

# The Calendar of Religious Festivals and Supplement

2019



The Catholic Institute of Education's Religious Education Department makes the **Calendar of Religious Festivals** and the **Supplement to the Calendar of Religious Festivals** available to schools as a resource for planning assembly programs and Religious Education in relation to Life Orientation, other learning areas, the life of faith communities, and issues that face South Africa and the world. We hope that you can use the **Calendar** and its **Supplement** to encourage ecumenical and interfaith sensitivity, a strong concern for human rights – for children, adults, the disabled, and the displaced – and a passionate care for the environment.

The **Calendar** contains a selection of the most important celebrations in Christianity and several world religions. Note, however, that the Orthodox plan their liturgical year slightly differently to the Catholic and Protestant Churches.

No entries for African Traditional Religious practices are included in the **Calendar**. First, rituals are practiced within the family or local community as needed rather than at an appointed time. Second, while major festivals are linked to the agricultural cycle of planting and harvesting, the dates of these are uncertain until such time as they are announced by a monarch or chief. So, you will need to find out when events of local or regional significance are scheduled if you wish to refer to them.

The **Supplement** largely lists secular days of observance, declared by the South African State, the African Union, or the United Nations Organization, that relate to the environmental, health, human rights, social justice, and peace-keeping challenges that face us all. More information on UN observances is available at: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/observances/united-nations-observances/> Here, links to days, weeks, years, and decades can be found. In addition, please consider how your school can cultivate awareness around the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The document, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, can be found at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

Feedback on the calendar is welcome. Comments can be sent to:

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# Calendar of Religious Festivals 2019

## JANUARY

- 1 Mary, Mother of God (New Year 2019 AD) CATHOLIC
- 6 Epiphany CHRISTIAN

## FEBRUARY

- 8 Parinirvana BUDDHIST  
The solemn observance of the death of the Buddha's earthly form and his entrance into nirvana.

## MARCH

- 4 Maha Shivaratri HINDU  
Great Shiva Night. a festival honouring the marriage of Lord Shiva to Goddess Parvati.
- 6 Ash Wednesday CHRISTIAN  
Orthodox Christians begin Lent on 11 March – Clean Monday.
- 21 Holi HINDU  
A joyous spring festival including pilgrimage to holy places to offer penance for misdeeds, and to make or renew vows.
- 21-22 Purim JEWISH  
A festival commemorating the events recounted in the Book of Esther - how the Jews of the Persian Empire were saved from the designs of the villainous Haman.
- 21 Naw-Rúz: New Year 176 BE BAHÁ'Í  
The date is calculated according to the vernal equinox and linked with the birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh – Tehran.

## APRIL

- 6-14 Ramayan Week & Rama Navami HINDU  
A 9 day period during which the Ramayana, a Hindu epic, is read. It ends with Rama Navami, a festival celebrating the birth of Lord Rama.
- 7 St. John Baptist de La Salle CATHOLIC  
Patron of Teachers.
- 14-19 Holy Week (Inclusive of Palm Sunday and Good Friday) CHRISTIAN
- 20-27 Pesach (Passover) JEWISH  
Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorating the deliverance of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt.
- 21 Easter Sunday CHRISTIAN  
Orthodox Christians will celebrate Easter on 28 April.
- 21 1 Ridván BAHÁ'Í  
The first day of a twelve day period commemorating the last days of Bahá'u'lláh prior to his exile. It was during this time that Bahá'u'lláh made his first public declaration of his mission.

## MAY

- 6 Ramadan MUSLIM  
The first day of the month of fasting.
- 18 Vesak BUDDHIST  
The full-moon feast in May, celebrated by Theravada Buddhists to commemorate the birth, the enlightenment, and the death of the Buddha. These three events are celebrated separately by Mahayana Buddhists in April, December and February.
- 30 Ascension of Jesus CHRISTIAN
- 31-8/6 Novena of Prayer for Christian Unity CATHOLIC  
The South African Catholic Bishops' Conference commends the time between Ascension and Pentecost. Material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is developed by local ecumenical partners, edited by Catholic Church and World Council of Churches representatives, and then jointly published by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches.
- 31 Lailatul Qadr (26 Ramadan) MUSLIM  
The Night of Power on which the Qur'an descended from heaven. It marks the beginning of the Prophet Muhammad's ministry.

## JUNE

5	Eid-ul-Fitr (1 Shawwaal) The end of Ramadan, and the breaking of the fast.	MUSLIM
9	Pentecost	CHRISTIAN
9-10	Shavuot (Festival of Weeks) The occasion on which Moses received the Torah from God on Mount Sinai.	JEWISH
16	Trinity Sunday	CHRISTIAN

## AUGUST

6	Transfiguration	CHRISTIAN
12	Eid-al-Adha (10-12 Zul Hijjah) The Festival of Sacrifice commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael, at Allah's command and coincides with the end of the Hajj - the pilgrimage to Mecca. The sacrifice, made with either sheep, cow, or camel depending on the portions required, can be carried out on this or on one of the following two days.	MUSLIM
15	Assumption of Mary Celebrated in the Catholic Church in South Africa on the following Sunday.	CATHOLIC
17-23	Gita Week & Krishna Janmashtami The Bhagavad Gita is read up to, and including, Krishna Janmashtami, birthday of Lord Krishna.	HINDU

## SEPTEMBER

1	World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation Introduced by Pope Francis I, 6 August 2015, as a call to protect God's handiwork, and an ecumenical gesture to this Orthodox Churches' observation. Many World Council of Churches' members have followed the Orthodox lead, too.	CATHOLIC / ORTHODOX
1	Al Hijrah (New Year, 1441 AH, 1 Muharram) Marks the arrival of the Prophet and followers at Medina (Al Hijra) and the establishment of the 1 <sup>st</sup> Muslim State.	MUSLIM
29-7/10	Navaratri The festival of 'nine nights' honouring the mother goddess, Durga, wife of Shiva, and seeking her blessings.	HINDU
30	Birth of Bahá'u'lláh Celebrates the birth, in 1817, of the founder of the Bahá'í faith.	BAHÁ'Í
30-1/10	Rosh Hashanah (New Year 5780) Literally 'the head of the year'. Commemorates God's creation of the world.	JEWISH

## OCTOBER

9	Yom Kippur The Day of Atonement, considered the holiest day of the year.	JEWISH
14-20	Sukkot The Feast of Tabernacles commemorating the 40 years in the desert when the Israelites lived in shelters.	JEWISH
22	Simchat Torah 'Rejoicing over the Torah' - the completion (of Deuteronomy) and beginning (of Genesis) of the annual cycle of readings from the Torah.	JEWISH
27-31	Diwali (Deepavali) The Festival of Lights: Lakshmi, the Goddess of good fortune visits every house where a lamp is lit.	HINDU

## NOVEMBER

1	All Saints' Day This is the traditional date, but it is celebrated in South Africa on the Sunday following the feast.	CATHOLIC
10	Mawlid an-Nabi (Birth of the Prophet Mohamed, 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal) The Sunni date; Shia Muslims celebrate this 5 days later.	MUSLIM

## DECEMBER

1	First Sunday of Advent	CHRISTIAN
23-30	Hanukkah The Festival of Lights celebrating the victory of Judas Maccabeus and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in 164 BC.	JEWISH
8	Bodhi Day (Rohatsu) Mahayana Buddhists recall how Siddhartha Gautama was meditating under the peepal or banyan tree at the hour of dawn and experienced enlightenment ( <i>Bodhi</i> ) – seeing into the nature of suffering and how to be liberated from it.	BUDDHIST
25	Christmas Orthodox Christians will celebrate Christmas on 7 January, 2020.	CHRISTIAN

# Supplement to the Calendar of Religious Festivals

2019

## FEBRUARY

- 2 World Wetlands Day (Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, signed on 2 February 1971.) UNITED NATIONS  
21 International Mother Language Day UNITED NATIONS

## MARCH

- 18-24 National Water Week / World Water Day (22<sup>nd</sup>) SOUTH AFRICAN / UNITED NATIONS  
21 Human Rights Day (Also marks the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.) SOUTH AFRICAN  
24 World TB Day UNITED NATIONS

## APRIL

- 3 First meeting of the International Court of Justice in Hague in 1946  
7 World Health Day (Also marks founding of the World Health Organization in 1948.) UNITED NATIONS  
22 Family Day SOUTH AFRICAN  
27 Freedom Day SOUTH AFRICAN

## MAY

- 1 St. Joseph the Worker / Workers' Day CATHOLIC / INTERNATIONAL  
12 Mother's Day SOUTH AFRICAN  
21 World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development UNITED NATIONS  
22 International Day for Biological Diversity UNITED NATIONS  
25 Africa Freedom Day AFRICAN

## JUNE

- 5 World Environment Day UNITED NATIONS  
16 Youth Day / Day of the African Child SOUTH AFRICAN / UNITED NATIONS  
16 Father's Day SOUTH AFRICAN  
17 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought UNITED NATIONS  
20 Africa Refugee Day / World Refugee Day AFRICAN / UNITED NATIONS

## AUGUST

- 9 National Women's Day SOUTH AFRICAN

## SEPTEMBER

- 1-7 National Arbor Week SOUTH AFRICAN  
16 International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer UNITED NATIONS  
21 International Day of Peace UNITED NATIONS  
24 Heritage Day SOUTH AFRICAN

## OCTOBER

- 1 International Day of Older Persons UNITED NATIONS  
5 World Teachers' Day UNITED NATIONS  
7 World Habitat Day UNITED NATIONS  
14-20 National Marine Week SOUTH AFRICAN  
16 World Food Day UNITED NATIONS  
17 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty UNITED NATIONS  
24 United Nations Day (Founded 24 June, 1945; UN Charter signed on 26 June.) UNITED NATIONS

## NOVEMBER

- 17 World Day of the Poor CATHOLIC  
20 Universal Children's Day UNITED NATIONS  
25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women UNITED NATIONS  
(Marks the beginning of a 16 day period of action to address gendered patterns of exploitation and violence.)

## DECEMBER

- 1 World AIDS Day UNITED NATIONS  
3 International Day of Disabled Persons UNITED NATIONS  
16 Day of Reconciliation SOUTH AFRICAN