

The Calendar of Religious Festivals and Supplement 2024

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 you can use the **Calendar** and its **Supplement** to encourage ecumenical and interfaith sensitivity, a strong concern for human rights, and a passionate care for the environment. Each observance can invite new awareness, and assist in developing understanding, introspection, and dialogue. It can lead to a change of heart, and the cultivation of respect, that can result in care-filled action to build, renew, or repair the integrity needed for self, family, community, civil society, institutions of governance, the economy, ecological systems, and Earth.

The **Calendar** contains a selection of the most important celebrations in Christianity and several world religions. Note, however, that:

- the Orthodox Churches plan their liturgical year slightly differently to the Catholic and Protestant Churches.
- Jewish, Muslim, and Bahá'í days begin at sundown on the evening before the given date; some Hindu observances have activities that begin on the evening preceding the given date.

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/>

Further occasions or processes you might like to explore during 2024 are:

- The National Catholic Board of Education's theme, 'Together in Faith: Building Communities of Justice and Peace'
- Initiatives in the Catholic Church such as a World Day for Children (25-26 May, 2024), or developments in the Global Compact for Education campaign
- The UN International Year of Camelids. Start with the Food and Agriculture Organization site: <https://www.fao.org/home/en/>
- The UN Sustainable Development Goals outlined in *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* that can be found at: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

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

The Religious Education Department
Catholic Institute of Education
P O Box 2083
Southdale
2135

Religious Festivals 2024

JANUARY

1	Mary, Mother of God (New Year 2024 AD)	CATHOLIC
7	Epiphany	CATHOLIC
21	Sunday of the Word of God	CATHOLIC

FEBRUARY

15	Parinirvana Mahayana Buddhists mark the solemn observance of the death of the Buddha's earthly form and his entrance into nirvana.	BUDDHIST
14	Ash Wednesday Orthodox Christians begin Lent on 18 March – Clean Monday.	CHRISTIAN

MARCH

8	Maha Shivaratri Great Shiva Night. A festival honouring the marriage of Lord Shiva to Goddess Parvati.	HINDU
11	Ramadan The first day of the month of fasting.	MUSLIM
20	Naw-Rúz: New Year 181 BE The date is calculated according to the vernal equinox and linked with the birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh – Tehran.	BAHÁ'Í
24	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
24-30	Holy Week (Inclusive of Palm Sunday and Good Friday)	CHRISTIAN
25	Holi A joyous spring festival including pilgrimage to holy places to offer penance for misdeeds, and to make or renew vows.	HINDU
31	Easter Sunday Orthodox Christians will celebrate Easter on 5 May.	CHRISTIAN

APRIL

6	Lailatul Qadr (26 Ramadan) The Night of Power on which the Qur'an descended from heaven. It marks the beginning of the Prophet Muhammad's ministry.	MUSLIM
7	St. John Baptist de La Salle Patron of Teachers.	CATHOLIC
9-17	Ramayana 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
11	Eid-ul-Fitr (1 Shawwaal) The end of Ramadan, and the breaking of the fast.	MUSLIM
20	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
23-30	Pesach (Passover) Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorating the deliverance of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt.	JEWISH

MAY

9	Ascension of Jesus Transferred in the Catholic Church in South Africa to the following Sunday (12/5/2024).	CHRISTIAN
10-18	Prayer for Christian Unity Often marked by southern hemisphere churches between Ascension and Pentecost; 18-25 January are the dates followed by northern hemisphere churches . Each year, local ecumenical partners in a different country / region develop prayer materials that are edited by Catholic Church and World Council of Churches representatives, and jointly published.	ECUMENICAL CHRISTIAN
19	Pentecost	CHRISTIAN
23	Vesak The full-moon feast, usually 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

26	Trinity Sunday	CHRISTIAN
JUNE		
12-13	Shavuot (Festival of Weeks) The occasion on which Moses received the Torah from God on Mount Sinai.	JEWISH
17	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
JULY		
8	Al Hijrah (New Year, 1446 AH, 1 Muharram) Marks the arrival of the Prophet and followers at Medina (Al Hijra) and the establishment of the 1 st Muslim State.	MUSLIM
AUGUST		
6	Transfiguration	CHRISTIAN
18	Assumption of Mary	CATHOLIC
20-26	Gita Week & Krishna Janmashtami The Bhagavad Gita is read up to, and including, Krishna Janmashtami, birthday of Lord Krishna. This is the date for Smarta lineages; Vaishnavite lineages celebrate a day later.	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
16	Mawlid an-Nabi (Birth of the Prophet Mohamed, 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal) The Sunni date; Shia Muslims celebrate this 5 days later.	MUSLIM
OCTOBER		
3-4	Rosh Hashanah (New Year 5785) Literally 'the head of the year'. Commemorates God's creation of the world.	JEWISH
3-12	Navaratri The festival of 'nine nights' honouring the mother goddess, Durga, wife of Shiva, and seeking her blessings.	HINDU
12	Yom Kippur The Day of Atonement, considered the holiest day of the year.	JEWISH
17-18	Sukkot The Feast of Tabernacles commemorating the 40 years in the desert when the Israelites lived in shelters.	JEWISH
25	Simchat Torah 'Rejoicing over the Torah' - the completion (of Deuteronomy) and beginning (of Genesis) of the annual cycle of readings from the Torah.	JEWISH
31	Diwali (Deepavali) The Festival of Lights: Lakshmi, the Goddess of good fortune, visits every house where a lamp is lit. Diwali is the 3 rd day of a 5-day festival.	HINDU
NOVEMBER		
1	All Saints' Day	CATHOLIC
3	Birth of Bahá'u'lláh Celebrates the birth, in 1817, of the founder of the Bahá'í faith.	BAHÁ'Í
17	World Day of the Poor	CATHOLIC
DECEMBER		
1	First Sunday of Advent	CHRISTIAN
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 (Bodhi) – seeing into the nature of suffering and how to be liberated from it.	BUDDHIST
25	Christmas Orthodox Christians will celebrate Christmas on 7 January, 2025.	CHRISTIAN
26-1/1	Hanukkah The Festival of Lights celebrating the victory of Judas Maccabeus and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in 164 BCE.	JEWISH

National and International Days

2024

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

20-26	National Water Week / World Water Day (22nd)	SOUTH AFRICAN / UNITED NATIONS
21	Human Rights Day (Also marks the UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.)	SOUTH AFRICAN
24	World TB Day	UNITED NATIONS

APRIL

1	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
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
28-4/6	Child Protection Week	SOUTH 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

1-30	National Arbor Month	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

1-31	National Marine Month	SOUTH AFRICAN
1	International Day of Older Persons	UNITED NATIONS
5	World Teachers' Day	UNITED NATIONS
7	World Habitat Day	UNITED NATIONS
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 Persons with Disabilities	UNITED NATIONS
16	Day of Reconciliation	SOUTH AFRICAN