



The Calendar of Religious Festivals and Supplement 2018

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/international-days/index.html> Clicking on an observance leads to a background page and further links. 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 2018

JANUARY

- 1 **Mary, Mother of God** (New Year 2018 AD) **CATHOLIC**
- 6 **Epiphany** **CHRISTIAN**
Celebrated in the Catholic Church in South Africa on Sunday, 7th January.

FEBRUARY

- 8 **Parinirvana** **BUDDHIST**
The solemn observance of the death of the Buddha's earthly form and his entrance into nirvana.
- 13 **Maha Shivaratri** **HINDU**
Great Shiva Night. a festival honouring the marriage of Lord Shiva to Goddess Parvati.
- 14 **Ash Wednesday** **CHRISTIAN**
Orthodox Christians begin Lent on 12 February – Clean Monday.

MARCH

- 1 **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.
- 2 **Holi** **HINDU**
A joyous spring festival including pilgrimage to holy places to offer penance for misdeeds, and to make or renew vows.
- 17-25 **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.
- 21 **Naw-Rúz: New Year** 175 BE **BAHÁ'Í**
The date is calculated according to the vernal equinox and linked with the birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh – Tehran.
- 25-31 **Holy Week** (Inclusive of **Palm Sunday** and **Good Friday**) **CHRISTIAN**
- 31-7/4 **Pesach (Passover)** **JEWISH**
Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorating the deliverance of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt.

APRIL

- 1 **Easter Sunday** **CHRISTIAN**
Orthodox Christians will celebrate Easter on 8 April.
- 7 **St. John Baptist de La Salle** **CATHOLIC**
Patron of Teachers.
- 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

- 10 **Ascension of Jesus** **CHRISTIAN**
- 11-19 **Novena of Prayer for Christian Unity** **CATHOLIC**
Other churches within the ecumenical movement have a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity between 18-25 January, i.e. between the Feast of the Chair of Peter and Feast of the Conversion of St Paul.
- 17 **Ramadan** **MUSLIM**
The first day of the month of fasting.
- 20 **Pentecost** **CHRISTIAN**
- 20-21 **Shavuot (Festival of Weeks)** **JEWISH**
The occasion on which Moses received the Torah from God on Mount Sinai.
- 27 **Trinity Sunday** **CHRISTIAN**
- 29 **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.

JUNE

- 10 **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.
- 15 **Eid-ul-Fitr** (1 Shawwaal) **MUSLIM**
The end of Ramadan, and the breaking of the fast.

AUGUST

- 6 **Transfiguration** **CHRISTIAN**
- 15 **Assumption of Mary** **CATHOLIC**
Celebrated in the Catholic Church in South Africa on the following Sunday.
- 22 **Eid-al-Adha** (10-12 Zul Hijjah) **MUSLIM**
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.
- 27-2/9 **Gita Week & Krishna Janmashtami** **HINDU**
The Bhagavad Gita is read up to, and including, Krishna Janmashtami, birthday of Lord Krishna.

SEPTEMBER

- 1 **World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation** **CATHOLIC / ORTHODOX**
Introduced by Pope Francis I, 6 August 2015, as a call to protect God's handiwork, and an ecumenical gesture to the Orthodox Churches who already observe this day. Many World Council of Churches' members have already followed the Orthodox lead.
- 10-11 **Rosh Hashanah** (New Year 5779) **JEWISH**
Literally 'the head of the year'. Commemorates God's creation of the world.
- 11 **Al Hijrah** (New Year, 1440 AH, 1 Muharram) **MUSLIM**
Marks the arrival of the Prophet and followers at Medina (Al Hijra) and the establishment of the 1st Muslim State.
- 19 **Yom Kippur** **JEWISH**
The Day of Atonement, considered the holiest day of the year.
- 23-29 **Sukkot** **JEWISH**
The Feast of Tabernacles commemorating the 40 years in the desert when the Israelites lived in shelters.

OCTOBER

- 2 **Simchat Torah** **JEWISH**
'Rejoicing over the Torah' - the completion (of Deuteronomy) and beginning (of Genesis) of the annual cycle of readings from the Torah.
- 9-17 **Navaratri** **HINDU**
The festival of 'nine nights' honouring the mother goddess, Durga, wife of Shiva, and seeking her blessings.

NOVEMBER

- 1 **All Saints' Day** **CATHOLIC**
This is the traditional date, but it is celebrated in South Africa on the Sunday following the feast.
- 6-10 **Diwali (Deepavali)** **HINDU**
The Festival of Lights: Lakshmi, the Goddess of good fortune visits every house where a lamp is lit.
- 10 **Birth of Bahá'u'lláh** **BAHÁ'Í**
Celebrates the birth, in 1817, of the founder of the Bahá'í faith.
- 20 **Mawlid an-Nabi** (Birth of the Prophet Mohamed, 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal) **MUSLIM**
The Sunni date; Shia Muslims celebrate this 5 days later.

DECEMBER

- 2 **First Sunday of Advent** **CHRISTIAN**
- 3-10 **Hanukkah** **JEWISH**
The Festival of Lights celebrating the victory of Judas Maccabeus and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in 164 BC.
- 8 **Bodhi Day** (Rohatsu) **BUDDHIST**
Mahayana Buddhists recall how Siddhartha Gautama was meditating under the peepal or banyan tree at the hour of dawn and experienced enlightenment (*Bodhi*) – seeing into the nature of suffering and how to be liberated from it.
- 25 **Christmas** **CHRISTIAN**
Orthodox Christians will celebrate Christmas on 7 January, 2019.

Supplement to the Calendar of Religious Festivals

2018

FEBRUARY

2	World Wetlands Day	UNITED NATIONS
21	International Mother Language Day	UNITED NATIONS

MARCH

19-25	National Water Week / World Water Day (22 nd)	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

2	Family Day	SOUTH AFRICAN
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
27	Freedom Day	SOUTH AFRICAN

MAY

1	St. Joseph the Worker / Workers' Day	CATHOLIC / INTERNATIONAL
13	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
17	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
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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	World Habitat Day	UNITED NATIONS
1	International Day of Older Persons	UNITED NATIONS
5	World Teachers' Day	UNITED NATIONS
15-21	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

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

DECEMBER

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