Jesus, Mary, and the Angels. A central gate in the screen stands for the gateway to Paradise. The inner area beyond the screen, where the priest celebrates the liturgy, is a simple space with a small tabernacle, altar and table.

The Russian Orthodox community relies on help from donors and sponsors for the repair and upkeep of the church which was in a state of disrepair when they took it over. They had to bring all the icons and equipment from Russia. Volunteers worked for several weeks, from six in the evening to midnight, so that it would be ready for the Easter celebrations. The congregation seems delighted to have their own church building now. As one man said: "This is not just a place for us to practise our faith. It is a base for our community. It is important for our children to grow up in our traditional way, with our values and everything we take from our ancestors." The people at worship in the Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul clearly love the formality, the incense, and the music of the ceremonies and rituals.

*Source: Irish Independent & The Irish Times*

*(Adapted from Junior Certificate Religious Education Higher Level Paper 2003)*

- Discuss: When do Christians in this denomination gather for this formal prayer?  
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