Although the polytheistic beliefs of the Aztec and Inca Empires in the 1450s did not continue, the Catholic Church that was instituted by those who conquered the polytheistic cultures did continue and became popular in the region. Even though there have not been a large number of religions in Latin America and the Caribbean through history, the Catholic Church has remained the most prominent since European conquest.

Latin America underwent a major change in that its inhabitants shifted from practicing polytheistic and animistic beliefs, to widely adopting the monotheistic Christian faith. From 1450-1519, native groups were mainly polytheistic and animistic. The Aztec and Inca Empires, for example, each believed in gods of nature, specifically a sun god. Human sacrifice and animal sacrifice played a large part in their rituals and customs. These practices and religious beliefs were practiced without question or change until Western European explorers and conquistadors came to Mexico and Peru beginning in the early 16th century in search of gold and silver for their governments. In the process, they transformed the Latin American and Caribbean world. In 1519, when conquistadors like Hernan Cortes came and subjugated the Aztec people, until 1820 when most of Latin America began to win their independence, Christianity became a large factor in the Western Hemisphere. When the Aztec and Inca Empires were conquered, many of the surviving people were taken and forced to work on plantations and in silver mines. Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors whose countries were going through a time of religious turmoil and reformation enforced Christianity not only to change the natives' religion and to civilize them, but to justify their reasons for taking the natives as slaves. The Europeans rooted out the polytheistic or “pagan” beliefs and tried to enforce their own religion on the helpless natives. Another religious change came when the African people were brought to Latin America and the Caribbean by the Europeans to work as slaves. The Africans brought with them their own religions and customs and, although the Europeans tried to convert them as well, some African beliefs remained. This is demonstrated by the practice of Vodun (Voodoo) in some Caribbean nations like Haiti which is a syncretic religion, blending Christianity with traditional African animism.

From 1820 to the present, when Latin Americans and those in the Caribbean fought for their independence and made new countries for themselves free from European imperialism, Christianity continued to be the predominant religion – in particular Roman Catholicism. This happened because of the active work of missionaries like the Jesuits, the establishment of churches and Catholic schools, and the large number of converts throughout the region. The Catholic Church became very dominant and in some cases the leaders in revolutions and political uprisings against foreign powers. This is demonstrated by the work of Father Hidalgo, a Catholic priest, in Mexico’s first attempt at independence from Spain in 1810. The Catholic Church held much land and wealth as it grew in the Latin American and Caribbean nations. The Catholic religion also became cause for feuds among political leaders. Although slavery was outlawed, the African religion and customs did not continue to be major player in the religious world.

Between 1450 and the present, most Native Americans in Latin America and the Caribbean changed from primarily practicing polytheistic and animistic religions to adopting Christianity. Africans also introduced their own style of beliefs to this region in the form of Voodoo. However, for most of this time, Christianity was practiced, especially in the form of Roman Catholicism.