

LESSON 5: Festivals and Celebrations


AIM

To help the children understand the importance of religious festivals and celebrations (5.1.17)

OUTCOME



The learners understand aspects of religious festivals and celebrations across a range of religions found in South Africa.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES


- 1 Arrange the class in groups. Let the children **share stories** of the photographs they brought with them. How did the family prepare for the occasion? Who was responsible for what and why? Allow those who may not have photographs of their own to choose from the ones you brought. The discussion leads into the explanation of why we have celebrations in church and in other religions.
- 2 Religious celebrations also remember persons and events that are significant in the particular religious tradition. Refer to the **Church's Year** worksheet to revise the different seasons of the Christian year and the liturgical colours associated with them. Ask the learners to name the significance of the feasts listed on the worksheet.  ⇒



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Photographs of their most memorable celebrations brought by the learners (1)
- * Photographs, pictures or drawings of some of the celebrations that families have, for example weddings, birthdays (1)
- *  Copies of the Church's Year worksheet (2) ⇒
- *  Calendar of religious festivals (3) ⇒

SEASON/FEAST	SIGNIFICANCE
Advent	Awaiting the promised Messiah
Christmas	Birth of Jesus
Lent	Jesus' forty days in the desert
Holy Week	Passion and death of Jesus
Easter	Resurrection of Jesus
Ascension	Jesus' return to the Father
Pentecost	the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples
Christ the King	Second Coming of Jesus

- 3 Give the children a copy of the second worksheet which contains a **calendar** of festivals from different religions.  ⇒ Select from the calendar a number of festivals corresponding to the number of groups you have for this lesson. Choose the festivals with the following things in mind:

GRADE 6

- Which religious traditions are represented in the class?
- Which festivals are the learners likely to have some knowledge of?
- Which festivals will I be able to provide additional information on?

Invite the learners in their groups to discuss and tell what they know of their assigned festival. One member of the group records what members share for feedback later and also to collect ideas for a project if you are going to include **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY 5**. In their discussion, they could attend to the following aspects:

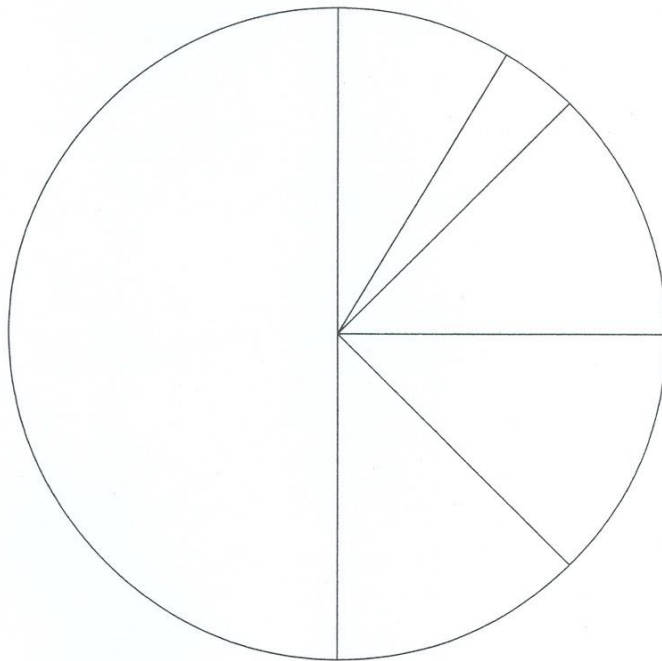
- How do the believers prepare for this festival?
 - What do they do during the festival?
 - What does the festival commemorate?
 - What special things associated with the festival - foods, customs, and rituals?
 - Does this festival have similarities with a festival in another religion? What are the similarities?
- 4 Give each group an opportunity for a **report**. Correct anything you find erroneous, and fill in any details you think would be helpful or significant.
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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 5 Ask the class groups to find out more about their **assigned festivals** from the library, from the internet, or from the local church, temple, mosque or synagogue. They will present their findings as a group project.
- 6 Invite someone from the Jewish, Muslim or Hindu community to come and **address the children** about their faith's celebrations.
- 7 Let the children **prepare an assembly** for the school around the theme of Pentecost or any other religious festival that will be celebrated by a community around the time of the lesson.

The Church's Year

Start at twelve o'clock on the circle, naming the seasons of the Church's year, and colouring in the wedges in the correct liturgical colours. A key to the colours is given. The year starts with the season of Advent. Note that ordinary time is divided into two separate periods. Place small red circles in the correct wedges to represent Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Pentecost.



LITURGICAL COLOURS

RED	PALM SUNDAY, GOOD FRIDAY and PENTECOST
GREEN	ORDINARY TIME
WHITE	CHRISTMAS, EASTER
PURPLE	ADVENT, LENT

Fill in the table describing the significance of each of the feasts given.

SEASON/FEAST	SIGNIFICANCE
Advent	
Christmas	
Lent	
Holy Week	
Easter	
Ascension	
Pentecost	
Christ the King	

Calendar of Religious Festivals 2021

JANUARY

6 **Epiphany** (Celebrated in the Catholic Church in South Africa on Sunday, 3/1/2021) CHRISTIAN

FEBRUARY

17 **Ash Wednesday** (Orthodox Christians begin Lent on 15 March – Clean Monday.) CHRISTIAN

MARCH

28-4/4 **Pesach** (Passover) JEWISH

(Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorating the deliverance of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt.)

28-2/4 **Holy Week** (Inclusive of Palm Sunday and Good Friday) CHRISTIAN

29 **Holi** HINDU

(A joyous spring festival including pilgrimage to holy places to offer penance for misdeeds, and to make or renew vows.)

APRIL

4 **Easter Sunday** (Orthodox Christians will celebrate Easter on 2 May.) CHRISTIAN

14 **Ramadan** (The first day of the month of fasting.) MUSLIM

MAY

13 **Ascension of Jesus** CHRISTIAN

(Celebrated in the Catholic Church in South Africa on the following Sunday (16/5/2021).)

14 **Eid-ul-Fitr** (I Shawwaal) (The end of Ramadan, and the breaking of the fast.) MUSLIM

23 **Pentecost** CHRISTIAN

26 **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.)

JULY

21 **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.)

SEPTEMBER

7-8 **Rosh Hashanah** (New Year 5782) JEWISH

(Literally 'the head of the year'. Commemorates God's creation of the world.)

16 **Yom Kippur** (The Day of Atonement, considered the holiest day of the year.) JEWISH

NOVEMBER

4-8 **Diwali** (Deepavali) HINDU

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

29-6/12 **Hanukkah** JEWISH

(The Festival of Lights celebrating the victory of Judas Maccabeus and the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in 164 BCE.)

DECEMBER

25 **Christmas** (Orthodox Christians will celebrate Christmas on 7 January, 2022.) CHRISTIAN

LESSON 6: Why Go to Church?


AIM

To help learners to appreciate the need to participate in the community's sacramental and liturgical life. (14.2.5)

OUTCOME


The learners understand that belonging to a religious community brings both privileges and responsibilities

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 To start the lesson ask the children to write in their books a **description or illustration** of each of the following:
 - a rugby, cricket, or soccer player without a team
 - an ant without a colony
 - a bee without a hive
 - a president without a Cabinet
 Place a liturgical calendar in view of all.
- 2 Ask the children for the reasons **why they go to church**. Some of the answers you may get are: "My parents make me go", "We all go there on Sunday". A few of them may go because they enjoy the company of other children at church or just the Sunday school. From these answers try and show the children how good it is to be with other people in the worship and praise of God.
- 3 **Our need for worship:** Read Psalm 8, Psalm 23 or Psalm 139. What sentiments do these psalms express? Guide the learners to an appreciation of the following:
 - Worship is rooted in a sense of wonder and amazement at the greatness and goodness of God.
 - Worship expressed a wish that God may transform our lives.
 - Worship conveys our need of and our trust in God.
 - We praise and thank God in community.
- 4 Ask the learners to identify the four points in ACTIVITY 3 in another scripture reading - [Ephesians 3:14-21], and to complete the **worksheet**.  ⇒
- 5 Explain to the children that the church is a **support group** for all the Christians belonging to it, the church offers all kinds of help in times of need. Here invite groups to call to mind and list all the areas of support that their communities provide.



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Liturgical calendar (1)
- * Bibles (3)
- *  Copies of the worksheet (4) ⇒
- * Precepts of the Catholic Church (8) ⇒
- * Order of service books from the learners' own places of worship (10)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 Let the children split up into mixed religion and denomination **groups**. The task is to discuss how it would be for each one of us to worship God completely on our own without the company of other believers and also whether this is practical. Allow time for the groups to report back to the class what they discussed.

- 7 Concentrate on the **sacraments** which we celebrate in the Catholic Church. All the sacraments relate in some way to rites of passage and as such take place in the presence of the greater family of God to be made meaningful.
- 8 A brief explanation of the **precepts of the church** and their spirit can be given to the children in writing. Invite the learners of different religious groups to present a set of rules from their religious community to the class. ⇒
- 9 Plan a **Eucharistic liturgy** with the class.
- 10 Compare the various **order of service** books that the learners are asked to bring from their respective places of worship.

MATERIALS

THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH

The Church directs its members to:

1. Attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.
2. Confess our sins at least once a year.
3. Humbly receive our Creator in Holy Communion at least during the Easter season.
4. Keep holy the holy days of obligation.
5. Observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence.

Come, Let Us Worship

Worship means saying to God, “How great you are!” it is our response when we “see your heavens, the work of your fingers” [Psalm 8]; when we become aware of the depths within us and acknowledge, “You knit me in my mother’s womb” [Psalm 139]; or when we recognise the goodness of God in our lives and know the “the Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.” [Psalm 23]

The basic attitudes that characterise Christian worship are set out below. Read [Ephesians 3:14-21]. Can you identify how Paul speaks of these attitudes in this passage? Write down his words in the empty column.

Worship is rooted in a sense of wonder and amazement at the greatness and goodness of God.	
Worship expresses a wish that God may transform our lives.	
Worship conveys our need of and trust in God.	
We praise and thank God in community worship.	

LESSON 7: Gestures and Movement in Worship

AIM

To help the children understand the place of gestures and movement in prayer and worship (5.3.5)



WHAT YOU NEED

- * Prayer or song (5)
- * An area where movement is not restricted, suitable dress (6)

OUTCOME

Learners understand the meaning of certain gestures and movements in a liturgical setting.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 1 Ask the children why they would rather move around than sit in one spot even during lesson time. The answers are sure to make them realise how important movement is to them. The focus in this lesson, however, will be on **meaningful movement** in prayer and worship.
- 2 Clarify the meaning of 'gesture'. **Gestures** are actions we perform to convey some meaning. Ask the class to identify and demonstrate some examples. One learner performs a gesture, and another interprets it (says what it means). Some examples might be a shrug, a handshake, a smile, a clenched fist, hands-on-hips, or turning one's back on another.
- 3 Explain that there is movement and gesture involved in **prayer and worship**. For instance when the Gospel is about to be read all people stand, and this serves a dual purpose. One is to ensure attention, and the other is acknowledge the Word of God. Ask the learners to identify as many kinds of movement or gesture that can happen during the celebration of Mass. Perhaps working in groups they draw up a list such as the following:

MOVEMENT OR GESTURE	SIGNIFICANCE
Entrance Procession	gathering of the people - reminiscent of the people of Israel going up to Jerusalem
Offertory Procession	bringing gifts to the altar
Sign of Peace	expressing a desire for unity
Sign of the Cross	blessing
the lifting up of hands or eyes	offering to the Father
genuflecting	greeting of humble respect and adoration
bowing	humble recognition of God's presence and power
joining hands in prayer	subjection to God, attention and readiness
Kneeling	adoration, penance or supplication
striking the breast	sorrow for sin

Standing	respect, reverence, readiness
prostrating	an intense and total expression of adoration, penance or supplication

- 4 Give the children of **other denominations and faiths** time to explain to the class where and when they use gestures in their own worship.
- 5 **Liturgical dance:** Some form of dance suitable to the culture celebrating the Eucharist often forms a part of the Offertory Procession, or even Communion Meditation. Such a dance is prayerful and dignified, serving to raise the consciousness of the worshippers of the beauty and majesty of God, and to give the people an opportunity to express their feelings of worship in a moving way. Choose a prayer or song, like the *Glory Be* or *Gloria* that you would like the learners in groups to set to dance. Let them read through the prayer to make sure that they understand it well. Explain anything that is necessary. Let the learners devise appropriate movements and gestures for the prayer. They can work on this even during their own time and then present it to the class. They could select the most appropriate one to be presented to the school at assembly. Some criteria to look for during presentations:
 - Has the group chosen the most practical way of gesturing or moving for this prayer or song?
 - Did the group remember that the gestures should be prayerful?
 - Were the group members cooperative? Did all the members have a chance to contribute to the presentation?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 6 Let the children prepare a liturgical dance for the next **school Mass**. Or use the same dance that was selected by the class. This could be for the entrance of the priest, the presentation of the gifts or the procession of the Word.
- 7 Introduce the class to **rak'ah**, the set of movements accompanying Muslim prayer. You will find a clear description with illustrations of a rak'ah in the Sacred Worlds Series: *Festivals and Celebrations* published locally by Juta. If you have a Muslim learner ask him or her to demonstrate this for the class.
- 8 In an old Christian tradition, people stood with hands uplifted while praying, **facing east**, the direction of the rising sun, the symbol of Christ. You may like to do this when and if you have a class morning prayer.
- 9 **Indian dancing** is full of gestures. Invite a dancer to demonstrate this for the class.
- 10 Hindu and Buddhist tradition contains symbolic hand gestures called **mudra**. The easiest place to see this is in paintings and sculptures in that tradition. The illustrations alongside depict the gods Brahman (right) and Shiva (left). Their four arms express their greater than human power.

