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 Ramadhan)  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.

### JULY

### 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 1 st 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 Baha’u’llah  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

2018

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

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

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  UNITED NATIONS
(Marks the beginning of a 16 day period of action to address gendered patterns of exploitation and violence.)

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