

The Calendar of Religious Festivals and Supplement

2012

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 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** because many rituals are practiced within the family or local community. 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.

In addition, please consider how your school might address the following during the course of the year:

- The *International Year of Cooperatives* and *International Year of Sustainable Energy for All* – the two foci offered by the United Nations Organisation for 2012.
- The *Hope and Joy* movement in the Catholic Church in South Africa to use 2011 and 2012 to celebrate and learn from the 50th anniversary of Vatican II. (See ww.hopeandjoy.org.za for more information.)

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

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Calendar of Religious Festivals 2012

JANUARY

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| 1 | Mary, Mother of God (New Year 2012 AD) | CATHOLIC |
| 6 | Epiphany
Celebrated in the Catholic Church in South Africa on Sunday, 2 nd January. | CHRISTIAN |

FEBRUARY

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| 4 | Mawlid an-Nabi (Birth of the Prophet Mohamed, 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal)
The Sunni date; Shia muslims celebrate this 5 days later. | MUSLIM |
| 8 | Parinirvana
The solemn observance of the death of the Buddha's earthly form and his entrance into nirvana. Some celebrate it on 15 February. | BUDDHIST |
| 20 | Maha Shivaratri
Great Shiva Night. a festival honouring the marriage of Lord Shiva to Goddess Parvati. | HINDU |
| 22 | Ash Wednesday
Orthodox Christians begin Lent on the 27 February – Clean Monday. | CHRISTIAN |

MARCH

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| 8 | Holi
A joyous spring festival including pilgrimage to holy places to offer penance for misdeeds, and to make or renew vows. | HINDU |
| 8-9 | Purim
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. | JEWISH |
| 21 | Naw-Rúz: New Year 169 BE | BAHÁ'Í |
| 23-1/4 | Ramayan Week & Rama Navami
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. | HINDU |

APRIL

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|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1-6 | Holy Week (Inclusive of Palm Sunday and Good Friday) | CHRISTIAN |
| 7 | St. John Baptist de La Salle
Patron of Teachers. | CATHOLIC |
| 7-14 | Pesach (Passover)
Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorating the deliverance of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. | JEWISH |
| 8 | Easter Sunday | CHRISTIAN |
| 21 | 1 Ridván
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. | BAHÁ'Í |

MAY

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| 5 | Vesak
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. | BUDDHIST |
| 17 | Ascension of Jesus | CHRISTIAN |
| 18-26 | Novena of Prayer for Christian Unity
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. | CATHOLIC |
| 27 | Pentecost | CHRISTIAN |
| 27-28 | Shavuot (Festival of Weeks)
The occasion on which Moses received the Torah from God on Mount Sinai. | JEWISH |

JUNE

3 Trinity Sunday CHRISTIAN

JULY

20 Ramadan MUSLIM
The first day of the month of fasting.

AUGUST

4-10 Gita Week HINDU
The Bhagavad Gita is read over this period leading up to, and including, Krishna Janmashtami.

6 Transfiguration CHRISTIAN

10 Krishna Janmashtami HINDU
A festival celebrating the birthday of Lord Krishna.

14 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 Assumption of Mary CATHOLIC
Celebrated in the Catholic Church in South Africa on the following Sunday.

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

SEPTEMBER

17-18 Rosh Hashanah (New Year 5773) JEWISH
Literally 'the head of the year'. Commemorates God's creation of the world.

26 Yom Kippur JEWISH
The Day of Atonement, considered the holiest day of the year.

OCTOBER

1-7 Sukkot JEWISH
The Feast of Tabernacles commemorating the 40 years in the desert when the Israelites lived in shelters.

9 Simchat Torah JEWISH
'Rejoicing over the Torah' - the completion (of Deuteronomy) and beginning (of Genesis) of the annual cycle of readings from the Torah.

16-23 Navaratri HINDU
The festival of 'nine nights' honouring the mother goddess, Durga, wife of Shiva, and seeking her blessings.

26 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.

NOVEMBER

1 All Saints' Day CATHOLIC
This is the traditional date, but it is celebrated in South Africa on the Sunday following the feast.

12 Birth of Bahá'u'lláh BAHÁ'Í
Founder of the Bahá'í faith in the nineteenth century.

13 Diwali (Deepavali) HINDU
The Festival of Lights: Lakshmi, the Goddess of good fortune visits every house where a lamp is lit.

15 1434 Al Hijrah (New Year, 1 Muharram) MUSLIM
Marks the arrival of the Prophet and followers at Medina (Al Hijra) and the establishment of the 1st Muslim State.

DECEMBER

2 First Sunday of Advent CHRISTIAN

9-16 Hanukkah JEWISH
The Festival of Lights celebrating the victory of Judas Maccabeus and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in 164 BC.

25 Christmas CHRISTIAN
Orthodox Christians will celebrate Christmas on 7 January, 2013.

Supplement to the Calendar of Religious Festivals

2012

FEBRUARY

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

MARCH

19-25	National Water Week / World Day for Water (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

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
9	Family Day	SOUTH AFRICAN
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	International Day of Older Persons	UNITED NATIONS
1	World Habitat Day	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

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