

Calendar of Holidays

September 2018 - September 2019

September 1

Church year begins (Orthodox Christianity)

This day marks the beginning of the Orthodox Christian liturgical calendar.

September 3 [Moves]

Krishna Janmashtami (Hinduism)

This day celebrates the birthday of Lord Krishna, the eighth avatar, or incarnation, of Vishnu. Upon his birth, his life was threatened by his uncle, King Kansa, who believed that Krishna was fated to kill him. Kansa ordered that Krishna be brought to him, but the baby was miraculously carried away to a safe hiding place. Hindus celebrate this day with a large feast. Sweets are given to children, and a clay statue of Krishna is worshipped in every home.

September 7 [Moves]

Paryushana (Jainism)

Paryushana is a word that means "to stay in one place." Originally, this was a monastic practice, drawing from the tradition of monks staying in one place during the rainy season. Now, all use this time to slow down, fast, reflect and repent.

September 8

Nativity of Mary (Christianity)

This feast originates in fifth century Jerusalem and celebrates the birth of the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus. This is recognized in the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches.

September 9-11 (Begins at sundown on the 9th) [Moves]

Rosh Hashanah (Judaism)

Rosh Hashanah, marks the seventh month in the Jewish calendar and the beginning of the Jewish civil new year. It is also referred to as "the day of the sounding of the shofar," as a shofar, or ram's horn, is blown in the synagogue on this day (the horn is not blown if Rosh Hashanah falls on the Sabbath). This day is reserved for prayer and penitence, commemorating the Creation of the world as written in the Bible. It marks the beginning of the ten Days of Awe, a time for introspection and repentance, which culminate in Yom Kippur.

September 10-11 (Begins at sundown on the 10th) [Moves]

Al-Hijra: Islamic New Year (Islam)

This is the first day of Muharram, the first month in the Islamic calendar, and it marks the migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E.

September 12

Ghambar Paitishem (Zoroastrianism)

This is the third of the six Ghambar festivals in the Zoroastrian year. This five-day seasonal festival celebrates the creation of the earth, and the summer crop harvest.

September 12 [Moves]

Ganesha Chaturthi (Hinduism)

This day is celebrated as the birthday of Ganesha, the elephant-headed son of Shiva and Parvati. Known as the supreme god of wisdom, prosperity and success, Ganesha bestows his presence on earth during this time. In some traditions, clay figures of Ganesha are made and worshiped for a period of two to ten days, then are thrown into the river as ritual departure back to Kailash, the sacred mountain on which he lives.

September 13 [Moves]

Samvatsari (Jainism)

The last day of Paryushana is called Samvatsari, or the International Day of Forgiveness. Jains spend this day in prayer and contemplation, and seek forgiveness from friends, relatives and others whom they may have harmed or offended in any way.

September 14

Holy Cross Day (Christianity)

This day recognizes the Cross as a symbol of triumph in the Christian religion. The date traces back to the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on September 14, 335. By order of Saint Helena and her son, the first Christian Roman Emperor Constantine, the church was built over the ruins of the Crucifixion and Burial sites in Israel. According to some traditions, it was also at this site that Helena found the True Cross.

September 18-19 (Begins at sundown on the 18th) [Moves]

Yom Kippur (Judaism)

Occurring on the tenth day of Tishri, the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur is also known as the Day of Atonement. Yom Kippur is considered the holiest day of the Jewish year, in which people atone for the sins of the past year. It is solemnly observed with ceremonial repentance and strict fasting for a twenty-four hour period.

September 23-30 (Begins at sundown on the 23rd) [Moves]
Sukkot (Judaism)

The Festival of Sukkot, also known as Feast of the Tabernacles, begins on Tishri, the 15th day after Yom Kippur. The word Sukkot refers to temporary dwelling places, or huts, and the holiday commemorates the 40-year period in which the children of Israel wandered the wilderness, living in temporary huts for protection. In some practices, temporary huts are constructed - which must have ceilings made of organic material - and all eating, praying and sleeping must take place here for the duration of the holiday. As a Jewish Biblical pilgrimage festival, Sukkot is one of three holidays during which Jews historically traveled to the Temple in Jerusalem.

September 23

Mabon (Neo-Paganism--Northern Hemisphere)

Mabon is the autumn equinox in the Northern Hemisphere. It is a time when the day is as long as the night, and people prepare for the coming winter days by storing their harvest.

September 23

Higan / Fall Equinox (Buddhism, Japan)

This holiday is celebrated twice a year, during the spring and fall equinoxes. This is an important date for Jodo Shinshu Buddhists in particular. Many Japanese visit their ancestors' graves to pay respects, often leaving flowers and treats like ohagi: rice balls that are coated in soybean paste.

September 27

Meskel (Ethiopian/Eritrean Orthodox Christianity)

This day commemorates the finding of the True Cross - the physical remnants of the cross on which Jesus was crucified - by Queen Eleni (St. Helena) in the fourth century. The celebration includes burning a large fire, to symbolize the bonfire that Queen Eleni was told to make in a dream. As told in her prophesying dream, the smoke from the fire leads to the burial site of the True Cross. When the fire is extinguished, followers use the charcoal to make the sign of the cross on their foreheads. In the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant traditions, the finding of the True Cross is celebrated on September 14th.

September 29

Feast of St. Michael and All Angels (Christianity)

Also known as Michaelmas, this day recognizes the Archangel Michael, one of the principal angelic warriors, and other angels. Christians give thanks for the different ways that God watches over them.

October 1-2 (Begins at sundown on September 30th) [Moves]

Shemini Atzeret (Judaism)

Shemini Atzeret, meaning the "eighth day of assembly," is celebrated after the seventh day of Sukkot, but is in fact a holiday separate from Sukkot. It is often explained that Sukkot is like a seven-day party, where the Creator is the host who has invited his visitors for a limited time. On the eighth day, he has had such a pleasurable time that he asks for guests to stay an extra day. Shemini Atzeret marks the beginning of the rainy season. On this day, no work is permitted and a prayer for rain, called tefilat geshem, is recited, so that it will be plentiful and bring healthy crops.

October 1-2 (Begins at sundown on the 1st) [Moves]

Simchat Torah (Judaism)

In the Jewish tradition, the Torah - the first five books of the Hebrew Bible - is divided and read over the course of a year. Simchat Torah, which means "rejoicing in the Torah," is the day when the reading of the Torah is completed and the next year's reading commences. The end of the text and the beginning of the text are read back-to-back to remind all that the story is a circle that never ends. Synagogue services involve selected readings, processions of the Torah scrolls, and blessing of the children.

October 4

St. Francis Day (Christianity)

This day celebrates St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals and the environment. Born Giovanni Francesco Bernardone in 1181, he fled a wealthy family to embrace a life of simplicity and poverty. He was known for his love of nature and all creatures. Many Christian churches welcome pets on St. Francis Day to be blessed, and patrons reflect on the importance of all beings in creation.

October 7 [Moves]

World Communion Sunday (Christianity)

This holiday, recognized by Christians around the world, was started in a congregation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1933. The Rev. Dr. Hugh Thomson Kerr, pastor of the Shadyside Presbyterian Church, conceived World Communion Sunday as a way to bring different congregations together in Christian unity. The concept did not gain in popularity until World War II, when people began to see the value of uniting in faith and spirit to get through troubling times. Dr. Kerr was also the first pastor to have his worship services broadcast over the radio.

October 8 [Moves]

Thanksgiving in Canada (Interfaith)

Thanksgiving in Canada falls on the second Monday of October each year. Today, this holiday celebrates the end of the harvest season with family gatherings and special meals. However, history records that the first Canadian Thanksgiving, held in 1578, actually applauded a safe homecoming for Martin Frobisher, an explorer who was on a treacherous search for the Northwest Passage. Frobisher threw a formal feast in Newfoundland to celebrate surviving his journey.

October 9-17 [Moves]

Navratri (Hinduism)

Navratri, meaning "nine nights," is a joyous festival honoring the divine mother, Shakti. This festival falls around harvest time, and each day is spent worshiping one of Shakti's three manifestations: Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. The first three days invoke Durga, the warrior goddess, to destroy all impurities and vices. Lakshmi is worshiped during the next three days as a giver of spiritual wealth and prosperity. Finally, the last three days honor Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom. The festival culminates with Dussehra.

October 12

Ghambar Ayathrem (Zoroastrianism)

This is the fourth of six Ghambar festivals in the Zoroastrian calendar. This five-day harvest festival celebrates the creation of plants, sowing the winter crop, and the return of herds from pasture.

October 18

Feast of Saint Luke, Apostle and Evangelist (Christianity)

This feast day celebrates Saint Luke, patron saint of physicians, artists, students, butchers and much more. Tradition credits him with authoring the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles and was mentioned in the New Testament as a doctor and a disciple of Paul.

October 19 [Moves]

Dussehra (Hinduism)

This is the Hindu day of victory and valor, marking the time when Lord Rama was victorious over the evil Ravana, who had abducted his wife. In celebration, paintings of Rama's life are displayed, and effigies of Ravana, often stuffed with explosive materials, are put in public places. During this time, people reflect on their lives and denounce any evil that may be within them.

October 20

Installation of Scripture as Guru Granth (Sikhism)

The Granth is the Sikh scripture, a collection of hymns and writings started by Arjan Dev, the fifth guru (spiritual master), and completed by Gobind Singh, the tenth guru. Upon his death, Guru Gobind Singh declared the Granth to be the final Guru, and his successor for all time. This holiday commemorates the installation of the Sikh scriptures, Adi Granth, as the Permanent Guru, or final teacher. The scriptures are a compilation of sermons and songs written by Guru Nank, the founder of Sikhism, and other writings by respected holy men. The writings embody the universal message of Truth, Peace, Compassion, Equality and Service.

October 20 [Moves]

Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib (Sikhism)

Present day Sikhism is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak, the first Guru, and the nine Gurus who followed him. Every year, Guru Nanak's birthday commences with an Akhand Path: a reading of the Sikh holy scriptures continuously from beginning to end. This reading takes over 48 hours, and begins two days prior to Guru Nanak's birthday. The day before his birthday, processions are held with singers and musicians, and the actual birthday is spent singing, praying, decorating gurdwaras (Sikh temples), and feasting together.

October 24 [Moves]

Pavarana Day / Kathina Ceremony (Buddhism)

This day is the end of the three-month rainy retreat season for Buddhist monks. One story tells us that a group of Monks were traveling to spend their retreat with the Buddha but did not make it in time. According to the rules of Vassa, they sadly had to halt their trip and wait until the season's end. When they finally made it to the Buddha, he cheered them up by allowing them to roam free and collect cloth to sew into new robes. Today, a Kathina robe ceremony is often held, where Buddhists offer cloth to make robes for the monks. This and other donations are made to express gratitude for the monks.

October 28

Milvian Bridge Day (Christianity)

In the Christian tradition, this is a day of solemn reflection on the relationship of religion and the civil government. On October 28, 312 C.E., Constantine fought and prevailed in a battle against Maxentius, who drowned crossing the Milvian Bridge. Constantine became the new emperor, and subsequently made Christianity the legal religion of the Roman Empire. This initially brought the persecution of Christians to an end; however, Constantine's decision resulted in problems and future battles with secular powers. The struggle between religion and politics continues today, and thus is reflected upon on this holiday.

October 31

Reformation Day (Protestant Christianity)

On this day in 1517, Augustinian monk Martin Luther nailed a document to the door of the castle chapel in Wittenberg, Germany. This document, later named "Ninety-five Theses," contained arguments against the current practices of the Church, particularly the sale of indulgences (forgiving sins in exchange for money). In 1520, Luther and his supporters were excommunicated, which led to the Protestant Reformation. This day is celebrated as an anniversary of the Protestant Christian tradition, and a day for religious freedom.

October 31

All Hallows Eve / Halloween (Christianity)

Set on the eve of All Saints Day, in which all saints in the Christian tradition are celebrated, All Hallows Eve is a time to keep vigil and pray for the dead. Most of the current practices associated with All Hallows Eve, or Halloween - such as costumes, Trick or Treating and Jack O' Lanterns - can be traced back to England and Ireland. Ancient Celts believed that the boundary between the living and the dead dissolved on this day, and that evil spirits returned to cause sickness or damage crops, so they wore costumes and masks to copy and placate the dead. Trick or Treating resembles the medieval practice of "souling," in which poor people would go door to door, receiving "soul cake" (typically shortbread or pastry) in exchange for prayers for the dead. Jack O' Lanterns are related to the Irish legend of Stingy Jack, a greedy farmer who tricked the devil into climbing a tree and trapped him there by carving a cross into the trunk. In revenge, the devil cursed Jack and condemned him to forever walk the earth at night.

November 1

All Saints Day (Christianity)

Because the Church was canonizing so many saints that it was becoming difficult to give each saint an individual feast day, Pope Gregory III set November first as the day to recognize all saints and martyrs, both known and unknown. These people, who have a reputation for living great lives of devotion and holiness, are celebrated through prayer.

November 1

Samhain (Neo-Paganism, northern hemisphere)

Samhain celebrates the end of the harvest season and, in correlation with All Hallow's Eve and All Saints Day, recognizes the dead. A feast is often held with an extra place setting for a deceased family member, and stories are told about them.

November 2

All Souls Day / Day of the Dead (Roman Catholicism)

All Souls Day is devoted to prayer and remembrance for friends and loved ones who have passed. This day originated as an ancient Pagan Festival, in which the souls of the dead were believed to return to their family for a meal. Traditionally, candles were placed in the windows to guide the souls home, and an extra place setting was put at the dinner table. In addition, children would go door to door and ask for food to symbolically feed the dead. Unlike All Saints Day, All Souls Day observes those who have not yet reached heaven, and who linger in purgatory. Prayers of the faithful will help cleanse the souls of the dead and help them reach heaven more quickly.

November 7 [Moves]

Deepavali, Diwali, Jain New Year (Hindu - Sikh - Jain)

Deepavali / Diwali is a merry festival that is celebrated for five days, the third day being the height of the festival. Diwali commemorates the defeat of evil King Ravana, and the return of the good Lord Rama from his 14-year exile. Also known as the Festival of Lights, diyas (small clay lamps) and fireworks are ignited, and the light of these symbolizes the victory of good over evil. Gifts are given and festive meals are prepared. This festival is primarily celebrated in the Hindu, Sikh and Jain traditions, though it is also recognized by the Buddhists of Nepal.

November 8 [Moves]

New Year's Day (Jainism)

On the second day of Diwali, Jains celebrate the New Year. This is an occasion for gatherings and wishing others well.

November 9 [Begins on the evening of Nov. 8th] [Moves]

Birth of the Bab (Baha'i)

One of the eleven holy days on the Baha'i calendar, this day marks the Birth of Bab ud-Din (Mirza Ali Muhammad), who declared himself a Prophet of God. Born in 1819 in Shiraz, Iran, his mission was to reform Islam, and his teachings became the foreground for the later developed Baha'i tradition. Baha'is celebrate this day with gatherings to pray, eat together, and read about his life.

November 12

Birth of Baha'u'llah (Baha'i)

This day celebrates the birth of the Baha'i founder and teacher, Baha'u'llah. Born to an affluent family in Persia in 1817, Baha'u'llah spent many of his later years as a prisoner and in exile for his work in the Babi movement. It was in his prison cell that he had his new religious revelation and the Baha'i faith was born. On this day, one of nine holy days in the Baha'i religion, Baha'is do not work. Many observe the day in small celebrations or gatherings where prayers are said from Baha'u'llah's writings.

November 20-21 (Begins at sundown on the 20th) [Moves]

Mawlid al-Nabi (Islam)

Mawlid al-Nabi means "the birth of the Prophet." This day celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, founder of Islam. In some sects, the day is spent reciting litanies and special sermons, honoring religious dignitaries, gift giving and feasting.

November 22 [Moves]

Thanksgiving (Interfaith, USA)

Thanksgiving is a harvest festival, often celebrated with large family meals that incorporate traditional foods. It is argued that the earliest Thanksgiving celebration was held in either 1565 C.E. in St. Augustine, Florida, or 1621 in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

November 24

Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (Sikhism)

Guru Tegh Bahadur was the ninth Sikh Guru, executed in 1675 for refusing to convert to Islam. This day commemorates his martyrdom, and remembers him not only for his defense of the Sikh faith, but also for all religious liberty.

November 25 [Moves]

Christ the King (Christianity)

Christ the King is a title for Jesus based on several passages of Scripture. On this day, Christians celebrate the preeminence of Jesus over all earthly authorities. The Feast of Christ the King falls on the last Sunday of the liturgical year, before a new year begins with the First Sunday of Advent.

November 26

Day of the Covenant (Baha'i)

In his last will and testament, Baha'u'llah, the leader of the Baha'i faith, appointed his oldest son 'Abdul-Baha, to be his successor and the Center of the Covenant. He was identified as the authorized interpreter of Baha'u'llah's writings, the perfect exemplar of his Father's teachings, and a model man for all Baha'is to emulate. This day celebrates 'Abdul-Baha and the establishment of Baha'u'llah's Covenant.

November 28 [Moves]

First of Advent / Nativity Fast (Orthodox Christianity)

The Nativity fast, which begins on this day and leads up until Christmas, is a time of spiritual preparation for the birth of Jesus. Certain foods cannot be consumed, such as oil, fowl, certain fish and wine, and the fasting reminds Orthodox Christians of sacrifice in anticipation of the holy day.

November 28

Ascension of 'Abdul-Baha (Baha'i)

'Abdu'l-Baha passed away on November 28, 1921. This day commemorates his death, celebrates the rising of his spirit, and reminds Baha'is to rededicate themselves to following his example.

November 30

Saint Andrew's Day (Christianity)

St. Andrew is the patron saint of Greece, Romania, Russia and Scotland, where this day is a national holiday. In Greece, a special ceremony is held in St. Andrew's Basilica in Patras, which houses St. Andrew's relics and is built over the location where he was martyred. Upon his death, St. Andrew asked to be killed on a cross in the shape of an "X", as he did not feel worthy to die on a cross similar to Jesus'. This "X", known as St. Andrew's cross, is symbolized on the Scottish Flag.

December 2 [Moves]

First Sunday of Advent (Christianity)

This is a Christian time of preparation before the birth of Jesus. Often observed with the lighting of advent candles, display of wreaths and special ceremonies, some cultures also observe Advent via calendars with small boxes or pegs affixed that contain gifts to open on each day leading up to Christmas.

December 3 – December 10 (Begins at sundown on the 2nd) [Moves]

Hanukkah (Jewish)

Also known as the Festival of Lights, Hanukkah commemorates the 164 B.C.E. Maccabean recapture and rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. During this celebration, special readings and songs that focus on liberty and freedom are performed, and gifts are often given. Hanukkah lasts for eight nights, and on each night a candle from the Menorah is lit to represent the miracle of the eternal flame. Tradition has it that there was only enough consecrated olive oil to fuel the flame in the Temple for one day, but the oil miraculously burned for eight days, the time it took to prepare and consecrate fresh olive oil.

December 6

Saint Nicholas Day (Christianity)

On this day, Christians celebrate Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of children. Saint Nicholas was known for his kindness and generosity. He is also recognized for his secret gift-giving, as when he discreetly provided the dowry for three poor farmer's daughters to save them from destitution. For many, this day is celebrated by giving gifts. The American Santa Claus is derived from the Dutch Sinterklaas, another name for Saint Nicholas.

December 8

Immaculate Conception (Catholic Christianity)

The Immaculate Conception celebrates the belief that the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus, was preserved from the taint of original sin all of her life. Catholics observe this as a day of obligation, meaning that church attendance is required.

December 12

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Catholic Christianity)

In December of 1531, Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin saw visions of the Virgin Mary on the hill of Tepeyak near Mexico City. On December 12, Mary instructed him to ask church officials to build a basilica in her honor in Mexico City. When Juan Diego asked for a sign, she placed roses in a blanket that he carried with him on his journey to the city. Upon arrival, he unrolled the blanket to find an image of Mary imprinted on the cloth. The Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe was built in her honor, and thousands of Catholics make pilgrimages there every year. This day is celebrated with festivals, dances and special masses.

December 16-25

Posadas Navideñas (Christianity)

In Hispanic Christian tradition, Posadas are the celebrations that happen during the nine days before the "Noche Buena" or "Holy Night" of December 24th. These Posadas are an enactment of Joseph and the Virgin Mary looking for lodging on their pilgrimage to Bethlehem. In some practices, families in a neighborhood take turns hosting, or playing the part of innkeeper, while others have a door-to-door procession with candles and symbolic elements.

December 18 [Moves]

10th Tevet (Judaism)

The 10th day of the Hebrew month of Tevet is a Jewish fast day that reflects upon Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia's siege of Jerusalem 2,500 years ago. This event ultimately led to the destruction of the First Temple, Solomon's Temple, and Babylonia's conquest of Israel's Kingdom of Judah.

December 21 (Solstice)

Yule (Christianity, Pagan)

Yule marks the winter solstice, the longest night of the year, and celebrates the rebirth of the sun in the Norse pagan tradition. The modern day, western Yule festival contains a large blend of celebrations, leading back to multiple cultures and religious practices. Christians often celebrate this as the birth of light through Jesus. Practices include decorating a fir or spruce tree, burning a Yule log, hanging mistletoe and holly branches and giving gifts.

December 21

Tohji-Taisai (Shinto)

This day marks the decline in the sun's presence, depicted as the Japanese sun goddess, Amaterasu, who withdrew into a cave in reaction to the impetuous behavior of the storm god Susano-o. Because rice and other crops will not grow in her absence, the other gods needed to entice her back out.

December 25

Christmas (Christianity)

Christmas is the Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus. The actual date of Jesus' birth is unknown, but December 25th was made popular by Pope Liberius of Rome in 354 A.D. Although this day is celebrated by Christians throughout the world, traditions and practices vary within different cultures and communities. The day is often celebrated in prayer and song at church services, and gifts are often given to represent the gifts Jesus received from the three kings.

December 26

Death of Prophet Zarathushtra (Zoroastrianism)

This day commemorates the death of Zoroaster, an Iranian prophet and philosopher that founded Zoroastrianism. Zoroaster believed that the purpose of humankind was to live truthfully, and to pursue constructive thoughts and deeds. Iranian followers of Zoroastrianism observe this day on December 26th, often through mourning and prayer. Parsi followers observe Zoroaster's death in May.

December 26 - January 1

Kwanzaa (African-American/Canadian)

This holiday, created by the activist, author and professor Maulana Karenga in 1966, celebrates African-American heritage. Kwanzaa is derived from the Swahili term for "first fruits of harvest," and is often celebrated with feasts, sharing libations, and lighting candles in the kinara. The seven candles represent the seven principles of African heritage: Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith).

December 28

Feast of the Holy Innocents (Christianity)

Holy Innocents is the Christian day of solemn reflection, recognizing the male children of Bethlehem who were killed by Herod the Great in his attempt to eliminate the infant Jesus, whom he deemed as a threat to the throne.

December 30

Feast of the Holy Family (Catholic Christianity)

This day celebrates the family unit, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and is recognized with special prayer. The moveable feast is usually celebrated the Sunday after Christmas, or if Christmas is on a Sunday, December 30th.

December 31

Watch Night (Christianity)

Watch Night began in the early 1700s with the Moravians, a small Christian denomination from what is the present-day Czech Republic. Participants attend special church services to reflect upon and give thanks for the previous year, and pray for the future. Watch Night became a significant event for African-American Christian communities after the celebration of 1862, the evening before the Emancipation Proclamation went into affect and abolished slavery.

December 31

Ghambar Mailyarem (Zoroastrianism)

Ghambars are seasonal festivals, and occur six times per year in the Zoroastrian calendar. Ghambar Mailyarem is the mid-year winter feast and, like the other Ghambars, is celebrated for five days.

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January 1

Feast of St. Basil (Orthodox Christianity)

This day celebrates St. Basil, one of the great fathers of the Orthodox Church. An influential Christian theologian and monastic, Basil was also known for his attention to the underprivileged and poor, and his writings on asceticism.

January 1

Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus (Orthodox Christianity)

This Feast commemorates the naming and circumcision of the baby Jesus, eight days after he was born.

January 1

Gantan-sai (Shinto)

Gantan-sai is the Shinto celebration of the new year (oshogatsu). This day is one of the most popular for shrine visits, as many pray for inner renewal, health and prosperity.

January 1

Mary, Mother of God (Catholic Christianity)

This liturgical feast celebrates the Virgin Mary and her motherhood of Jesus. Some countries recognize this day with church services.

January 5

Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh (Sikhism)

Gobind Singh (1666-1708) was the tenth Sikh Guru, and the last of the human-form Gurus. On his birthday, Sikhs celebrate Gobind Singh as a saint and a soldier: he worked toward reforming his religion, and persevered in the face of persecution.

January 5

Twelfth Night (Christianity)

The Twelfth Night marks the conclusion of the twelve days of Christmas and the eve of Epiphany. According to tradition, three kings arrived in Bethlehem twelve days after Jesus' birth to bestow gifts. This night is celebrated much like Christmas Eve, with merrymaking, eating traditional foods like King Cake, and parties.

January 6

Epiphany (Christianity)

Epiphany commemorates the Magi's visit to Bethlehem, and the revelation of Jesus as God in human form. Some traditions celebrate Epiphany by giving gifts to represent the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh that Jesus received from the wise men. In Hispanic countries, this day is referred to as Dia de los Reyes, Three Kings Day, and children receive gifts from los reyes magos: the three wise men.

January 6

Nativity of Christ (Armenian Christianity)

This day marks the Armenian Orthodox celebration of Christ's birth and baptism. It is preceded by a seven-day fast and, on the eve of the feast, a Divine Liturgy is celebrated in honor of Jesus as the Son of God, followed by a Blessing of the Waters. The Blessing of the Waters symbolizes Jesus' descent into the Jordan River, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him. The following day, worshippers often partake in drinking or anointing with the blessed water.

January 6

Dia de los Reyes / Three Kings Day (Hispanic Christianity)

In some Hispanic countries, Epiphany is called El Dia de los Reyes, or the Day of the Kings, to commemorate the 3 kings, or Magi, who visited Jesus and bore him gifts. In Spanish tradition, the three kings represented Europe, Arabia, and Africa, and arrived on a horse, camel, and elephant. Children and adults leave their shoes out for the Kings' presents before they go to bed the night before, and leave treats to refresh the traveling Magi.

January 7

Feast of the Nativity (Orthodox Christianity)

The Feast of the Nativity is the Orthodox Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus. It is also the break of a 40-day fast, in which participants purify both body and soul in preparation for Christ's birth.

January 13 [Moves]

Bodhi Day, Rohatsu (Buddhism)

This day marks the time when Prince Siddhartha Gautama, a spiritual teacher and founder of Buddhism, positioned himself under the Pipul tree and vowed to remain there until he attained supreme enlightenment. Buddhist traditions vary as to what Siddhartha's experience was while meditating under the tree, but all agree that upon the rising of the morning star, he had experienced enlightenment and attained Nirvana: a state of being free from suffering and broken from the cycle of rebirth.

January 13

Maghi (Sikhism)

Maghi is the day in which Sikhs commemorate the martyrdom of the Forty Immortals, followers of Guru Gobind Singh who were all killed while fighting a Mughal army. On this day, many Sikhs gather in Muktsar, India, the original site where Gobind Singh blessed the martyrs and cremated their bodies. Sikhs visit their palaces of worship (gurdwaras) and listen to hymns (kirtan).

January 13 [Moves]

Baptism of Lord Jesus (Christianity)

Although Eastern Christianity celebrates the baptism of Jesus at Epiphany, Catholics and Episcopalians celebrate his baptism by Jean the Baptist on the following Sunday. This day is also the beginning of ordinary time on the liturgical calendar.

January 17

Blessing of the Animals (Hispanic Christianity)

Saint Anthony, the Patron Saint of the Animal Kingdom, is recognized on this day. Similar to St. Francis of Assisi's feast day, animals are welcome and blessed at many church services.

January 18-25

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Christianity)

This eight-day observation began in 1908 as a way to unite the different sects of the Christian faith. Since the 1950s, Protestant and Catholic groups have worked together to write joint publications for use during the week of prayer.

January 19

Feast of Theophany (Orthodox Christianity)

The Orthodox Church marks this day as the anniversary of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. For the Feast of Theophany, Orthodox Christians reflect on their own baptism and salvation.

January 19 [Moves]

Timkat (Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity)

Timkat is the Ethiopian Orthodox celebration of Epiphany: the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. During this celebration, there is a ritual reenactment of the baptism and a procession with the Tabot, a model of the Ark of the Covenant. The clergy often dress in bright robes, carrying colorful umbrellas, and sing and dance as they escort the Tabot back to the church.

January 20 [Moves]

World Religions Day (Baha'i)

On this day, members of the Baha'i faith recognize all faith traditions and note their common denominators. Commencing in 1950, the goal of World Religions Day is to help foster interfaith understanding and harmony.

January 21 [Moves]

Mahayana New Year (Buddhism)

The Mahayana New Year begins with the first full moon and lasts for three days. It is a time to reflect on the past and cleanse oneself from the prior year's sins to make a fresh start.

January 21 (Begins at sundown on the 20th) [Moves]

Tu B'shvat (Judaism)

This day is known as the new year for trees, as it is the day that the age of trees are calculated for tilthing. In tradition, fruit from trees may not be consumed in the first 4 years of life - as the first three years are forbidden, and the fourth year the fruit is for God. One tradition on this day is to eat from the seven species abundant in Israel: wheat, barley, grapes, pomegranates, olives, figs, and dates.

January 25

Conversion of St. Paul (Christianity)

On this day, Christians commemorate the conversion of Paul the Apostle. Previously known as Saul of Tarsus, a great persecutor of Christians, Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, when he had a vision of Christ.

January 31

Birthday of Guru Har Rai (Sikhism)

Guru Har Rai (1630-1661) was the seventh of the 10 human-form Sikh Gurus. He is celebrated for his compassion for life and living things. Tradition says that at a young age, he was disturbed by the suffering of a flower after he accidentally damaged it in passing. This strong compassion continued throughout his life and his work.

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February 2

Saint Brigid of Kildare (Celtic / Christianity)

Saint Brigid of Kildare, who lived from 451 to 525 C.E., is one of Ireland's patron saints. She was an Irish Christian nun, and the founder of several convents including Kildare Abbey, one of the most prestigious abbeys in Ireland.

February 2

Candlemas (Christianity)

Under Mosaic law, after giving birth to Jesus, Mary was obligated to go to the temple with an offering and have the priest pray for her, so that she would be ritually cleansed. This event thus marked the first solemn "presentation of Jesus" in the temple. Since the 4th century, when Jesus' birth was set at December 25, this "presentation day" and "feast of the purification of Mary" was set on February 2. In Catholic tradition, beeswax candles were blessed on this day and then distributed to the clergy and the laity, after which there was a procession. Such processions with candles take place even today, with the priest leading the procedure stopping occasionally to chant "the light of Christ," which is then intoned by the people.

February 2

Imbolc (Neo-Paganism)

Falling halfway between the Winter Solstice and the spring equinox, Imbolc celebrates the increased growing power of the sun, and the anticipation of spring. This celebration is commonly thought to be a precursor to Groundhog Day.

February 3 [Moves]

Four Chaplains Sunday (Interfaith)

In February of 1943, the U.S.A.T. ship Dorchester was transporting troops to European battlefields with over 900 soldiers aboard when it was hit by a torpedo off the coast of Greenland. The ship sank in 20 minutes, and only 230 soldiers survived the icy ocean waters. Survivors recounted how the ship's four chaplains—a Catholic priest, a Methodist minister, a Protestant Reverend, and a Jewish rabbi—helped the men into their life jackets and onto the lifeboats. When life jackets ran out, the four, who had been friends since chaplains' school, took off their own jackets and gave them to individuals who still needed them. From accounts, they were last seen with their arms linked and praying aloud as the Dorchester sank, killing them and over 600 other soldiers. They are remembered today with a number of interfaith services.

February 3 [Moves]

Setsubun-sai (Shinto)

This festival marks the end of "Kan," the coldest season. Beans are commonly thrown to keep demons away.

February 5 [Moves]

Chinese New Year (Confucian/Daoist/Buddhist)

The most important holiday for the Chinese, the New Year is a time to reflect on the past and celebrate the future. This is a 15-day celebration with each day having special significance. The first day is recognized as the time to welcome the gods of heaven and earth, and many people abstain from eating meat. Sons-in-law pay respect to their spouses' parents on the third and fourth days. On the fifth day, people remain in the home to welcome the god of wealth, while during the sixth through the tenth days, relatives and friends are visited. The fifteenth and final day ends with the Lantern Festival, held at night. Traditionally, trays of oranges, tangerines, and candy, as well as vases of flowers are displayed. Elders often give red envelopes with money to children. The color red, used extensively in decoration and dress, symbolizes good luck and wards off evil spirits.

February 10 [Moves]

Vasant Panchami (Hinduism)

This festival is dedicated to Saraswati, the goddess of learning. On this day, schools and colleges often organize special worship of Saraswati, many participate in special activities at Hindu temples, and young children are taught their first words.

February 11

Our Lady of Lourdes (Christianity)

This marks the day in 1858 when St. Bernadette had her first vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the city of Lourdes in southern France. She had 18 apparitions in all, one of which told her to dig for a spring. The water of this spring is said to have great healing powers, and Christians make pilgrimages to visit this spring and the church that was built on the property.

February 14

St. Valentine's Day (Christianity)

Pope Gelasius assigned February 14th as Saint Valentine's Day in 496 CE. This day commemorates the death of Saint Valentine of Rome, who, according to tradition, was martyred on February 14th ca. 270 C.E. However, less commonly known, this day also recognizes another Saint Valentine: Saint Valentine of Terni, who was martyred in 197 C.E. Saint Valentine's Day was not associated with romantic love until the High Middle Ages, when legends and stories about Valentine were written and popularized by Geoffrey Chaucer and his circle.

February 15

Nirvana Day (Buddhism)

This day, celebrated by some on 2/8, marks the Buddha's death and when he reached Nirvana at the age of 80. Nirvana is the end to all wanting, and thus the end to all suffering that craving brings about. Buddhists who observe Nirvana day often do so by examining their lives, in order to make changes needed to help them achieve perfect peace. Observances sometimes take place in monasteries, where people read the Parinibbana Sutta, one of the Buddhist texts that describes the Buddha's final days.

February 17 [Moves]

Triodion begins (Orthodox Christianity)

Triodion is the three week preparation period before Lent begins. Followers gradually modify their diets and meditate on themes like humility, repentance and forgiveness, to prepare for the great fast, prayer, and worship that happens over Lent.

February 19 [Moves]

Magha Puja (Buddhism)

Magha Puja is the day the Buddha addressed a meeting of 1250 arhats: spiritual practitioners that had reached a certain level of enlightenment. The Buddha introduced to them these principles: cease from evil, do what is good, and cleanse one's mind. On this day, temples in Thailand hold candlelight processions, walking clockwise three times around the Uposath Hall-- once for the Buddha, once for the Dharma, and once for the Sangha.

Sundown on February 26 - March 1

Intercalary Days (Baha'i)

The Intercalary Days, or "Days of Ha," occur between the eighteenth and nineteenth months of the Baha'i Calendar, and end one day before the Baha'i fast begins. There are four Intercalary Days in ordinary and five in leap years. These are days of preparation for the Fast; days of hospitality, charity, ministering to the poor and sick, the giving of presents, and so on.

March 1

Saint David of Wales (Christianity)

Saint David, the patron saint of Wales, was a church official who lived during the sixth century. It is said that he lived for 100 years, in which he founded many churches and monasteries, and was celebrated for his teaching, preaching, and for living a simple life. His saying, "Do the little things in life," is a well-known Welsh phrase.

March 2-20

Fast of Ala (Baha'i)

The Baha'i calendar is comprised of 19 months of 19 days each. The fast of Ala occurs during the last month of the Baha'i year, when Baha'is fast from sun up to sun down. All healthy individuals between the ages of 15 and 70 participate in the fast, which is done in spiritual preparation for the New Year, Naw Ruz.

March 3 [Moves]

Meatfare Sunday (Orthodox Christianity)

Traditionally, this is the last day that Orthodox Christians eat meat before commencing their fast, which lasts until Easter.

March 3 [Moves]

Transfiguration Sunday (Christianity)

Transfiguration Sunday, celebrated on the last Sunday before Lent, marks the day that Jesus was "transfigured" on the mountain. His appearance became radiant, and he was joined by both Moses and Elijah. The disciples who were with him saw him in this dazzling glory, and they heard a voice from heaven that said, "This is my beloved son... Listen to him."

March 4 [Moves]

Maha Shivaratri (Hinduism)

Also known as the "Great Night of Shiva," this day celebrates Lord Shiva, one of the great Hindu deities, with a day of fasting, an all night vigil, and offerings of leaves from the Bilva tree - a tree of great medicinal value that was loved by Lord Shiva.

March 5 [Moves]

Shrove Tuesday (Christianity)

Shrove Tuesday is the last day before the beginning of Lent, during which Christians are supposed to examine their lives, confess their sins, and receive advice on mending their ways - as the time of Lent represents purification. In Old English, the word "shrove" referred to the act of listening intently to someone and giving advice. The French term for this day, Mardi Gras, means Fat Tuesday, which is said to come from the custom the French had of using up all the fats they had in the house for cooking, since the food during Lent's time of "fast and abstinence" would entail leaner cuisine. The fat would be baked into rich meals on Mardi Gras, and often what was cooked ended up being a pancake of sorts; thus the custom still observed in some parts of the western world of eating pancakes on the day before Lent. In many places it is a time for a final "celebration" before the 40 days of purification that precede Easter.

March 6 [Moves]

Ash Wednesday (Christianity)

In the Western Church, Lent - the fasting season marking Jesus' time in the wilderness - commences with Ash Wednesday. Many Christians attend church, where their foreheads are marked with ashes in the form of the cross. The ashes consist of the burnt remains of palms blessed on Palm Sunday the previous year. The cross of ash symbolizes belonging to Jesus Christ, and reminds people of their human mortality.

March 10 [Moves]

Cheesefare Sunday (Orthodox Christianity)

Also known as the "Sunday of Forgiveness," this day often reflects on Adam and Eve and their exile from the Garden of Eden, emphasizing the human fall into sin and separation from God. This reminder prepares Orthodox Christians for the intense fasting of Lent - a time to focus and seek forgiveness from God. This is the last day that dairy products can be consumed before the Lenten fast.

March 11 [Moves]

Great Lent / Clean Monday (Orthodox Christianity)

On this day, referred to as "Clean Monday," Orthodox Christians leave behind sinful attitudes and certain foods as they prepare for the Great Lent. This is a seven-week period of fasting to prepare for Orthodox Easter, the greatest feast of the year.

March 13

Birthday of L. Ron Hubbard (Scientology)

Born in 1911, Lafayette Ronald Hubbard was a science fiction writer who founded the Church of Scientology in 1953, in Camden, New Jersey. Hubbard originally developed a self-help system called Dianetics in 1950, and these ideas grew into doctrines and rituals that became Scientology, an applied religious philosophy. Today, followers of the Church of Scientology recognize his birthday.

March 16-20

Ghambar Hamaspathmaeden (Zoroastrianism)

This is the last of the six Ghambar festivals in the Zoroastrian calendar. Ghambars are joyous occasions when communities gather to share a feast. Food is contributed anonymously, and participants give according to their means and ability to contribute. This particular five-day Ghambar celebrates the creation of humans, and is a time to remember souls who have passed away.

March 17

St. Patrick's Day (Christianity)

St. Patrick, the Patron Saint of Ireland, was credited for spreading Christianity in Ireland and abolishing pagan practices in the fourth century. Today, St. Patrick's Day is celebrated world-wide with large parades, Irish-themed food and drink, and wearing of the color green. The symbol of the shamrock is often associated with St. Patrick's Day, as St. Patrick used the three leaves to explain the mystery of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

March 17 [Moves]

Orthodox Sunday (Orthodox Christianity)

Celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent, Orthodox Sunday recognizes the victory and restoration of icons for use in church services and private devotional life.

March 18

Higan (Buddhism)

Higan, or Ohigan, is celebrated twice a year, during the spring and fall equinoxes. This is an important date for Jodo Shinshu Buddhists in particular. On this date, the day and night are the same length, symbolizing equality and harmony. Buddha appears on earth during this week to save stray souls, thus many Buddhists visit cemeteries and pay respects to their passed ancestors.

March 19

Saint Joseph's Day (Christianity)

This feast day celebrates Saint Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus. One Italian tradition recalls a draught, where the peasants prayed to St. Joseph for rain. When the rains came, crops were planted and then a large harvest feast was given in St. Joseph's honor. Some cultures celebrate this day by creating St. Joseph Tables: a table full of elaborate foods, though all free of meat, as this day typically falls during the fasting period of Lent.

March 20-Vernal Equinox

Ostara (Neo-Paganism)

Ostara celebrates the coming of spring, the time when the days are getting longer. It is a time to celebrate the abundance of nature and the abundance of life, and to plant crops.

March 20-21 (Begins at sundown on the 20th) [Moves]

Purim (Judaism)

Purim is a Jewish festival that recognizes the deliverance of the Persian Jews from destruction during the reign of King Ahasuerus. This story, recorded in the book of Esther, is read aloud in Synagogues on Purim, and adults and children often wear costumes commemorating the characters. In some traditions, a Purim gragger, or noisemaker, is used whenever Haman's name is mentioned in reading the Megillah, to cover up the name of evil. Families also exchange gifts and eat special foods.

March 21 [Moves]

Nowruz (Zoroastrian)

Nowruz is the celebration of the Iranian New Year, and marks the first day of spring. On this day, Persian families wear new clothing, visit each other's homes, give gifts, and act kindly, as it is said that when people act well on Nowruz, it will affect them positively for the entire year. Likewise, any fights or ill-temper on Nowruz will result in a poor year.

March 21 [Moves]

Naw Ruz (Baha'i)

Similar to Nowruz, Naw Ruz is the celebration of the New Year as adopted by Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i faith. The equinox is believed to be a symbol of the manifestations of God, and spring-time to be the carrier of new life and new beginnings.

March 21 [Moves]

Holi (Hinduism)

Holi, the Hindu spring festival also known as "the festival of colors," is a celebration of fertility, brotherhood, and the triumph of good over evil. Festivities surrounding Holi can last up to sixteen days. During the main day of celebration, people throw colored water or powder at each other until they are coated and indistinguishable from their neighbors. This symbolizes unity and brotherhood, as everyone looks the same coated in colors, and differences such as race, sex, class and creed are forgotten. Bonfires are lit to represent the destruction of evil, recalling the legend of Prahlad miraculously escaping from the fire of the demoness Holika. His escape was said to be due to his staunch devotion to the god Vishnu.

March 21 [Moves]

Hola Mohalla (Sikhism)

A week-long celebration that often coincides with the Sikh New Year, Hola Mohalla was started by Guru Gobind Singh as a day of mock battles and poetry. Today, those who celebrate the festival often camp out, watch demonstrations of fighting and bravery, and listen to music and poetry. The day is concluded with a military-style procession.

March 25

Feast of the Annunciation of Virgin Mary (Christianity)

This day commemorates when the angel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary that she would bear a child, Jesus. The feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary is celebrated with prayers and church services.

March 28

Khordad Sal (Zoroastrianism)

Khordad Sal is the birthday celebration of Prophet Zarathustra, the founder of Zoroastrianism. Considered to be one of the most important holidays on the Zoroastrian calendar, the day is spent feasting, wearing new clothes, displaying fresh flowers and gathering in fire temples for prayers.

April 3 (Begins at sundown on April 2nd) [Moves]

Lailat al-Miraj (Islam)

Lailat al-Miraj, also known as Shab-e-Miraj in Iran, Pakistan, and India, or Miraç Kandili in Turkish, is the Muslim festival celebrating the "night journey" (isra) and "ascension" (mi'raj) of Muhammad, when he went from Mecca to Al-Haram al-Sharif (also known as the Temple Mount) and was then raised to heaven (Jannah), met with the prophets and eventually with God. It is celebrated on the 27th day of the month Rajab in the Islamic calendar. From this journey, Muslims believe, the command for five daily prayers (Salat) was given.

April 5

Qingming (Chinese Traditional)

Qingming is a celebration to remember ancestors and to tend to their grave sites. Some leave offerings at graves, such as food, tea and other libations. Willow branches are often carried or hung outside doors to ward off evil spirits.

April 6 [Moves]

Hindu New Year / Ugadi (Hinduism)

Ugadi is the Hindu New Year, often celebrated with a ritual bath, prayers, and the eating of pachhadi: six flavors that represent six different life experiences. There's bitter, tang, sour, spice, sweet, and salty, to represent sadness, happiness, anger, fear, disgust and surprise.

April 6 – April 14 [Moves]

Ramayana Week (Hinduism)

Commencing with the Hindu New Year, Ramayana Week celebrates the appearance of Sri Ram, a Hindu Lord. Hindus worship Sri Ram by fasting, singing songs and dancing, and reading from the Ramayana text.

April 14 [Moves]

Rama Navami (Hinduism)

This day marks the birth of Rama, a divine figure in Hinduism who is referred to as Maryada Purushottama, or "the perfect man." Rama's birthday is celebrated with evening processions of murtis, Hindu symbolic figures, and drinking panakam, a sweet drink made of jaggery and pepper. Ceremonial weddings are also often staged in houses and temples, using murtis of Rama and his wife Sita.

April 14 [Moves]

Palm Sunday (Christianity)

Falling on the Sunday before Easter, Palm Sunday commemorates the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. It is said that a crowd greeted Jesus by carpeting his path with palms, as the palm is a symbol of triumph and victory. In many churches, palm leaves are distributed to all worshipers. In regions where palms are not available (Russia, Ukraine, and Austria to name a few) pussy willow branches are often used.

April 14

Vaisakhi / Baisakhi / New Year (Hinduism / Sikhism)

Vaisakhi is an ancient harvest festival, celebrated by both Sikhs and Hindus as the beginning of the solar new year. Sikhs also spend this day commemorating the establishment of the Khalsa - or military order of "saint soldiers" - by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. Through the Khalsa, Sikhs were given a clearer identity and code to live by. Today, the term Khalsa is used to refer to all baptized Sikhs. This holiday is celebrated around the world with parades, Seva (community service), and giving offerings at gurdwaras.

April 17 [Moves]

Mahavir Jayanti (Jainism)

Mahavir Jayanti, the most important holiday in Jainism, celebrates the birth of Mahavira, the last Tirthankara. A Tirthankara is a human being who achieves enlightenment and becomes a role-model and teacher. On this day, Jain temples are decorated with flags, and lectures are often held to discuss the path to virtue. Special ceremonies and processions are also performed, and devotees make offerings of rice, fruit, milk, and other items to those participating in the procession.

April 18 [Moves]

Maundy Thursday (Christianity)

Also known as "Holy Thursday," this Thursday before Easter commemorates the "last supper" that Jesus shared with his apostles. It was on this night that the Christian sacrament known as Holy Eucharist was introduced. Maundy Thursday observances include reading the account of the Last Supper from the Gospel.

April 18 [Moves]

Akshaya-Tritiya (Jainism)

This day celebrates the breaking of the year-long fast by the first Jain teacher, Tirthankara Rishabhdeva. Any meaningful activity started on this day will be successful.

April 19 [Moves]

Lord's Evening Meal (Jehovah's Witness Christianity)

The Lord's Evening Meal, a memorial to commemorate Christ's death, is the only holiday in which the Jehovah's Witnesses participate. They believe it is the only holiday that the Bible commands Christians to observe. On this day, a service is held and unleavened bread and wine is offered, though a very small minority partake in this offering; only those who believe they have a heavenly hope will partake.

April 19 [Moves]

Good Friday (Christianity)

The Friday preceding Easter Sunday, known as "Good" or "Holy" Friday, commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus and his death. Some Christian denominations fast on this day, and many hold special church services.

April 19 [Moves]

Hanuman Jayanti (Hinduism)

Hanuman Jayanti is the birthday of Hanuman, a monkey god and devotee of Rama. Seen as a symbol of physical strength and perseverance, Hindus often perform special chants to Hanuman when they are faced with obstacles. On this day, worshippers fast and visit temples, where they apply on their foreheads a tilak made from the vermilion coloring on the feet of a Hanuman statue. The tilak is said to bring good luck.

April 19 – 27 (Begins at sundown on the 19th) [Moves]

Pesach / Passover (Judaism)

Pesach, or Passover, commemorates God "passing over" the houses of the Jews—sparing them—during the tenth plague of Egypt. In some traditions, Passover lasts for seven days, with major feasts on the first and last days. The first night of Passover is celebrated with a seder, a special dinner where the story of the Exodus from Egypt is retold. The last day, celebrated with prayer services and special meals, commemorates the day the Children of Israel reached the Red Sea and found safety. Different traditions call for varying levels of diet restriction at this time, but generally all Jews abstain from eating chametz (leavening and fermenting agents) as it is commanded in the Torah.

April 19 [Moves]

Theravadin New Year (Buddhism)

On the first three days after the full moon in April, the Theravada Buddhists of Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Laos, celebrate the New Year. This is a time to reflect on one's karma, focus on cleansing, and offer good wishes to others.

April 20 [Moves]

Lazarus Saturday (Orthodox Christianity)

Celebrated the day before Palm Sunday, this holiday celebrates the resurrection of Lazarus, as told in the Gospel of John. Though this day is still a fast day, some cultures celebrate with special permitted foods, like caviar in Russia, and a special spice bread called Lazarakia in Greece.

April 21 [Moves]

Easter (Christianity)

Christians believe that Jesus was resurrected from the dead on Easter Sunday, on the third day after his crucifixion. This day is celebrated in different ways among the many Western and Eastern Christian traditions, including vigils, readings, reenactments, and the eating of special foods. The egg is a significant symbol of Easter, as it represents the resurrection: it is dormant, but contains a new life. Easter traditions involving eggs include egg hunts, egg games, and the gifting of candy eggs.

April 21 [Moves]

Palm Sunday (Orthodox Christianity)

Called Willow Sunday in some Slavic countries, Palm Sunday commemorates the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem and was greeted as the Messiah. Palm Sunday is celebrated on a different date in Western Christian churches.

April 21 - May 2

Ridvan (Baha'i)

On April 21, 1863, Baha'u'llah, founder of the Baha'i faith, declared his mission. To celebrate the commencement of his prophethood, Baha'is hold a twelve-day festival called Ridvan, named after the Garden of Ridvan where Baha'u'llah stayed for twelve days in exile. The first, ninth, and twelfth days of Ridvan are special holy days, marking Baha'u'llah's arrival to the garden, his family's arrival, and his departure respectively. On these days, work is prohibited and time is spent in prayer and celebration.

April 23

Saint George's Day (Christianity)

This day commemorates Saint George, one of the most prominent military saints, and patron saint of England, Greece, Russia, Ethiopia, Palestine and Portugal (among others). Saint George's Day is observed in different fashions, including flying Saint George's Cross Flag and participating in parades.

April 26 [Moves]

Holy Friday (Orthodox Christianity)

Holy Friday commemorates Jesus' crucifixion. In the Orthodox tradition, special services are held that revisit removing the Body of Christ from the Cross and entombing him. Occasionally, pilgrimages are made to Jerusalem, and processions are held that follow the route that Jesus took to his crucifixion.

April 27 [Moves]

Black Saturday / Holy Saturday (Orthodox Christianity)

Holy Saturday, the final day of Holy Week and the last day of Lent, commemorates the day that Jesus's body lay entombed in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, before his resurrection on Easter Sunday. In the Western Church, this is a time to quietly reflect on Christ's death and burial, and no Masses are held.

April 28 [Moves]

Pascha (Easter) (Orthodox Christianity)

This date celebrates Jesus' resurrection, and the end of a 40 day fast (Easter is celebrated on a different date in Western Christian churches). Many Orthodox Christians celebrate by laying Easter Eggs and Easter Bread on relatives' graves, and blessing food baskets filled with cheese, meat, eggs, butter and more--many foods that cannot be consumed during the Lenten fast. Eggs, symbolizing new life, are often dyed red to represent the blood of Christ.

April 28-29

Ninth day of Ridvan (Baha'i)

As noted above for the first day of Ridvan, this day, the ninth of the days Baha'u'llah spent in the Ridvan garden, marks the day his family arrived.

April 30

Ghambar Maidyozarem (Zoroastrianism)

This is the first of six annual Ghambar festivals celebrated by Zoroastrians. The word Ghambar is derived from "gahanbar" meaning time-storage in Persian, and alludes to the division and storage of food. As the name indicates, these five-day festivals are observations of the different seasons and harvests. They are celebrated through joyous feasts and the recognition of the seven acts of goodness: generosity of the spirit, sharing, selfless help toward those in need, community participation and inclusion, honesty, pity, and remembrance of one's ancestors. Today's Ghambar - Ghambar Maidyozarem - celebrates the sky and the winter crop harvest.

April 21 (Begins at sundown on the 20th)[Moves]

Laylat al-Bara'ah (Islam)

Occurring on the night between the 14th and 15th day of the eighth month on the Islamic calendar, Laylat al-Bara'ah is a night when Muslims are given blessings and Divine Mercy. Allah descends upon the earth after sunset and asks followers if they seek salvation. Muslims spend the night reciting the Qur'an and special prayers, and often visit deceased friends and relations.

May 1

Beltane (Neo-Paganism)

Beltane is the last of three spring festivals celebrated halfway between the spring equinox and the summer solstice. In ancient times, the festival marked the arrival of summer and continues to be recognized as the beginning of the "Light Part" of the year.

May 2 (Begins at sundown on the 1st) [Moves]

Yom HaSho'ah, Holocaust Remembrance Day (Judaism)

Commencing in 1953, Yom HaSho'ah is a remembrance day for the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. Many Jewish communities hold solemn ceremonies on this day. In Israel, Yom HaSho'ah is a national memorial day, where a state ceremony is held, flags are flown at half staff, and those who have perished are recognized with a moment of silence.

May 2

12th Day of Ridvan (Baha'i)

Beginning on April 21 and concluding on May 2, Baha'is celebrate the period when the religion's founder, Baha'u'llah, resided in a garden in Baghdad. Baha'u'llah called it the Garden of Ridvan, as Ridvan translates to paradise. It was during his time in the garden that Baha'u'llah proclaimed that he was the messenger of God for this age.

May 2 [Moves]

National Day of Prayer (USA) -(Interfaith)

On this day, citizens are asked to come together to pray- especially for their country. The National Day of Prayer was designated by the United States Congress in 1952, but was a floating holiday until Ronald Reagan fixed it on the first Thursday in May.

May 6-June 4 (Begins at sundown on the 5th) [Moves]

Ramadan (Islam)

Ramadan, the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, is the holiest month. It recognizes Muhammad's divine revelation from God, as recorded in the Qur'an. During this period, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset, and time is focused on prayer, charity and self-reflection.

May 9 (Begins at sundown on the 8th) [Moves]

Yom Ha'Atzmaut (Judaism)

Yom Ha'Atzmaut is the national independence day of Israel, commencing in 1948. Many celebrate the holiday with picnics, singing and dancing, and Hallel, a Jewish prayer of praise and thanksgiving, is often recited.

May 19 [Moves]

Buddha Day/Visakha Puja (Buddhism)

Visakha Puja celebrates the day the Buddha was born, and the day he reached his enlightenment some thirty-five years later, and the day of his death, some forty-five years after that. Buddhists believe that all three of these events took place on the day in May when the moon is full. It is an important day in the Buddhist tradition. Buddhists tend to observe the day by being generous, because of their gratitude for what the Buddha did, and perhaps also by listening to speeches about the Buddha. In contrast to many other celebrations, on this day Buddhists tend to dress much more simply than they might otherwise, and they cut down on the amount and kind of food they might eat. Offering flowers, and burning candles and incense to the Buddha is also common.

May 23 (Begins at sundown on the 22nd) [Moves]

Lag B'Omer (Judaism)

Lag B'Omer is the 33rd day between the second day of Passover and the holiday of Shavuot. There is altogether a span of 49 days between the two holidays; a time that is traditionally a period of mourning the death of Rabbi Akiba's 24,000 students over 2,000 years ago. By contrast, however, Lag B'Omer is a break in the mourning period and is therefore a time for celebration. It is the occasion of the end of the plague that killed Rabbi Akiba's students, as well as the day of passing for Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who made it clear that he wanted his death to be celebrated, rather than mourned.

May 23

Declaration of the Bab (Baha'i)

The Baha'i Faith is considered to have begun on May 23, 1844, which was the day that the individual known as "The Bab" declared his mission. The world's 5 million Baha'is have basic principles that include belief in the oneness of the human race, the unity of religions, equality of the sexes, and universal peace. Baha'is are followers of Baha'u'llah, who was born in Persia in 1817. But, not unlike the role that John the Baptist played in announcing the coming of Jesus, Baha'u'llah's coming was preceded and announced by Siyyid Ali Muhammad, who referred to himself as the Bab (meaning "the Gate"). The Bab told people that another messenger would be coming after him, and that the power of the revelation of the coming one would far exceed any message previously sent down by God.

May 29

Ascension of Baha'u'llah (Baha'i)

Baha'is believe in the oneness of the human race, the unity of religions, equality of the sexes, and universal peace; they abstain from alcohol, gambling, and gossip. Baha'is are followers of Baha'u'llah, who was born in Persia in 1817. This day, which commemorates Baha'u'llah's death and ascension to heaven, is one of nine holy days in the year. Baha'is do not work on their holy days, which for many is considered a sacrifice. Celebrations on such days are generally quiet observances. Baha'u'llah's ascension may be celebrated by a picnic, or a gathering at which prayers are said, or songs are sung from Baha'u'llah's writings.

June 1 (Begins at sundown on May 31st) [Moves]

Laylat al-Qadr (Islam)

Meaning loosely "the night of power," this is identified as the night in which God first revealed the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad. This day holds more power in prayer than one thousand months; thus many Muslims

spend the whole day in prayer and reading the Qur'an. Sunni Muslims traditionally observe Laylat al-Qadr on the 27th day of Ramadan, while Shias believe the 23rd day to be the most important. Since the specific day of the revelation is uncertain, many Muslims spend the last 10 days of Ramadan focused on prayer.

June 5 (Begins at sundown on the 4th) [Moves]

Eid al-Fitr (Islam)

Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan, the holiest month in the Islamic calendar. Ramadan recognizes Muhammad's revelation from God, as recorded in the Qur'an. During this period, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset, and time is focused on prayer, charity and self-reflection. On Eid al-Fitr, Muslims celebrate the end of fasting, and thank God for giving them the strength to practice self-control during Ramadan.

June 6 [Moves]

Ascension of Christ (Orthodox Christianity)

Falling forty days after Easter, this date marks the conclusion of Jesus's time on earth. Acts 1:9-11 state that the disciples witnessed Jesus's ascension into heaven from the Mount of Olives. The day is celebrated with prayer and special church services, and is often marked with music. It is one of the oldest celebrations of the tradition.

June 9

Saint Columba of Iona (Celtic Christianity)

This day commemorates Saint Columba (521-597 AD), one of the twelve apostles of Ireland. He led evangelizing missions in Ireland and Scotland, and was credited, with the Celtic Church, for bringing a revival of Christianity to Western Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire.

June 9-10 (Begins at sundown on the 8th) [Moves]

Shavuot (Judaism)

Also known as the "Feast of Weeks" Shavuot falls seven weeks after Pesach (Passover). The holiday commemorates both the early summer grain harvest (associated with ancient pilgrimage to Jerusalem) and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. Readings from the Hebrew Bible include the Book of Ruth and the Psalms of Praise. It is customary to eat dairy foods during Shavuot.

June 16 [Moves]

Pentecost (Orthodox Christianity)

On Pentecost, Christians celebrate the day the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles of Jesus. The word itself comes from the Greek word for "fiftieth," since the feast day takes place the 50th day after Easter. (Don't count the Sundays.) In the early days of the Christian church no courts of law were held during the week of Pentecost, and manual labor was forbidden; those practices gradually diminished. In Italy, it has been customary to drop rose leaves from the ceilings of churches, to signify the descent of the spirit. The French tended to sound trumpets, signifying the sound of the "mighty wind" that is said to have accompanied the Holy Spirit's descent upon the apostles. Pentecost is usually celebrated with a special church service and or special prayers.

June 16 [Moves]

Trinity Sunday (Christianity)

This feast celebrates the Holy Trinity, or the three persons that constitute God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christians recognize this day with special church services.

June 16

Guru Arjan Dev Martyrdom (Sikhism)

This day commemorates Guru Arjan Dev, the first Sikh martyr. Until the early 1600s, Sikhs had a peaceful history, but the new Mughal Emperor, Jahangir, was a fundamentalist Muslim who feared the growing popularity of the Sikh faith. In 1606, he had Guru Arjan Dev arrested and tortured. A few days later, when taken to bathe in the Ravi River, Guru Arjan Dev disappeared. His death changed the character of Sikh followers, from passive people to soldiers.

June 19

New Church Day (Swedenborgian Christianity)

The 18th century theologian and scientist Emanuel Swedenborg founded the New Church after a course of divinely inspired revelations. He wrote 35 volumes, which he called The True Christian Religion, to reveal hidden meaning in the Bible and address the mysteries of human life. This day celebrates the book's publication in 1770.

June 20 [Moves]

Corpus Christi (Catholic Christianity)

Corpus Christi, or the Feast of the Most Holy Body of Christ, is a day to honor the Holy Eucharist, and to commemorate the Last Supper. Catholics receive Communion on this day, accepting wine and bread in memory of the blood and body of Christ.

June 21 Solstice

Litha (Neo-Paganism - Northern Hemisphere)

Also known as the Summer Solstice, Litha is the celebration of the arrival of summer- when the days are most full of daylight, and there is abundance and fertility in the earth.

June 21

First Nations Day (Canadian Native People)

Held annually on June 21st, this day celebrates the diverse and unique cultures of Canadian Native Peoples, and also brings attention to their rights. The First Nation is a term that refers to a specific band of Canadian Natives, thus this day is often called Canada's National Aboriginal Day, to also include the Inuit and Métis people. This day is also associated with a day of prayer for First Nations.

June 23 [Moves]

All Saints (Orthodox Christianity)

In the Christian church, days were specified to commemorate important martyrs and saints. But after certain persecution periods, the number to be remembered was so great that a special day could not be named for each. The feast of All Saints Sunday commemorates all the saints of the church who have remained anonymous. It falls the Sunday after Pentecost. Orthodox Christians pray to the saints for help of various kinds.

June 24

Nativity of John the Baptist (Christianity)

John was a Jewish preacher who called upon people to repent, amend their lives and renew their relationship with God. He was a strong believer that the coming of the Kingdom of God was imminent. John baptized Jesus in the River Jordan, which is said to mark the beginning of Jesus's public ministry. When Jesus arrived to be baptized by John, John told his followers "this is the man I spoke of," and that his mission was to proclaim the coming of Christ. John lost his life after he was arrested and beheaded by King Herod Antipas, because he criticized the king for divorcing his wife and taking a new wife.

June 28 [Moves]

Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Catholic Christianity)

This feast day commemorates Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque's (1647-1690) visions of Jesus and his instruction to her that she serve as the instrument for spreading devotion to his sacred heart. The feast celebrates Jesus's gift of the Eucharist and urges believers to pray for the sins of the world.

June 29

Ghambar Maidyoshem (Zoroastrianism)

This is the second of six Ghambar festivals during the Zoroastrian year. This particular seasonal festival celebrates the creation of water, the harvest of grain, and the sowing of summer crops.

June 29

Festival of Peter and Paul (Catholic Christianity)

This feast commemorates Peter and Paul, two apostles of Jesus. Peter is often noted as the leader, or spokesman, of the Apostles, and Paul as one of the greatest missionaries. Both were martyred in Rome, and their remains are still there. Their feast day, established as early as 258, was supposedly chosen because it marks the anniversary of the date that their remains were moved to the catacombs near where the Roman church San Sebastiano fuori le Mura stands today. At a still later date, Peter's remains were moved to the Vatican Basilica, and Paul's to the church on Via Ostiensis. The feast day is celebrated with liturgy and prayers.

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July 9

Martyrdom of the Bab (Baha'i)

Marks the execution of The Bab (The Gate), the founder of the Baha'i faith. The Bab was executed on July 9, 1850. To celebrate this day, Baha'is read special prayers at noon, the time at which The Bab was killed. This is also a day of rest; no work is to be done.

July 11

St. Benedict Day (Catholic Christianity)

This day recognizes St. Benedict of Nursia, who lived from 480-547 AD. St. Benedict was the founder of Western Christian monasticism, and started twelve communities for monks in his lifetime.

July 13-15

Obon (Ullambana)(Japanese Buddhism)

Obon is the Japanese celebration similar to Ullambana - or Ancestor Day. It celebrates the reunion of passed ancestors with their living family. Extended families often reunite to return to ancestral places, and visit ancestors' graves. This date is celebrated in August in other countries.

July 15

Saint Vladimir's Day (Christianity)

Saint Vladimir, celebrated on this day in Orthodox and Catholic traditions, was born an illegitimate prince, who defeated his stepbrothers to become the sole leader of Russia in 980 AD. Known for his barbarism and immorality in his younger years, Vladimir later became interested in the Christian faith and converted himself and the people of Russia. He is the patron saint of Russia.

July 16 [Moves]

Asalha Puja Day (Buddhism)

This day remembers the Buddha's first sermon, The Wheel of Truth, given in Deer Park. In Thailand, Asalha Puja is a government holiday and work is suspended. Buddhists observe the day by giving offerings at temples and listening to sermons.

July 17 [Moves]

Vassa (Buddhism)

This date marks the start of a three-month retreat for monks during the rainy season in Asia. Worshippers often donate candles and other necessary supplies to temples.

July 23

Haile Selassie I Birthday (Rastafarianism)

This day celebrates Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974, who was believed to be an incarnation of God, or Jah, for Rastafarians. Thus, Haile Selassie is seen as part of the Holy Trinity.

July 24

Pioneer Day (Mormon Christianity)

Pioneer Day commemorates the arrival of the first Mormon wagon train into the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. Some Latter Day Saints recognize this holiday by walking the Pioneer trail and reenacting the events of '47. Although Pioneer Day started as a celebration for Mormon pioneers, this day is now a state holiday in Utah that recognizes pioneers from all faiths and cultural backgrounds. Celebrations include fireworks, food, rodeos, intertribal powwows, and more.

July 25

St. James the Great Day (Christianity)

July 25th is the feast day for St. James the Great, the patron saint of Spain. One of the twelve apostles, James was also known for being a valiant knight and for preaching the gospel in Spain. He was executed by sword in Jerusalem - by order of Agrippa I - and thus became the first martyred saint. His body was returned to Spain, where many make pilgrimages to visit.

August 1

Fast in Honor of Holy Mother of Jesus (Orthodox Christianity)

This day begins a fourteen-day fasting period before the great Feast of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary. This time celebrates Mary as the Holy Mother.

August 1

Lughnassad (Neo-Paganism - Northern Hemisphere)

Lughnassad celebrates the beginning of the harvest season. In Celtic tradition, this feast was begun by the god Lugh as a funeral commemorating his foster mother, Tailtiu. The story holds that Tailtiu died of exhaustion after clearing land in Ireland for agriculture. Lughnassad is associated with gatherings, market festivals, and feasts.

August 1

Lammas (Christianity)

In English-speaking countries, August 1 is Lammas Day (loaf-mass day), the festival of the first wheat harvest of the year. On this day it was customary to bring to church a loaf made from the new crop. In many parts of England, tenants were bound to present freshly harvested wheat to their landlords on or before the first day of August. In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, where it is referred to regularly, it is called "the feast of first fruits." The blessing of new fruits was performed annually in both the Eastern and Western Churches on the first, or the sixth, of August.

August 6 [Moves]

Transfiguration of the Lord (Orthodox Christianity)

The Transfiguration of Jesus is an event reported by the Synoptic Gospels in which Jesus was transfigured upon a mountain (Matthew 17:1-6, Mark 9:1-8, Luke 9:28-36). Jesus becomes radiant, speaks with Moses and Elijah, and is called "Son" by God. The transfiguration associated Jesus with the two preeminent figures of Judaism: Moses and Elijah. It also supports his identity as the Son of God. In keeping with the Messianic secret, Jesus tells the witnesses not to tell others what they saw. In general, the events in Jesus' life that are said to have taken place in secret, such as the transfiguration, are given less weight by scholars of the historical Jesus than public events. The original Greek term in the Gospels is metamorphothe, describing Jesus as having undergone metamorphosis.

August 10 [Moves]

Waqf al-Arafa - Hajj Day (Islam)

Waqf al-Arafa is the Islamic observance day during Hajj in which pilgrims pray for forgiveness and mercy.

Pilgrims stay awake at night to pray on the hill of Arafat, the site where Muhammad delivered his last sermon.

August 11 (Begins at sundown on the 10th) [Moves]

Tisha B'Av (Judaism)

Tisha B'Av is a fast day that solemnizes the destruction of the first and second temples in Jerusalem, which occurred on the same day roughly 650 years apart. This day is often recognized as the day of mourning, not just for the loss of the temples, but also for other tragic events in Jewish history.

August 12 (Begins at sundown on the 11th) [Moves]

Eid al-Adha (Islam)

Eid al-Adha is the Festival of Sacrifice held at the conclusion of the Hajj. Those who can afford to do so sacrifice their best domestic animals, such as sheep or cows. This practice recalls Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, in obedience to God, and commemorates God's forgiveness.

August 15

Ullambana / Obon / Ghost Festival (Buddhism)

The Ghost Festival is the height of the Ghost Month (August 3rd - August 31st), the seventh month in the traditional Chinese calendar. During this time, the spirits are allowed to return and roam the earth. The first day of the Ghost Month is celebrated with offerings to ancestors and to ghosts without families, so they will not bring you harm. These offerings include food and ghost money: money burned so that the spirits can use it. Ullambana is the day when the spirits are said to be most active. Feasts and ceremonies are often performed to help ease their suffering.

August 15 [Moves]

Raksha Bandhan (Hinduism)

This Hindu festival celebrates the relationships between brothers and sisters, but extends beyond bloodrelations to incorporate "adopted" brothers and sisters: good friends and distant relatives. Sisters give brothers rakhis, a holy thread tied around their wrist, in exchange for gifts and protection. Rakhis are also exchanged to show solidarity and kinship.

August 15

Feast of the Assumption of Blessed Mary / Dormition of the Theotokos (Catholic Christianity)

According to Roman Catholic doctrine and the traditions of the Catholic Church, the Blessed Virgin Mary (Mary, the mother of Jesus) "having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory." This means that Mary was transported into Heaven with her body and soul united. The feast day recognizing Mary's passage into Heaven is celebrated as The Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Roman Catholics.

August 29

Beheading of John the Baptist (Christianity)

This day commemorates the martyrdom of St. John the Baptist, a mission preacher and religious figure. Jesus was among the many people that John baptized in the Jordan River. He was imprisoned by Herod Antipas, because he publicly disapproved of Herod's divorce and unlawful remarriage. Herod feared that John would lead a revolt, thus had him executed.

August 31 [Begins at sundown on the 30th] [Moves]

Al-Hijra: Islamic New Year (Islam)

This is the first day of Muharram, the first month in the Islamic calendar, and it marks the migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E.

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September 1

Church year begins (Orthodox Christianity)

This day marks the beginning of the Orthodox Christian liturgical calendar.

September 8

Nativity of Mary (Christianity)

This feast originates in fifth century Jerusalem and celebrates the birth of the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus. This is recognized in the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches.

September 10 (Begins at sundown on the 9th) [Moves]

Ashura (Islam)

The Day of Ashura is a holy day observed on the 10th day of the month of Muharram. The day means different things for the Shi'a and Sunni traditions. Sunni Muslims fast to commemorate the day on which the Israelites were freed from the Pharaoh of Egypt, and observe it as a day of atonement. Many fast on this day and recite special prayers. Shiite Muslims mourn the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Hussein, with prayers and verse, processions and pilgrimages to Karbala--where he was slaughtered. Reenactments of the Battle of Karbala are often staged.

September 12

Ghambar Paitishem (Zoroastrianism)

This is the third of the six Ghambar festivals in the Zoroastrian year. This five-day seasonal festival celebrates the creation of the earth, and the summer crop harvest.

September 12

Anant Chaturdashi (Jainism, Hinduism)

Today celebrates Anant, one from of Lord Vishnu. Hindus vow to honor Vishnu, and if this vow is kept for 14 years they will see wealth. This is also the last day of Ganesh Utsav, a 10-day Hindu celebration. Statues (idols) of Lord Ganesha are carried to seas, lakes or rivers to be immersed in the water, accompanied by devotional songs and dancing. Jains celebrate this day with special worship and processions to the community's main temple.

September 14

Holy Cross Day (Christianity)

This day recognizes the Cross as a symbol of triumph in the Christian religion. The date traces back to the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher on September 14, 335. By order of Saint Helena and her son, the first Christian Roman Emperor Constantine, the church was built over the ruins of the Crucifixion and Burial sites in Israel. According to some traditions, it was also at this site that Helena found the True Cross.

September 19 (Begins at sundown on the 18th) [Moves]

Yom Kippur (Judaism)

Occurring on the tenth day of Tishri, the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur is also known as the Day of Atonement. Yom Kippur is considered the holiest day of the Jewish year, in which people atone for the sins of the past year. It is solemnly observed with ceremonial repentance and strict fasting for a twenty-four hour period.

September 20

Ohigan / Fall Equinox (Buddhism, Japan)

This holiday is celebrated twice a year, during the spring and fall equinoxes. This is an important time for Jodo Shinshu Buddhists in particular. Many Japanese visit their ancestors' graves to pay respects, often leaving flowers and treats like ohagi: rice balls that are coated in soybean paste.

September 21

Mabon (Neo-Paganism--Northern Hemisphere)

Mabon is the autumn equinox in the Northern Hemisphere. It is a time when the day is as long as the night, and people prepare for the coming winter days by storing their harvest.

September 27

Meskel (Ethiopian/Eritrean Orthodox Christianity)

This day commemorates the finding of the True Cross - the physical remnants of the cross on which Jesus was crucified - by Queen Eleni (St. Helena) in the fourth century. The celebration includes burning a large fire, to symbolize the bonfire that Queen Eleni was told to make in a dream. As told in her prophesying dream, the smoke from the fire leads to the burial site of the True Cross. When the fire is extinguished, followers use the charcoal to make the sign of the cross on their foreheads. In the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant traditions, the finding of the True Cross is celebrated on September 14th.

September 29 [Moves]

Navratri (Hinduism)

Navratri, meaning "nine nights," is a joyous festival honoring the divine mother, Shakti. This festival falls around harvest time, and each day is spent worshipping one of Shakti's three manifestations: Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. The first three days invoke Durga, the warrior goddess, to destroy all impurities and vices. Lakshmi is worshiped during the next three days as a giver of spiritual wealth and prosperity. Finally, the last three days honor Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom. The festival culminates with Dussehra.

September 29

Feast of St. Michael and All Angels (Christianity)

Also known as Michaelmas, this day recognizes the Archangel Michael, one of the principal angelic warriors, and other angels. Christians give thanks for the different ways that God watches over them.

September 30 – October 1 (Begins at sundown on the 29^m) [Moves]

Rosh Hashanah (Judaism)

Rosh Hashanah marks the seventh month in the Jewish calendar and the beginning of the Jewish civil new year. It is also referred to as "the day of the sounding of the shofar," as a shofar, or ram's horn, is blown in the synagogue on this day (the horn is not blown if Rosh Hashanah falls on the Sabbath). This day is reserved for prayer and penitence, commemorating the Creation of the world as written in the Bible. It marks the beginning of the ten Days of Awe, a time for introspection and repentance, which culminate in Yom Kippur.

October 4

St. Francis Day (Christianity)

This day celebrates St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals and the environment. Born Giovanni Francesco Bernardone in 1181, he fled a wealthy family to embrace a life of simplicity and poverty. He was known for his love of nature and all creatures. Many Christian churches welcome pets on St. Francis Day to be blessed, and patrons reflect on the importance of all beings in creation.

October 6 [Moves]

World Communion Sunday (Christianity)

This holiday, recognized by Christians around the world, was started in a congregation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1933. The Rev. Dr. Hugh Thomson Kerr, pastor of the Shadyside Presbyterian Church, conceived World Communion Sunday as a way to bring different congregations together in Christian unity. The concept did not gain in popularity until World War II, when people began to see the value of uniting in faith and spirit to get through troubling times. Dr. Kerr was also the first pastor to have his worship services broadcast over the radio.

October 8 [Moves]

Dussehra (Hinduism)

This is the Hindu day of victory and valor, marking the time when Lord Rama was victorious over the evil Ravana, who had abducted his wife. In celebration, paintings of Rama's life are displayed, and effigies of Ravana, often stuffed with explosive materials, are put in public places. During this time, people reflect on their lives and denounce any evil that may be within them.

October 12

Ghambar Ayathrem (Zoroastrianism)

This is the fourth of six Ghambar festivals in the Zoroastrian calendar. This five-day harvest festival celebrates the creation of plants, sowing the winter crop, and the return of herds from pasture.

October 13-20 (Begins at sundown on the 13th) [Moves]

Sukkot (Judaism)

The Festival of Sukkot, also known as Feast of the Tabernacles, begins on Tishri, the 15th day after Yom Kippur. The word Sukkot refers to temporary dwelling places, or huts, and the holiday commemorates the 40-year period in which the children of Israel wandered the wilderness, living in temporary huts for protection. In some practices, temporary huts are constructed - which must have ceilings made of organic material - and all eating, praying and sleeping must take place here for the duration of the holiday. As a Jewish Biblical pilgrimage festival, Sukkot is one of three holidays during which Jews historically traveled to the Temple in Jerusalem.

October 14 [Moves]

Pavarana Day / Kathina Ceremony (Buddhism)

This day is the end of the three-month rainy retreat season for Buddhist monks. One story tells us that a group of Monks were traveling to spend their retreat with the Buddha but did not make it in time. According to the rules of Vassa, they sadly had to halt their trip and wait until the season's end. When they finally made it to the Buddha, he cheered them up by allowing them to roam free and collect cloth to sew into new robes. Today, a Kathina robe ceremony is often held, where Buddhists offer cloth to make robes for the monks. This and other donations are made to express gratitude for the monks.

October 14 [Moves]

Thanksgiving in Canada (Interfaith)

Thanksgiving in Canada falls on the second Monday of October each year. Today, this holiday celebrates the end of the harvest season with family gatherings and special meals. However, history records that the first Canadian Thanksgiving, held in 1578, actually applauded a safe homecoming for Martin Frobisher, an explorer who was on a treacherous search for the Northwest Passage. Frobisher threw a formal feast in Newfoundland to celebrate surviving his journey.

October 18

Feast of Saint Luke, Apostle and Evangelist (Christianity)

This feast day celebrates Saint Luke, patron saint of physicians, artists, students, butchers and much more. Tradition credits him with authoring the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles and was mentioned in the New Testament as a doctor and a disciple of Paul.

October 20

Installation of Scripture as Guru Granth (Sikhism)

The Granth is the Sikh scripture, a collection of hymns and writings started by Arjan Dev, the fifth guru (spiritual master), and completed by Gobind Singh, the tenth guru. Upon his death, Guru Gobind Singh declared the Granth to be the final Guru, and his successor for all time. This holiday commemorates the installation of the Sikh scriptures, Adi Granth, as the Permanent Guru, or final teacher. The scriptures are a compilation of sermons and songs written by Guru Nank, the founder of Sikhism, and other writings by respected holy men. The writings embody the universal message of Truth, Peace, Compassion, Equality and Service.

October 20-22 (Begins at sundown on the 20th) [Moves]

Shemini Atzeret (Judaism)

Shemini Atzeret, meaning the "eighth day of assembly," is celebrated after the seventh day of Sukkot, but is in fact a holiday separate from Sukkot. It is often explained that Sukkot is like a seven-day party, where the Creator is the host who has invited his visitors for a limited time. On the eighth day, he has had such a pleasurable time that he asks for guests to stay an extra day. Shemini Atzeret marks the beginning of the rainy season. On this day, no work is permitted and a prayer for rain, called tefilat geshem, is recited, so that it will be plentiful and bring healthy crops.

October 21-22 (Begins at sundown on the 21st) [Moves]

Simchat Torah (Judaism)

In the Jewish tradition, the Torah - the first five books of the Hebrew Bible - is divided and read over the course of a year. Simchat Torah, which means "rejoicing in the Torah," is the day when the reading of the Torah is completed and the next year's reading commences. The end of the text and the beginning of the text are read back-to-back to remind all that the story is a circle that never ends. Synagogue services involve selected readings, processions of the Torah scrolls, and blessing of the children.

October 27 [Moves]

Deepavali, Diwali, Jain New Year (Hindu - Sikh - Jain)

Deepavali / Diwali is a merry festival that is celebrated for five days, the third day being the height of the festival. Diwali commemorates the defeat of evil King Ravana, and the return of the good Lord Rama from his 14-year exile. Also known as the Festival of Lights, diyas (small clay lamps) and fireworks are ignited, and the light of these symbolizes the victory of good over evil. Gifts are given and festive meals are prepared. This festival is primarily celebrated in the Hindu, Sikh and Jain traditions, though it is also recognized by the Buddhists of Nepal.

October 28 [Moves]

New Year's Day (Jainism)

On the second day of Diwali, Jains celebrate the New Year. This is an occasion for gatherings and wishing others well.

October 28

Milvian Bridge Day (Christianity)

In the Christian tradition, this is a day of solemn reflection on the relationship of religion and the civil government. On October 28, 312 C.E., Constantine fought and prevailed in a battle against Maxentius, who drowned crossing the Milvian Bridge. Constantine became the new emperor, and subsequently made Christianity the legal religion of the Roman Empire. This initially brought the persecution of Christians to an end; however, Constantine's decision resulted in problems and future battles with secular powers. The struggle between religion and politics continues today, and thus is reflected upon on this holiday.

October 29 [Begins on the evening of Oct. 28th] [Moves]

Birth of the Bab (Baha'i)

One of the eleven holy days on the Baha'i calendar, this day marks the Birth of Bab ud-Din (Mirza Ali Muhammad), who declared himself a Prophet of God. Born in 1819 in Shiraz, Iran, his mission was to reform Islam, and his teachings became the foreground for the later developed Baha'i tradition. Baha'is celebrate this day with gatherings to pray, eat together, and read about his life.

October 31

Reformation Day (Protestant Christianity)

On this day in 1517, Augustinian monk Martin Luther nailed a document to the door of the castle chapel in Wittenberg, Germany. This document, later named "Ninety-five Theses," contained arguments against the current practices of the Church, particularly the sale of indulgences (forgiving sins in exchange for money). In 1520, Luther and his supporters were excommunicated, which led to the Protestant Reformation. This day is celebrated as an anniversary of the Protestant Christian tradition, and a day for religious freedom.

October 31

All Hallows Eve / Halloween (Christianity)

Set on the eve of All Saints Day, in which all saints in the Christian tradition are celebrated, All Hallows Eve is a time to keep vigil and pray for the dead. Most of the current practices associated with All Hallows Eve, or Halloween - such as costumes, Trick or Treating and Jack O' Lanterns - can be traced back to England and Ireland. Ancient Celts believed that the boundary between the living and the dead dissolved on this day, and that evil spirits returned to cause sickness or damage crops, so they wore costumes and masks to copy and placate the dead. Trick or Treating resembles the medieval practice of "souling," in which poor people would go door to door, receiving "soul cake" (typically shortbread or pastry) in exchange for prayers for the dead. Jack O' Lanterns are related to the Irish legend of Stingy Jack, a greedy farmer who tricked the devil into climbing a tree and trapped him there by carving a cross into the trunk. In revenge, the devil cursed Jack and condemned him to forever walk the earth at night.

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If you have any comments, questions or corrections regarding the above calendar, please contact CSEE at 800.298.4599, or info@csee.org.