There is a question that seems simple, almost innocent, but which contains one of the great intellectual and spiritual challenges of our time:

**If you had been born in Saudi Arabia, you would probably be Muslim. If you had been born in India, perhaps Hindu. If you had been born in Thailand, possibly Buddhist. And if you had been born in Spain, Italy, or Poland, you would probably be Christian. So, does this not prove that our religion simply depends on where we are born?**

The argument has intuitive force. We all know people who belong to a religion mainly because they received it from their family, their people, or their culture. Geography seems to determine faith.

But here a fundamental confusion arises: **explaining sociologically why a person comes to know a religion is one thing; proving that religion to be true is something quite different.**

Being born in a particular place can greatly influence what we know. But it does not necessarily determine what is true.

If truth depended on geography, then there would be no universal truth. Mathematics would be different depending on the continent; human nature would change when crossing a border; and good and evil would simply be local conventions.

The Catholic faith, however, begins from a radically different affirmation: **God belongs to no nation, culture, or region. God is the Creator of all men. And Jesus Christ did not come to found a national religion, but to save the human race.**

That is why the Church is called precisely **Catholic**, that is, universal.

## 1. Geographical Relativism: An Objection That Seems Stronger Than It Really Is

The argument is usually formulated like this:

> *"If you had been born in another country, you would have another religion. Therefore, no religion can claim to possess the truth."*

But let us examine the reasoning carefully.

It is true that our birthplace influences our beliefs. But whether it determines the truth of those beliefs is another matter.

Imagine a child born into a family that believes the Earth is flat. That child will probably initially learn that the Earth is flat. But the fact that he was born into that family **does not make flat-Earth belief true**.

The same applies to religion.

Birth explains to a considerable extent **how we come to hold a particular belief**, but it does not by itself answer the decisive question:

**Is that belief true?**

Confusing these two questions is a logical error.

Geographical relativism turns a sociological observation—"culture influences our beliefs"—into a metaphysical conclusion—"therefore, no religious belief can be universally true."

The first statement is obvious.

The second does not follow from it.

And this is precisely where the religious question begins.

## 2. Truth Does Not Change When We Cross a Border

Suppose one person is born in Madrid and another in Tokyo.

Both belong to different cultures, speak different languages, and may have received different religious traditions.

But if there is a true God, **God is the same for both**.

There is no "Spanish God" and "Japanese God."

There is no truth for Europe and another truth for Asia.

There is no Western morality and another Eastern morality when we are speaking of genuinely universal moral principles.

Truth, by definition, does not depend on our geographical coordinates.

Therefore, the fundamental question should not be:

**“Where were you born?”**

but:

**“Which religion truly corresponds to the truth about God, man, and salvation?”**

The Catholic Church does not claim that Christianity is true because Europe was Christian for centuries. Nor because Spain has a deep Catholic tradition, nor because our parents had us baptized.

The Church asserts something much deeper:

**Jesus Christ is truly God made man, He truly died and rose again, and He founded a Church destined for all peoples.**

If this is true, then its truth is not confined to Galilee, Rome, Spain, or Europe.

## 3. From the Beginning, Jesus Christ Breaks Religious and National Boundaries

This becomes extraordinarily clear in the Gospel.

Jesus was historically born among a particular people: Israel.

He speaks a particular language.

He lives within a particular culture.

He has a particular genealogy.

His humanity is truly situated in history.

But precisely here we encounter one of the great mysteries of Christianity: **the eternal Son**

**of God enters a particular history in order to offer universal salvation.**

Christ does not say to His Apostles:

“Go only to Israel.”

After His Resurrection, He gives them a completely different mission:

> ***“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”*** *(Mt 28:19).*

The expression is decisive: **all nations**.

Christianity was not meant to remain a Jewish sect.

From its origin, it carried a universal vocation within itself.

The Catechism explains that the Church is Catholic precisely because Christ is present in her and because she has been sent by Him to the whole human race.

And this is fundamental for answering geographical relativism.

If Jesus Christ had founded a religion exclusively tied to one nation, we could speak of an ethnic religion.

But He did not.

## 4. Pentecost: When God Speaks to All Peoples

There is a particularly significant scene in the Acts of the Apostles.

At Pentecost, men from different peoples hear the Apostles proclaim the wonders of God.

They are not required to abandon their cultural identity.

They are not asked to become culturally Jewish.

What they receive is the Gospel.

Here we see an extraordinary characteristic of the Church: **unity without cultural uniformity**.

The Church can speak Spanish, Latin, Greek, Arabic, Coptic, Armenian, Polish, or any other language.

She can exist in Africa, Europe, America, Asia, or Oceania.

She can legitimately incorporate cultural elements compatible with the faith.

But the truth she proclaims remains the same.

This is precisely what Catholicity means.

The Catechism teaches that the Church is called to take root in the variety of cultural, social, and human settings, expressing herself externally in diverse ways without losing her unity.

Culture changes.

Language changes.

Architecture can change.

Music can change.

Customs can change.

**God’s Revelation does not change.**

## 5. Does This Mean That All Religions Are Equal?

Here we must be very clear.

The fact that there are many religions **does not prove that they are all true**.

The existence of many explanations for a question does not mean that all of them are equally correct.

If five people give five different answers to a mathematical problem, we do not conclude that all five answers are true.

Asking about God also requires rational and theological discernment.

Religions can contain elements of truth, moral insights, spiritual practices, and even a sincere search for God.

But recognizing elements of truth in other religions **does not oblige us to affirm that all religions teach exactly the same truth**.

The Catholic faith holds that the fullness of Revelation is found in Jesus Christ.

That is why Saint Paul can say:

> ***"There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all"*** *(Eph 4:5–6).*

He does not say that there are many contradictory religious truths.

He speaks of **one faith**.

## 6. But Then, What About Those Born in Places Where They Never Knew the Gospel?

This is one of the most important questions and also one of the most delicate.

It would be profoundly unjust to present Catholic doctrine as though God automatically condemns a person simply because he was born in a non-Christian country.

The Church teaches something much more nuanced.

The Catechism teaches that those who, **through no fault of their own**, do not know the Gospel of Christ and His Church, but sincerely seek God and strive to fulfill His will under the influence of grace, may attain eternal salvation.

This does not mean that religions are indifferent.

It means something much more beautiful:

**God judges man with perfect justice and knows the circumstances, possibilities, and conscience of every person.**

Salvation still comes from Christ.

But God's mercy is not limited by geographical borders.

The person born in a remote village who never had a real opportunity to know the Gospel is not in the same moral situation as someone who knows the Christian truth and deliberately rejects it.

God is not unjust.

## 7. Catholic Universality Does Not Mean Imposing a Culture

Here there is another contemporary confusion.

Some people identify Catholicism with a particular European civilization.

But the Church is far older and far more universal than any particular cultural project.

Catholicism does not consist in turning all peoples into Europeans.

It consists in bringing all peoples to Christ.

The difference is enormous.

That is why we can see saints from extraordinarily diverse backgrounds: Europeans, Africans, Asians, Americans, and people belonging to completely different cultures.

Holiness has no nationality.

An African saint does not need to become culturally European in order to be a saint.

A Japanese saint does not need to stop being Japanese.

An Eastern Christian does not cease to belong to the Church by preserving legitimate expressions of his tradition.

The Church can embrace everything that is true, good, and compatible with the faith.

But there is also a limit: **culture cannot become the supreme criterion of Revelation.**

Culture does not judge Christ.

It is Christ who enlightens and purifies all cultures.

## 8. The Church Is Not a Federation of National Religions

This question is of enormous importance.

Catholicism does not consist in each people having “its own version” of the faith.

There is no Spanish Catholicism essentially different from Japanese Catholicism.

There can be legitimate differences in discipline, spirituality, devotion, language, or rite.

But the faith received from the Apostles is one.

The Catechism precisely points out that the various particular Churches, with their legitimate liturgical, spiritual, and cultural riches, manifest the Catholicity of the undivided Church.

This explains something that can sometimes be surprising to someone discovering traditional Catholicism: the traditional Roman liturgy, for example, can be celebrated in very different cultural settings and still express the same sacrifice of Christ.

Universality does not require eliminating every tradition.

On the contrary.

True universality allows different legitimate traditions to share in the same faith.

## 9. The Great Paradox: The Church Is Universal Precisely Because She Does Not Depend on a Culture

Here we perhaps find the deepest answer.

A religion created exclusively by one culture could hardly claim to be universal.

But Catholicism is born from an extraordinary affirmation:

**God has entered history.**

Christ truly belongs to human history, but He is not reduced to it.

He is Jewish according to His humanity.

But He is also the eternal Word of God.

That is why He can be recognized by all peoples.

The same Christ who was worshiped by the first Christians in Jerusalem is the Christ worshiped today in Madrid, Manila, Nairobi, Mexico, Warsaw, or Seoul.

The Church does not need to invent a new Christ for each culture.

**Christ is enough for everyone.**

## 10. Geographical Relativism Can Also Become an Excuse

There is something pastorally important that we should point out.

Sometimes the statement “if I had been born somewhere else, I would have another religion” is not really an intellectual search.

It can become a way of avoiding the question.

Because if we accept that our culture influences us, a responsibility arises:

**to examine critically what we have received.**

This applies equally to a Catholic, a Muslim, an atheist, a Buddhist, or an agnostic.

If we have received a particular worldview from our parents, we should ask ourselves:

**Is it true?**

Mature faith does not consist simply in repeating what we received.

But neither does it consist in rejecting it simply because we received it.

It consists in seeking the truth.

A traditional Catholic should not be afraid of this question.

On the contrary: he should use it as an opportunity to deepen his faith.

## 11. The Church Invites Everyone, Not Only Those Born Catholic

There is an important spiritual consequence here.

If the Church were simply a European cultural inheritance, her mission would have ended when Europe began to secularize.

But the Church does not live by geography.

She lives from Christ.

That is why she continues to proclaim the Gospel.

Christ's command remains in force:

> ***"Go into all the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation"*** *(Mk 16:15).*

The Church is missionary by her very nature. The Catechism recalls that her mission originates in the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that God wills all men to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Therefore Christianity cannot be confined within a kind of religious nationalism.

The Church does not say:

"Christ is ours because He was born among us."

She says:

**“Christ is for everyone because He is the Savior of all.”**

## 12. What Does This Mean for a Catholic in the Twenty-First Century?

It has very concrete consequences.

### First: We Must Not Be Ashamed to Affirm the Truth

In an age dominated by relativism, it may seem arrogant to affirm that a religion is true.

But humility does not mean denying the truth.

The Catholic does not say:

“I am right because I am superior.”

He says:

**“I have received a truth that I did not invent.”**

Faith is not a cultural trophy.

It is a gift.

### Second: We Must Know Our Faith

If we want to respond to relativism, repeating phrases is not enough.

We must know Sacred Scripture, the Catechism, Tradition, the Fathers of the Church, the history of Christianity, and the reasons for the credibility of the faith.

An ignorant faith easily becomes vulnerable.

A well-formed faith can engage in dialogue without fear.

### Third: We Must Distinguish Evangelization from Imposition

Evangelization does not mean coercion.

Faith requires a free response.

Christ calls, invites, converts, and transforms.

The Christian must proclaim the truth with charity, patience, and coherence.

The power of the Gospel does not depend on the aggressiveness of the evangelizer.

### Fourth: We Must Live Consistently

The best response to relativism is not merely an argument.

It is a transformed life.

If the Catholic faith is true, it must produce saints.

It must produce faithful marriages, strong families, chaste young people, holy priests, honest workers, people capable of forgiving, and Christians capable of suffering without despair.

Truth that does not transform life eventually becomes theory.

## 13. Does Your Religion Depend on Where You Were Born?

In part, your birth can explain **how you came to know a particular religion**.

But it does not prove **which religion is true**.

The place where you were born may have conditioned your first ideas about God.

But it has no authority to decide who God is.

Geography explains our personal history.

**It does not determine metaphysical reality.**

And here lies the greatness of Catholicism:

The Church does not belong to one race.

She does not belong to one continent.

She does not belong to one language.

She does not belong to one era.

She does not belong to one nation.

**She belongs to Christ.**

And Christ belongs to all men.

That is why the Church can pass through centuries, empires, revolutions, cultural changes, and political borders without ceasing to proclaim the same Gospel.

From Pentecost to our own day, the Church has carried the same fundamental proclamation:

**Jesus Christ is Lord.**

## 14. One Universal Faith Because One God Created All

Ultimately, the answer to geographical relativism is found in the Christian vision of man itself.

If we all come from the same Creator, if we have all been created in the image of God, if we all need redemption, and if Christ died for all, then it makes sense that the Gospel is destined for all.

Saint Paul expresses it with extraordinary clarity:

> ***"There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"*** *(Gal 3:28).*

This does not eliminate legitimate differences among peoples.

It integrates them into a higher reality.

The Church does not destroy nations.

**She gathers them together in Christ.**

She does not destroy cultures.

**She purifies and elevates them when they contain truth and goodness.**

She does not destroy identities.

**She directs them toward a deeper identity: that of children of God.**

## Conclusion: Truth Has No Passport

We live in an age in which it is constantly repeated that each person has “their own truth.”

But truth cannot depend on our preferences.

Nor can it depend on our geographical coordinates.

If God exists, God is true for the Spaniard and the Chinese, for the African and the American, for the believer and for the person who is still searching.

If Christ is truly the Son of God made man, then He is not “the Christ of the West.”

**He is the Christ of all.**

That is why the Church cannot confine herself to one culture, nor become a mere relic of European civilization.

Her vocation is much greater.

She is Catholic because she is universal.

And she is universal because she has received from Christ a mission directed to **all nations, all peoples, and all ages**. The Catechism summarizes this Catholicity by affirming that the Church proclaims the fullness of the faith, possesses the fullness of the means of salvation, and is sent to all peoples.

So when someone asks:

**“Wouldn’t you belong to another religion if you had been born somewhere else?”**

we can answer calmly:

**“I would probably have received a different religious education. But that would not prove that religion to be true. Truth does not change when we cross a border.”**

The decisive question is not where we were born.

It is **what we do after encountering the question of truth**.

Because God has no nationality.

Christ has no borders.

Salvation has no passport.

And the Church, faithful to the command of her Lord, continues to repeat to all peoples and every generation:

> ***“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations”*** *(Mt 28:19).*

That is true Catholic universality: **one faith, one Lord, one Church, and one truth offered to all men.**