

The Father, The Son and the Holy Guest Star

Season 16, Episode 21 – available on DVD and via digital streaming on the compilation video “Kiss Me, I’m a Simpson”

Theme: Catholicism

Synopsis:

Bart is unjustly blamed for a prank and expelled from school. After looking at other schools, Marge decides to enroll Bart in St. Jerome's Catholic School.

Marge becomes concerned over Bart's interest in the Catholic Church. Homer goes to the school to confront Father Sean, but reconsiders after having a pancake dinner and playing Bingo. Homer decides to convert to Catholicism, as well, to be absolved of his sins.

With Bart and Homer both considering joining the Church, Marge seeks help from Rev. Lovejoy and Ned Flanders, who agree to stop them. Marge, Lovejoy, and Ned capture Bart and try to bring Bart back to the "one true faith": The Western Branch of American Reform Presbylutheranism.

Bart says it is stupid that all the different forms of Christianity are feuding, explaining that the few stupid things they disagree on are nothing compared to the many stupid things they agree on.

The episode then jumps 1,000 years into the future, when Bart is believed to be the last Prophet of God. In this age, mankind is waging war over whether Bart's teachings were about love and tolerance, or understanding and peace. Unable to come to an agreement, one side cries Bart's catchphrase "Eat my shorts", the other cries "Cowabunga" and both sides engage in a bloody battle.

Lesson Summary

1. Opening 10 minutes
 - Welcome, especially new students or guests.
 - Pass out nametags.

- Light chalice.
- Repeat opening words.
- 1 minute of silent meditation. Begin and end with the gong.
- Check in

2. Briefly introduce episode and show it 25 minutes

3. Wall To Wall 5 minutes

Have participants gather in the center of the room. Designate one corner of the room as “agree” and the other as “disagree”. Read the following statements and have the participants go to the corner that best describes their belief.

- Most Christians believe the same thing.
- There is a wide spectrum of beliefs within Christianity.
- My parents would be concerned if I wanted to become a Catholic.
- Catholics have more rules than other Christian denominations.
- It’s hard to discuss religion with other people.
- I believe in an afterlife.

4. Discussion Questions 15 minutes

- Have you ever been unjustly accused of doing something wrong? How did you handle it?
- What does Marge mean when she says “I love you but sometimes I don’t like your choices”?
- How did Father Sean come to join the Catholic Church?
- Why is Marge so concerned about Bart’s interest in Catholicism?
- Why does Homer have an interest in Catholicism?
- Does Catholicism have “a lot of rules”? What do you do if you break a rule? How does Homer react to this? How do you react to this?

- Homer says, “I never heard of anyone getting so upset about religion.” Have you experienced people getting upset about discussions of religion?
- Rev. Lovejoy says, “A different faith means a different afterlife.” Marge pictures the afterlife for her and for a Catholic Homer to be very different. Do you believe in an afterlife? What would it be like?
- Bart says, “This is the Catholic Church. Chicks don’t have any authority here.” What does he mean by this?
- Should churches use entertainment to try to get people to join?
- Homer says, “Shouldn’t Bart and I be allowed to choose our own religion?” Lisa agrees with him and expresses her belief in Buddhism. How does that statement fit in with UU principles?

5. Activity (optional)

15 minutes

Discuss this quote from Bart: “Don’t you get it? It’s all Christianity, people. The little stupid differences are nothing next to the big stupid similarities.” Do most Christian faiths differ mostly in the details? Why do people care so much about the details? Using the PowerPoint slides, discuss the differences and similarities in beliefs between different denominations. After each topic is compared, ask for opinions on what UUs believe.

6. Closing

1 minute

Total Class Time:

56-71 minutes

Sacred Text

Catholic	Orthodox	Lutheran	Presbyterian	Episcopalian	Methodist	Baptist
The Bible, Church fathers, popes, bishops	The Bible only	The Bible only	The Bible and the Confession of Faith	The Scriptures and the Gospels, Church fathers	The Bible only	The Bible only

What do UUs Believe?

Mary

Immaculate Conception: Mary herself was conceived without original sin
Virgin Birth: Mary conceived a child without original sin

Catholic	Orthodox	Lutheran	Presbyterian	Episcopalian	Methodist	Baptist
Belief in the immaculate conception and Virgin Birth. Bodily assumption into heaven instead of death.	Honored highly, but no immaculate conception or bodily assumption into the heavens.	Belief in Virgin Birth but not an immaculate conception.	Belief in the Virgin Birth but not immaculate conception. Mary is not a mediator between man and God, but she should be honored as a model.	Belief in the Virgin Birth but not an immaculate conception.	Mary was the mother of Jesus and one of his disciples. Belief in the Virgin Birth but not an immaculate conception.	Belief in the Virgin Birth but not an immaculate conception.

What do UUs Believe?

Satan and Demons

Catholic	Orthodox	Lutheran	Presbyterian	Episcopalian	Methodist	Baptist
Demons are fallen angels who can never repent. Satan is a pure spirit, powerful and evil, but limited by God's providence	Satan is one of humanity's three enemies, along with sin and death	Some Lutherans understand Satan to be a very real being, others view Satan metaphorically.	Satan represents those temptations which entice us to act in ways contrary to God's goodness.	Differs; long history of questioning the literal existence of the devil	No official doctrine on the devil; most believe Satan is figurative, at most	Historic Baptists believe in the literal reality and actual personality of Satan

What do UUs Believe?

Resurrection of Christ

Catholic	Orthodox	Lutheran	Presbyterian	Episcopalian	Methodist	Baptist
A real event, historically verified.						

What do UUs Believe?

Inerrancy and Inspiration of Scripture

Inerrancy: Biblical inerrancy is the doctrinal position that the Bible is accurate and totally free of error
Inspiration: Biblical inspiration is the doctrinal position that the Bible is divinely inspired

Catholic	Orthodox	Lutheran	Presbyterian	Episcopalian	Methodist	Baptist
Inspired and inerrant; interpreted by the Pope	Inspired and inerrant	Inspired and inerrant	Inspired; for some it is inerrant but not for all	Inspired	Inspired and inerrant	Inspired and inerrant

What do UUs Believe?

Purgatory and Hell

Catholic	Orthodox	Lutheran	Presbyterian	Episcopalian	Methodist	Baptist
Believe in purgatory and hell.	Believe in hell, but not purgatory.	Believe in hell, but not purgatory.	Belief in hell by some, but not purgatory. 51% of members and 46% of pastors believe in hell (1996 statistic).	Believe in hell, but not purgatory.	Believe in hell, but not purgatory.	Believe in hell, but not purgatory.

What do UUs Believe?

Free Will

Catholic	Orthodox	Lutheran	Presbyterian	Episcopalian	Methodist	Baptist
Free to do good or evil.	"Man is truly free only when he is in communion with God; otherwise he is only a slave to his body or to the world."	Free only to do evil	Free only to do evil; believe it is through the action of God working in us that we become aware of our sinfulness and our need for God's mercy and forgiveness.	Man has no power to do good works, unless the grace of God goes before us so that we may have a good will, and continues to work with us after we are given that good will.	"We have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us."	Variety of opinions.

What do UUs Believe?