Name

Instructors’ Name

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Date

**Comparative Essay**

**Introduction**

The site that I chose to visit for an authentic cultural experience was St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church. Visiting the site was a culturally enriching experience. The awareness that I got by visiting the Church is far more than what I could have gotten from reading about the site. The Church is more like a work of art. The breathtaking building was designed by the Eugene Brothers of Chicago back in 1943. The design was initially demonstrated as mere fragments by Hagia Sophia. Diversity was added to my experience once I compared my site with the places that were visited by my group members. Comparing a Church with two culturally diverse temples portrayed how different a place of worship can be for people of diverse religions. This paper will highlight the comparison and contrast amid St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, Temple Beth Am and Shiva Vishnu Temple.

**Discussion**

The individuals who go to the Nicholas Church are mainly Catholics. Catholics are the people who believe the notion that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. There are certain views that Catholics also share with the Christian community (Hemeyer). However, the serious Catholic notions are comprised of Baptism, the Bible, The Holy Trinity and God’s Ten Commandments. On the contrary, the individuals who go to Temple Beth Am are believers of Judaism. This religion is monotheistic, which means that it is based on the concept of being God's servant. The main laws of Judaism are based on the Torah. The main core of all the scriptures and teachings of Judaism is God. Right of the back, Judaism and the Catholic religion has one thing in common, both follow and believe the teachings of a book. For Catholics, it is the bible and for Judaism, it is Torah. The most different religion out of all three is Hinduism. It is followed by the people who go to the Shiva Vishnu Temple. The religion that this group of people follow is quite colorful and unique. This religion is based on being fully devoted to achieving a righteous path, liberation, purification, and prosperity. This can be achieved by worshipping and practicing the Hindu Trinity. One of the most unique aspects of this religion is that milk is considered the drink of immortality and cows are considered sacred.

As far as the presence of all three sects in Florida is concerned, they are all thriving. Florida, in general, is a very diverse state. Both Catholics and Jewish people have strengthened their roots in Florida. Hindu's are comparatively less, but they are also cementing their feet in the state. When it comes to symbolism and art, both carry great importance in the Catholic Religion. One of the biggest examples of symbolism in this religion is the crucifix, which represents compensation and sacrifice. This sign is in the core beliefs of the Catholic religion. Even in Judaism symbolism carries great importance. They give great importance to the Torah and to symbolize its value they decorate the book intricately with jewels. They also use silver beakers for vine which are used on special occasions like Shabbat. Lastly, Hindu temples are like art. They make use of colors and geometric patterns to decorate their Gods and temples. The colors are a demonstration of the richness of their culture. Even the replicas that they have made of their God’s are beautifully decorated and painted to show love and importance.

When it comes to the dressing code, Catholics usually wear a robe or garments that are modest and cover the body well. For Jews, everyone is also expected to wear clean and nice clothes that are modest. However, in Reform temples, the men are expected to cover their heads. At times women also wear tallis and kippahs (Joseph). As far as Hindu attire is concerned both men and women wear colorful clothes. Color has great importance in the Hindu religion. One thing that is common in all the attires of the three religions is the presence of modesty. Every worshipper is expected to cover their bodies properly.

Further, there are various religious festivals and rituals that all three of the religions have. They are all very unique and different in their own way. For Catholics, the classical Church celebrations are inclusive of Holy Orders, Matrimony, Baptism, Penance and Eucharist. Further, the Catholics also celebrate the public declared festivities like Christmas and Easter. Additionally, Epiphany, Ascension and Pentecost are also celebrated by the Catholics. Jews have Shabbat which is a total of 25 hours long. Other festivals that they celebrate are Pesach, Bar mitzvah and mikvah. Jews also have many rituals that are performed after death, which are inclusive of Chevra Kadisha, shiva, sheloshim and the kaddish. Hindus also follow certain rituals. When they enter the temple they follow a path on the left which leads to all their prayers and bowing in front of the Gods. The major religious festivities are inclusive of Holi, Dewali, Onam, Navratri and many more. Since the Hindu religion is so colorful it has many festivals (Churchward).

If I look at my experience of the Catholic religion, I would say it is all about spreading positivity. The people who follow this religion have immense faith in manhood and God. They believe that they can get over any evil if they stick together and stay positive. Positivity is the aspect of the religion that hit me the most. After going through my peer’s thoughts on the Shiva Vishnu Temple, I can say that the religion is based on collectiveness, kindness and respect. That to me is the perfect foundation for a community to thrive and prosper. The best thing is that even though the religion is foreign and overwhelming it does not impose anything on anyone. Interestingly, going to a temple was more of a cultural than worshipping experience. Same is the case for the Jewish temple. My peer felt relaxation, it did not feel like they were forced or conditioned into worshipping. My peer's word suggests that the Jews accepted and welcomed them with open arms. Nothing in all the three experiences stroke as negative. It was more of a learning experience. This fact makes it clear that all three religions give, acceptance and awareness as opposed to treating one like and outsider.

**Conclusion**

There is no doubt in the fact that Judaism, Hinduism and the Catholic religion have drastic differences that give them their own standing. However, certain things were common in all three of the religions. For starters, the acceptance level that the believers gave to us as outsiders. That is commendable as it reflects how the religion teaches its followers to treat everyone with respect and inclusiveness. Secondly, all three of the religions had love, respect and faith at the core. So, these religions do not just teach how to worship but they teach the believers great values that are necessary to function in daily life. Lastly, even though the religions have many different teachings festivities and beliefs, the main aspect is to bring people together. These religions teach the followers how to function in a unit and how to move in a community. I would definitely like to go to a Catholic again to refresh my experience and I will also add Jewish and Hindu Temples in my site visit bucket list. This shows that no matter how different a religion is at the end of the day the core is always based on inclusivity and respect.

Works Cited

Hemeyer, Julia Corbett. *Religion in america*. Routledge, 2016.

Joseph, Morris. Judaism as Creed and Life. Routledge, 2018.

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