

# The Calendar of Religious Festivals and Supplement

## 2025

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 and celebrate during 2025 are:

- The Catholic Church's Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 begins on 24 December 2024 and ends on the Feast of Epiphany, 6 January 2026. Look for the Bull of Indiction from Pope Francis, *Spes Non Confundit* ('Hope does not disappoint'), a Letter from Pope Francis to the President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, the Jubilee Logo, the Jubilee Prayer, and the Jubilee hymn at <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html>
- The 1,700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Christian Ecumenical Council at Nicaea, in 325 AD. Pope Francis refers to this in *Spes Non Confundit*, and Catholic, Orthodox, and Coptic Christians will celebrate Easter on the same date in 2025. Further, material prepared for the eight days of Prayer for Christian Unity links biblical texts with key statements in the Nicene Creed. Find it at: <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/settimana-di-preghiera-per-l-unita.html>
- The UN International Year of Peace and Trust. Build awareness of protracted conflicts between countries, and of efforts to bring about agreements to ceasefire and conflict resolution. Begin with: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/087/89/pdf/n2408789.pdf>
- 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:

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# Calendar of Religious Festivals 2025

## JANUARY

1	Mary, Mother of God (New Year 2025 AD)	CATHOLIC
5	Epiphany	CATHOLIC
26	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
26	Maha Shivaratri Great Shiva Night. A festival honouring the marriage of Lord Shiva to Goddess Parvati.	HINDU

## MARCH

1	Ramadan The first day of the month of fasting.	MUSLIM
5	Ash Wednesday Orthodox Christians begin Lent on 3 March – Clean Monday.	CHRISTIAN
14	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
14	Holi A joyous spring festival including pilgrimage to holy places to offer penance for misdeeds, and to make or renew vows.	HINDU
20	Naw-Rúz: New Year 182 BE The date is calculated according to the vernal equinox and linked with the birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh – Tehran.	BAHÁ'Í
26	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
29-6/4	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
31	Eid-ul-Fitr (1 Shawwaal) The end of Ramadan, and the breaking of the fast.	MUSLIM

## APRIL

7	St. John Baptist de La Salle Patron of Teachers.	CATHOLIC
13-20	Pesach (Passover) Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorating the deliverance of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt.	JEWISH
13-18	Holy Week (Inclusive of Palm Sunday and Good Friday)	CHRISTIAN
20	Easter Sunday Coptic and Orthodox Christians will celebrate Easter on the same Sunday in 2025.	CHRISTIAN
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

## MAY

12	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
29	Ascension of Jesus Transferred in the Catholic Church in South Africa to the following Sunday (1/6/2025).	CHRISTIAN
30-7/6	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 by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity and the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. To mark the 1,700th anniversary of the first Christian Ecumenical Council, held in Nicaea, in 325 AD, the biblical texts for each day are linked with key statements in the Nicene Creed.	ECUMENICAL CHRISTIAN

## JUNE

2-3	Shavuot (Festival of Weeks) The occasion on which Moses received the Torah from God on Mount Sinai.	JEWISH
7	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
8	Pentecost	CHRISTIAN
15	Trinity Sunday	CHRISTIAN
27	Al Hijrah (New Year, 1447 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

## AUGUST

6	Transfiguration	CHRISTIAN
10-16	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
17	Assumption of Mary	CATHOLIC

## 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
5	Mawlid an-Nabi (Birth of the Prophet Mohamed, 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal) The Sunni date; Shia Muslims celebrate this 5 days later.	MUSLIM
22-30	Navaratri The festival of 'nine nights' honouring the mother goddess, Durga, wife of Shiva, and seeking her blessings.	HINDU
23-24	Rosh Hashanah (New Year 5786) Literally 'the head of the year'. Commemorates God's creation of the world.	JEWISH

## OCTOBER

2	Yom Kippur The Day of Atonement, considered the holiest day of the year.	JEWISH
7-8	Sukkot The Feast of Tabernacles commemorating the 40 years in the desert when the Israelites lived in shelters.	JEWISH
15	Simchat Torah 'Rejoicing over the Torah' - the completion (of Deuteronomy) and beginning (of Genesis) of the annual cycle of readings from the Torah.	JEWISH
20	Diwali (Deepavali) The Festival of Lights: Lakshmi, the Goddess of good fortune, visits every house where a lamp is lit. Diwali is the 3 <sup>rd</sup> day of a 5-day festival.	HINDU
23	Birth of Bahá'u'lláh Celebrates the birth, in 1817, of the founder of the Bahá'í faith.	BAHÁ'Í

## NOVEMBER

1	All Saints' Day Transferred in the Catholic Church in South Africa to the following Sunday (2/11/2025).	CATHOLIC
16	World Day of the Poor	CATHOLIC
30	First Sunday of Advent	CHRISTIAN

## DECEMBER

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
15-22	Hanukkah The Festival of Lights celebrating the victory of Judas Maccabeus and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in 164 BCE.	JEWISH
25	Christmas Orthodox Christians will celebrate Christmas on 7 January 2026.	CHRISTIAN

# Supplement to the Calendar of Religious Festivals 2025

## FEBRUARY

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

## MARCH

17-23	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.)	S 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
21	Family Day	SOUTH AFRICAN
27	Freedom Day	SOUTH AFRICAN

## MAY

1	St. Joseph the Worker / Workers' Day	CATHOLIC / INTERNATIONAL
11	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
25-31	Child Protection Week	SOUTH AFRICAN

## JUNE

5	World Environment Day	UNITED NATIONS
15	Father's Day	SOUTH AFRICAN
16	Youth Day / Day of the African Child	SOUTH AFRICAN / UNITED NATIONS
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

1-30	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
6	World Habitat Day	UNITED NATIONS
16	World Food Day	UNITED NATIONS
17	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty	UNITED NATIONS
10 Oct	Friday World Mental Health Day	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