



The Truth of the Catholic Faith and Dialogue with Religions in Today's World

In recent decades, a phrase has become widespread that, although it may appear well-intentioned, requires a profound clarification from the Catholic perspective: **“We all worship the same God.”**

Many times, this expression is used as a sign of respect, coexistence, and the desire for peace among religions. However, from a rigorous Catholic theological perspective, this statement can be imprecise and may even lead to an important doctrinal confusion.

The Catholic Church teaches that **there is one true God**, Creator of heaven and earth, but it also teaches that the fullness of divine revelation is found in Jesus Christ, true God and true man. Therefore, although the Church recognizes elements of truth and holiness present in other religions, it does not affirm that all religions worship the same God in the same sense, nor that all religious conceptions are equivalent.

This question becomes especially important when studying the declaration of the Second Vatican Council:

“*Nostra Aetate*,” promulgated on October 28, 1965, concerning the relationship of the Church with non-Christian religions.

This document marked a historic change in the way Catholics approach their relationship with those who belong to other religious traditions. It was not a renunciation of Christian identity nor an affirmation that all religions are equal. On the contrary: it was a call to truth, respect, and dialogue from the firm foundation of one's own faith.

1. What Really Is *Nostra Aetate*?

The Latin expression *Nostra Aetate* means **“In our time.”** It is a brief but extremely important declaration approved during the Second Vatican Council.

Its main purpose was to respond to an evident reality: the modern world was becoming increasingly interconnected, with peoples, cultures, and religions living together in the same



spaces.

The Church understood that it could not ignore this reality. It was necessary to provide Catholics with a clear orientation on how to relate to people belonging to other religious traditions.

The document begins by stating:

“In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together and the ties between different peoples are being strengthened, the Church examines more closely her relationship with non-Christian religions.”

The intention of the Council was not to say:

- All religions are true.
- All religions lead equally to God.
- All religions worship the same God.
- Jesus Christ is merely one option among many.

None of these ideas appear in *Nostra Aetate*.

What does appear is a call to recognize that God has not left humanity without any sign of His presence.

2. The One God, but the Full Revelation in Christ

The Catholic faith begins with a fundamental truth:

There is only one God.



The Sacred Scripture expresses this clearly:

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”
(Deuteronomy 6:4)*

Christianity does not believe in several gods. It is not a religion among many that simply proposes a different image of divinity. The Christian faith affirms that the one God has revealed Himself definitively in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Himself said:

*“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the
Father except through me.”
(John 14:6)*

This statement of Christ is central to understanding the Catholic position.

The Church cannot affirm that all religions present the same image of God because the differences are real and profound:

- Christianity confesses God as **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**.
- Judaism does not accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Lord.
- Islam rejects the divinity of Christ and the Trinity.
- Other religions have conceptions of the divine that are radically different.

Therefore, although there may be a common reference to God as Creator, **there is no complete identity between the Catholic faith and other religions.**



3. So What Does the Church Mean When It Speaks of Interreligious Dialogue?

This is one of the points where confusion often arises.

Dialogue does not mean making everything equal.

Respect does not mean accepting everything.

Loving one's neighbor does not mean denying the truth.

A Catholic can and must dialogue with people of other religions because every person possesses a dignity that comes from being created by God.

The Church teaches that every human person is created in the image of God:

*"God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."
(Genesis 1:27)*

Therefore, Christians must look at others with respect, even when there are profound doctrinal differences.

But authentic love never eliminates truth.

A father who loves his children does not tell them that everything is irrelevant. A mother who loves does not hide reality to avoid difficulties. In the same way, the Church loves all people, but she cannot abandon the truth she has received from Christ.



4. The Relationship with Judaism: A Unique History

Nostra Aetate dedicates a special section to the Jewish people.

The reason is profound: Christianity was born within the history of Israel.

Jesus was Jewish.

The Virgin Mary was Jewish.

The apostles were Jewish.

The Church recognizes that:

“The Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God’s saving mystery, the beginnings of her faith and her election are already found among the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets.”

Saint Paul expresses this relationship:

“They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, is the Christ.”
(Romans 9:4-5)

However, recognizing this common root does not mean affirming that Judaism and Christianity are currently the same faith.

The fundamental difference is Jesus Christ.



For the Catholic Church, Jesus is not merely a spiritual teacher or a prophet, but:

“*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*”
(John 1:14)

The relationship with Judaism must be marked by respect, historical gratitude, and absolute rejection of antisemitism, but also by fidelity to Christ.

5. The Relationship with Islam: Common Points and Essential Differences

Nostra Aetate also speaks about Muslims.

The document recognizes that:

“*The Church regards with esteem also the Muslims, who adore the one God.*”

This statement must be correctly understood.

The Church recognizes that Islam has a monotheistic reference and that many Muslims sincerely seek to serve God.

However, this does not mean that Islamic doctrine about God is identical to Christian revelation.

There are fundamental differences:

The Trinity

The Catholic faith confesses:



One God in three Persons:

- The Father.
- The Son.
- The Holy Spirit.

Islam rejects this truth because it considers that it compromises divine unity.

Jesus Christ

For Christians:

Jesus is God made man.

For Islam:

Jesus (*Isa*) is an important prophet, but not God.

Here we find an essential difference.

Therefore, simply saying “we worship the same God” without further explanation can create a false impression of doctrinal unity that does not exist.

6. Why Do Some People Say That All Religions Worship the Same God?

Normally, this phrase arises from three intentions:

1. Seeking Peace

Many people want to avoid religious conflicts and express:

“We all believe in something higher.”

The intention may be good, but the expression requires precision.



2. Recognizing Common Elements

Many religions share:

- Prayer.
- Spiritual searching.
- The importance of morality.
- Belief in a transcendent reality.

But having common elements does not mean having the same faith.

Two people may speak about love, but understand it in completely different ways.

3. A Relativistic Vision

In some cases, a modern idea appears:

“All religions are equally valid paths toward God.”

This position does not correspond to Catholic doctrine.

The Church teaches that there are seeds of truth in other religions, but she affirms that Christ is the definitive fullness of revelation.

7. What Does the Church Really Teach About Non-Christian Religions?

The Second Vatican Council uses an important expression:

“Seeds of the Word.”

This means that elements of truth and goodness may exist in different religious cultures.

God can act in the hearts of people who sincerely seek the truth.



However, these seeds find their fullness in Christ.

As Saint Paul says:

“In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
(Colossians 2:3)

The Church does not despise what is good outside her.

But she also cannot hide what she believes she has received:

Christ is the universal Savior.

8. The Danger of a False Religious Dialogue

There is a frequent mistake in our time:

Confusing dialogue with renunciation.

Some people think:

“To respect another religion, I must stop affirming my own faith.”

This is false.

True dialogue requires people who have an identity.

A Catholic who does not know what he believes will hardly be able to engage in a profound dialogue.

Authentic dialogue does not consist in saying:



“You are right and I am also right, even though we affirm contradictory things.”

That would simply be relativism.

True dialogue consists in saying:

“I respect you as a person, I listen to your religious experience, but I share with you the truth that I believe I have received from God.”

9. The Attitude of a Catholic Toward Other Religions

A well-formed Catholic should avoid two extremes.

First Extreme: Contempt

A Christian must never look with arrogance upon those who do not share his faith.

Christ died for everyone.

Every person has infinite dignity.

Second Extreme: Relativism

Nor should a Christian think:

“It does not matter what one believes.”

The Catholic faith has an objective content.

Jesus Christ did not say:

“I am an option.”

He said:



| *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."*
(John 14:6)

10. Practical Application in Today's Society

We live in societies where people of different religions coexist.

This creates concrete challenges:

- Schools with students from different beliefs.
- Multicultural neighborhoods.
- Diverse workplaces.
- Mixed marriages.
- Public debates about religion.

How should a Catholic act?

With Charity

Never with hatred or contempt.

With Clarity

Without hiding his faith.

With Humility

Recognizing that he himself needs conversion every day.



With a Missionary Spirit

Because proclaiming Christ remains a mission.

Jesus said:

“Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation.”
(Mark 16:15)

11. The Great Question: If We Do Not Worship the Same God, Should We Fight Against Each Other?

The Christian answer is clearly:

No.

Religious differences should never lead to hatred.

The Christian is called to love even those who think differently.

Jesus taught:

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”
(Matthew 5:44)

Truth and charity must never be separated.



The Church rejects both contempt toward other religions and the idea that all religions are identical.

12. Conclusion: Fidelity to Christ and Respect Toward Everyone

Nostra Aetate is not a document that says all religions are equal.

It is a document that teaches something much deeper:

That Christians must approach the world with love while carrying within themselves the truth of Christ.

We do not simply worship “the same God” understood as if all religions were equivalent.

The Church believes that there is one true God, but she also believes that this God has revealed Himself fully in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, a Catholic can say:

“I deeply respect every religious person. I recognize everything good that exists in other traditions. I want to live in peace and dialogue with everyone. But my faith leads me to profess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the fullness of all revelation.”

True peace does not come from erasing differences.

It comes from truth accompanied by charity.

As Pope Benedict XVI taught:

The Christian faith is not an idea created by human beings, but an encounter with a Person: Jesus Christ.

And this encounter is the greatest treasure that the Church is called to proclaim to the whole world.