



The Holy Days of April

Celebrations, Observances and Information about Religious, Spiritual, and Cultural Occasions

**Office of InterFaith
Pastoral and Spiritual Care**
Senior Chaplain
Rev. Kathleen Ennis-Durstine
extension 3321/ room 4201

Staff Chaplain
Janie Brooks
extension 5050/ room 4115

Staff/Spanish Language Chaplain
Margarita Roque
extension 2626/ room 4115

Catholic Chaplain
Fr. Olusola Adewole
extension 2626/room 4115

**Catholic Mass: Thursday at 12:00 noon
(East Chapel, room 3033, third floor East
Tower) and Saturday at 4:00 pm (Main
Chapel, room 3201, 3rd Floor Main Hospi-
tal)**

**Prayer and Meditation Tuesday 12:45 pm
East Chapel, room 3033, third floor East
Tower—please listen for the
announcement****

**Friday: Jumah Prayer R-114, floor 3.5
Main Hospital at 1:15**

**Sunday Worship 4:00 pm Room 3201, Main
Chapel third floor, Main Hospital - please
listen for the announcement****

****Because of staffing limitations leaders for
these worship opportunities may not be
available. We OVERHEAD announce them
1/2 hour prior to the service.**

Note the Information Boards and Brochure
Racks for other information

In April let's celebrate Autism Awareness, Cancer Control, Diversity, Child Abuse Prevention, Defeat Diabetes Month, Global Child Nutrition, Holy Humor Month, National DNA & Genomics & Stem Cell Education and Awareness Month, National Donate Life Month, National Occupational Therapy Month, National Parkinson's Awareness Month, National Sarcoidosis Awareness Month, National Sexually Transmitted Diseases Awareness Month, National Sexual Assault Awareness Month, Rosacea Awareness Month, School Library Media Month, Stress Awareness Month, Workplace Conflict and Awareness Month. There are also some weekly observances: National Public Health Week (1-7), National Week of the Ocean (1-7), National Library Week (8-14), Health Information Privacy and Security Week (10-16), Fibroid Awareness Week (15-21), Week of the Young Child (22-28), Safe Kids Week (23-28), Gathering of the Nations PowWow (26-28), [THAT'S ONLY A FEW!] And then there are Daily Observances: International Tongue Twister Day (1), International Children's Book Day (2), World Autism Day (2), International Day for Mine Awareness (4), National Fun at Work Day (5), Hospital Admitting Clerks' Day (6), World Health Organization Day (7), ASPCA Day (10), National Be Kind to Lawyers' Day (10), Ellis Island Family History Day (17), Administrative Professionals' Day (25), Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day (26).



Holy Days with no fixed date

Baswant India, Pakistan A Spring festival celebrated mostly in northern India and Pakistan. During the festival people wear clothing that is yellow—which is both the sacred color of India and a color for spring. The Sanskrit word “baswant” means “yellow.” In the morning families make offerings of food and white flowers to Saraswati, the goddess of learning and observe a time of fasting. At noon the fast is broken with a picnic lunch. Men and boys fly kites. As in other parts of Asia, the first hundred feet or so of the kite string is covered with glue/broken glass; the point is to try the skill of the kite flyer in cutting the strings of others' but saving his own! [There is a good description of this in the novel [The Kite Runner](#)]

Feast of Nganja Angola This is corn harvest time in Angola; children pick corn and gather for roasting and feasting. Different groups of children will try to trick and run off with the roasted ears of others. This is a happy, fun-filled day.



Lich'un China This Chinese festival is linked to the agricultural cycle and spring. The major feature is a procession of musicians and dancers led by a papier-mâché ox and ox-driver. These are constructed and painted only after a careful examination of the almanac under official direction. Five colors of paint are used—red, black, white, green, and yellow. These represent metal, wood, fire, water, and earth, five elements of nature. The use of these colors and the appearance of the ox and driver is very symbolic. If the head of the ox is painted red, drought is predicted for the spring. Yellow indicates heat; green, sickness; white, high winds; and black, much rain. The driver's appearance is also significant. If he is wearing a hat and shoes there will be rain but if he is barefooted then there will be drought. Many clothes indicate cold weather, few clothes hot weather. On this day people erect bamboo poles with feathers attached in front of their homes—as the spring winds blow the feathers off everyone celebrates that it has truly arrived!

San Khuda (New Year) Sierra Leone This is a traditional festival celebrated by the Mandingo tribe just as the dry season is ending and the rainy season beginning. The Mandingo people believe that water is the source of all life and that through use water loses its power. They equate the dry season with an act of God—taking away the old, worn-out water and replacing it with new water at this start of the year. On the eve of the celebration houses and yards are cleaned and containers readied to receive the new water. People gather in the center of the town or village. Women and children begin singing to the accompaniment of drums and flutes as their neighbors arrive carrying buckets. At a signal from the leader everyone goes to the river or spring. They return home carrying water and palm fronds. The palms are dipped in the water and used to sprinkle everything and everyone as a blessings. Gift-giving and feasting can sometimes be a part of the celebration, but the central focus is always on the water.

Yaqui Easter Ceremony Yaqui Indians of Arizona Christian/traditional This festival lasts throughout the 40 days of Lent. Evangelized by Jesuit missionaries in the 17th Century, the Yaqui blended many of their religious/cultural beliefs with those of Christianity. Beginning with Ash Wednesday the Yaqui decorate churches and make masks and erect crosses to remember and enact Christ's Passion. Public ceremonies and tribal dances occur during the entire period, but the celebration climaxes in Holy Week.



Yaqui Easter by Iowa Yoder

On Holy Thursday members of the tribe representing soldiers who have been searching for Jesus capture an effigy of Him and then seize control of the church. Other members of the tribe represent the Pharisees and they carry out a symbolic crucifixion on Good Friday. But during the night, as the resurrection takes place, they do not "realize" that they have lost possession of Christ's body. On Holy Saturday there is a confrontation between the Pharisees (fariseos) and the soldiers (chapayekas) and others who are defending the church armed with flowers. The fariseos and chapayekas approach the church three times—they are stopped and eventually defeated. To represent their defeat they throw their masks and an effigy of Judas into a bonfire. The Pascolas, the Deer Dancers, and the Matachin Dancers perform during the following celebration. When news of Christ's resurrection is proclaimed on Easter morning all the Yaqui join together in a procession which ends with a sermon on the meaning of the various parts of the Easter Ceremony. See <http://arizonarockstours.com/2009/07/27/the-yaqui-history-and-culture/>

Holy Days with fixed date

April 1 Palm Sunday Christian Palm Sunday is a Christian moveable feast that falls on the Sunday before Easter. The feast commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, an event mentioned in all four canonical Gospels. (Mark 11:1–11, Matthew 21:1–11, Luke 19:28–44, and John 12:12–19).



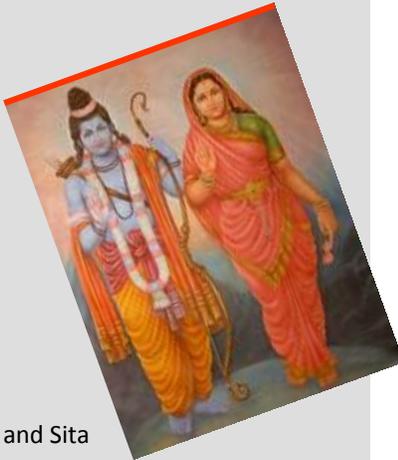
In the accounts of the four canonical Gospels, Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem takes place about a week before his Resurrection. According to the Gospels, Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem, and the celebrating people there lay down their cloaks in front of him, and also lay down small branches of trees. The people sang part of Psalms 118: 25–26 – ... Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord ...

The symbolism of the donkey may refer to the Eastern tradition that it is an animal of peace, versus the horse, which is the animal of war. Therefore, a king came riding upon a horse when he was bent on war and rode upon a donkey when he wanted to point out he was coming in peace. Therefore, Jesus' entry to Jerusalem symbolized his entry as the Prince of Peace, not as a war-waging king.

In many lands in the ancient Near East, it was customary to cover in some way the path of someone thought worthy of the highest honor. The Hebrew Bible (2Kings 9:13) reports that Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, was treated this way. Both the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John report that people gave Jesus this form of honor. However, in the synoptics they are only reported as laying their garments and cut rushes on the street, whereas John more specifically mentions palm fronds. The palm branch was a symbol of triumph and victory in Jewish tradition, and is treated in other parts of the Bible as such (e.g., Leviticus 23:40 and Revelation 7:9). Because of this, the scene of the crowd greeting Jesus by waving palms and carpeting his path with them and their cloaks has become symbolic and important.

April 1 Rama Navami Hindu Rama Navami celebrates the birth of Lord Rama, son of King Dasharatha of Ayodhya. Rama was an incarnation of Vishnu and the hero of the Ramayana, the Sanskrit epic of 24,000 stanzas.

A continuous recital of the book takes place for about a week prior to the celebration and on the day itself, the highlights of the story are read in the temple. The house is thoroughly cleaned on Rama Navami and is also decorated. Offerings of fruit and flowers are placed on the family shrine and after an early bath, prayers are recited. The youngest female member of the household leads the puja (prayers) by applying a red tilak (mark) to all the other members of the family before everyone joins together in worship. An image or picture of baby Rama is placed in a covered cradle. At noon the covering is removed and Prasad (special sacred food) is offered to Rama, which may then be shared amongst the congregation. There is an element of fasting. Some people don't eat certain foods, particularly things like onions, garlic, some spices and wheat products. The festival is a focal point for moral reflection and being especially charitable to others. Celebrations at places associated with Sri Rama, like Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh and Ramesvaram in Tamil Nadu, attract thousands of devotees.



Rama and Sita

April 1 Swaminarayan Jayanti Hindu Swaminarayan Jayanti celebrates the birthday of Lord Swaminarayan (1781-1830), the founder of the Swaminarayan tradition. Lord Swaminarayan was born in the village of Chhapaiya, Northern India, near Ayodhya, into a Brahmin family. He travelled extensively around India in his youth and eventually settled in an ashram in Gujarat. He was known as a social and moral reformer by the people of Gujarat, and by the British administration in that region. At the age of 21, he founded the Swaminarayan Sampradaya (or denomination) to promote his teachings. He initiated 3,000 sadhus (monks) and is recognized and worshipped as God by his followers.

To continue his work of promoting personal morality and molding spiritual character, he promised to remain ever-present with his followers through an unbroken succession of enlightened gurus.

Devotees of Lord Swaminarayan celebrate his birthday by fasting and offering a large variety of food to sacred images of Swaminarayan in temples. The day passes in worship and reflection. In the evening, celebrations include scriptural discourses, devotional singing, and live enactments of episodes from the life of Swaminarayan. At precisely 10.10pm, believed to be the time of Swaminarayan's birth, the arti ritual is performed symbolizing the auspicious birth. Festivities continue into the night and with the breaking of the fast the following morning.

April 5 Maundy Thursday Christian Maundy Thursday is observed by Christians on the Thursday before Easter. "Holy Thursday," as it is also commonly known, marks the Last Supper of Jesus Christ with his apostles prior to his betrayal, trial and crucifixion as portrayed in the Christian gospels. While the Palm Sunday and Easter observances of Holy Week are generally more joyful, Maundy Thursday observances take on a more solemn tone and focus on two primary rituals that are portrayed in the biblical accounts of the Last Supper.

The name "Maundy Thursday" is derived from the Latin word *mandatum* meaning "commandment." The primary commandment of Jesus' message is found in the story of the Last Supper when Jesus humbles himself to wash the feet of his apostles prior to the traditional Passover meal. He then commands them to "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34). In observance of this commandment, the act of feet-washing is often performed by clergy as part of Maundy Thursday church services. The other important Christian ritual to come out of the Last Supper story is that of the Eucharist or Holy Communion. Described in all three of the synoptic gospels and expounded upon in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, Christians take communion to replicate Jesus' giving of bread and wine to his apostles during their final meal together. While different denominations may maintain different specific interpretations of the ritual, many incorporate a special communion into the Maundy Thursday liturgy.



April 6 Good Friday Christian The holiday is observed during Holy Week as part of the Paschal Triduum on the Friday preceding Easter Sunday, and may coincide with the Jewish observance of Passover. Based on the details of the Canonical gospels, the Crucifixion of Jesus was most likely to have been on a Friday (John 19:42). The estimated year of Good Friday is CE 33. Many Christians spend this day in fasting, prayer, repentance, and meditation on the agony and suffering of Christ on the cross. The biblical account of Jesus' death on the cross, or crucifixion, his burial and his resurrection, or raising from the dead, can be found in the following passages of Scripture: Matthew 27:27-28:8; Mark 15:16-16:19; Luke 23:26-24:35; and John 19:16-20:30.

April 6 Fast of the Firstborn Jewish Ta'anit Bechorot (or Ta'anit Bekhorot - "Fast of the First Born") is a fast day from sunrise until sunset on the day before Passover, the first born male of every Jewish household fasts in commemoration of the 10th plague of Passover, in which HaShem spared the first born male in every Jewish household in Egypt, and instead slew the first born in every Egyptian household.

There are several traditions concerning the fast day and how rigidly it is observed. If there is no first born male in a Jewish household, then the oldest male in the family fasts. If there are no children, then the oldest member of the family fasts, usually the father of the household. This is done because all Egyptian families were affected by HaShem's wrath, whether or not they had a first born son. First borns can be exempted from the Ta'anit Bechorot by attending a Siyyum Bekhorot. Siyyum means "the celebration held after the public completion of study of a tractate of the Talmud or at the end of a year of study" in Hebrew, and Siyyum Bekhorot means "the celebration held after the public completion of study of a tractate of the Talmud or at the end of a year of study for first borns". This celebration usually involves eating at a feast. The Siyyum Bekhorot is done so that the obligation or mitzvah to hold a celebration will override the mitzvah to fast on the day before Passover.

April 6 Hanuman Jayanti Hindu Hanuman Jayanti is celebrated to commemorate the birth of Hanuman Ji, the monkey God. He is the symbol of strength and energy. Hanuman is worshipped for his unyielding devotion to Rama and is remembered for his selfless dedication to the God. Hanuman is considered the living embodiment of the Karma Yogi (one whose meditation and devotion are demonstrated through hard work or service). (continued)





Hanuman said "I am a humble messenger of Sri Rama. I have come here to serve Rama, to do His work. By the command of Lord Rama, I have come here. I am fearless by the Grace of Lord Rama. I am not afraid of death. I welcome it if it comes while serving Lord Rama."

In return for his unconditional love, Lord Rama granted him everlasting life. He promised that he would be worshipped alongside Rama and that his idol would be placed next to his. This is a very popular festival. It can be celebrated individually or in the temple. On this day, the sacred text, Hanuman Chalisa, is recited - a set of prayers glorifying Hanuman, describing his past times. Depending on the devotee, the text is either recited non-stop for 24 hours or sometimes it's performed a set number of times. Special Pujas are performed and offerings are made to Lord Hanuman. Some people have different rituals, such as sacred fire ceremonies. In India particularly, colorful processions fill the streets. People dance, carry idols of Lord Hanuman and some people wear masks and tails to imitate the monkey God. Every celebration is always accompanied by a period of fasting and then a big vegetarian feast. See a nice account of the story of Hanuman's life at http://www.sanatansociety.org/indian_epics_and_stories/the_life_of_hanuman.htm

April 6 Theravada New Year Buddhist Buddhists celebrate the New Year, the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death. This is a time for evaluating one's karma—cleansing—and well-wishing. The Theravada communities observe this occasion over the course of three days. The laity ritually bathe the Buddha-images and sprinkle water on the monks and the elders, showing respect and offering good wishes. The monks chant blessings on the laity, and together they share the merit of the occasion with the dead. The New Year appropriately begins at the end of the dry season and the beginning of the new life in the spring. The pouring of water is not only an honoring of the Buddha, the monks, the elders, and the dead, but also an offering for plentiful rain and prosperity in the days to come. In Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia the laity build sand mounds (stupas) at the monastery or on the bank of the river. Each grain of sand represents a demerit, and placing the grains in the monastery or letting them be washed away by the river symbolizes a cleansing from bad deeds.

April 7 Holy Saturday Christian Holy Saturday is the name given to the day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Some Christians recognize this day as the seventh day of Holy Week, the day on which Jesus "rested" from His work of providing salvation for the world. Holy Saturday is the day Jesus remained in the tomb where He had been buried following His crucifixion (Matthew 27:59-60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53-54; John 19:39-42). If a church body celebrates Holy Saturday, it is traditionally done by observing a day of somber reflection, contemplating the world of darkness that would exist without the hope of Christ's resurrection.



The only biblical reference to what happened on the Saturday in between Jesus' death and resurrection is found in Matthew 27:62-66. After sundown on Saturday—the end of the Sabbath—the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pontius Pilate and asked that a guard be placed at Jesus' tomb to prevent His disciples from removing the body. They remembered Jesus saying that He would rise again in three days (John 2:19-21) and wanted to do everything they could to prevent that. We know from the succeeding accounts that the Roman guards were inadequate to prevent the resurrection and those who returned to the tomb Sunday morning found it empty. The Lord had risen.

April 7 Passover (first day) Jewish Pesach, or Passover in English, is one of the best known Jewish holidays. Passover begins on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Nissan. It is the first of the three major festivals with both historical and agricultural significance (the other two are Shavu'ot and Sukkot). Agriculturally, it represents the beginning of the harvest season in Israel. The primary observances of Passover are related to the Exodus from Egypt after 400 years of slavery as told in the biblical Book of Exodus from chapters 1 to 15. Passover lasts for seven days (eight days outside of Israel). The first and last days of the holiday (continued)

(first two and last two outside of Israel) are days on which no work is permitted. Work is permitted on the intermediate days, referred to as Chol Ha-Mo'ed.

The name "Passover" is derived from the Hebrew word Pesach which is based on the root "pass over" and refers to the fact that G-d "passed over" the houses of the Jews when he was slaying the firstborn of Egypt during the last of the ten plagues. Passover is also widely referred to as Chag he-Aviv (the "Spring Festival"), Chag ha-Matzoth (the "Festival of Matzahs"), and Zeman Herutenu (the "Time of Our Freedom"). Many of the Passover observances still held were instituted in chapters 12 to 15 of the Exodus story in the Torah. Probably the most significant observance involves the removal of chametz (leavened bread) from homes and property. Chametz includes anything made from the five major grains (wheat, rye, barley, oats and spelt) that has not been completely cooked within 18 minutes after coming into contact with water (Ashkenazic Jews also consider rice, corn, peanuts, and legumes as chametz). The removal of chametz commemorates the fact that the Jews left Egypt in a hurry and did not have time to let their bread rise. It is also a symbolic way of removing the "puffiness" (arrogance, pride) from one's soul. The grain product eaten during Passover in place of chametz is called matzah. Matzah is unleavened bread made simply from flour and water and cooked very quickly. This is traditionally viewed as the bread that the Jews made for their flight from Egypt. Matzah is also referred to as Lechem Oni ("Bread of Affliction"). There is more information and some good recipes at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/holidaya.html>

April 8 Easter Christian Easter, which celebrates Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead, is Christianity's most important holiday. It has been called a moveable feast because it doesn't fall on a set date every year, as most holidays do. Instead, Christian churches in the West celebrate Easter on the first Sunday following the full moon after the vernal equinox on March 21. Therefore, Easter is observed anywhere between March 22 and April 25 every year. Orthodox Christians use the Julian calendar to calculate when Easter will occur and typically celebrate the holiday a week or two after the Western churches, which follow the Gregorian calendar.

The exact origins of this religious feast day's name are unknown. Some sources claim the word Easter is derived from Eostre, a Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility. Other accounts trace Easter to the Latin term hebdomada alba, or white week, an ancient reference to Easter week and the white clothing donned by people who were baptized during that time. Through a translation error, the term later appeared as esostarum in Old High German, which eventually became Easter in English. In Spanish, Easter is known as Pascua; in French, Paques. These words are derived from the Greek and Latin Pascha or Pasch, for Passover. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection occurred after he went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover (or Pesach in Hebrew), the Jewish festival commemorating the ancient Israelites' exodus from slavery in Egypt. Pascha eventually came to mean Easter.

Easter is really an entire season of the Christian church year, as opposed to a single-day observance. Lent, the 40-day period leading up to Easter Sunday, is a time of reflection and penance and represents the 40 days that Jesus spent alone in the wilderness before starting his ministry, a time in which Christians believe he survived various temptations by the devil. The day before Lent, known as Mardi Gras or Fat Tuesday, is a last hurrah of food and fun before the fasting begins. The week preceding Easter is called Holy Week and includes Maundy Thursday, which commemorates Jesus' last supper with his disciples; Good Friday, which honors the day of his crucifixion; and Holy Saturday, which focuses on the transition between the crucifixion and resurrection. The 50-day period following Easter Sunday is called Eastertide and includes a celebration of Jesus' ascension into heaven.



Why is the Egg a Symbol of Easter?

Of all the symbols associated with Easter the egg, the symbol of fertility and new life, is the most identifiable. The customs and traditions of using eggs have been associated with Easter for centuries. Originally Easter eggs were painted with bright colors to represent the sunlight of spring and were used in Easter-egg rolling contests or given as gifts. After they were colored and etched with various designs the eggs were exchanged by lovers and romantic admirers, much the same as valentines. In medieval time eggs were traditionally given at Easter to the servants. In Germany eggs were given to children along with other Easter gifts. Different cultures have developed their own ways of decorating Easter eggs. Crimson eggs, to honor the blood of Christ, are exchanged in Greece. In parts of Germany and Austria green eggs are used on Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday). Slavic peoples decorate their eggs in special patterns of gold and silver. Austrian artists design patterns by fastening ferns and tiny plants around the eggs, which are then boiled. The plants are then removed revealing a striking white pattern. The Poles and Ukrainians decorate eggs with simple designs and colors. A number of eggs are made in the distinctive manner called pysanki (to design, to write). Pysanki eggs are a masterpiece of skill and workmanship. Melted beeswax is applied to the fresh white egg. It is then dipped in successive baths of dye. After each dip wax is painted over the area where the preceding color is to remain. Eventually a complex pattern of lines and colors emerges into a work of art. In Germany and other countries eggs used for cooking were not broken, but the contents were removed by piercing the end of each egg with a needle and blowing the contents into a bowl. The hollow eggs were dyed and hung from shrubs and trees during the Easter Week. The Armenians would decorate hollow eggs with pictures of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and other religious designs.





The Symbol of Sikhism

The Khanda consists of three objects:
A Solid Circle
Two Interlocked Swords
One Double-edged Sword in the Centre

The two-edged sword (which itself is known by the name Khanda), circled by the solid circle known as a Chakra. The right edge of the Khanda symbolizes freedom and authority governed by moral and spiritual values. The left edge of the double-edged sword symbolizes divine justice which chastises and punishes wicked oppressors. The two-edged sword at the centre of the Khanda also symbolizes disintegration of false pride and vanity and demolition of the barriers of caste and other inequalities. The AMRIT which is used at the time of BAPTISM is stirred with the Khanda. The original Khanda with which GURU GOBIND SINGH stirred the baptismal waters on March 30, CE 1699 is now preserved at Anandpur.

The Chakra being a circle without a beginning or an end exhorts the Sikhs to make the whole creation as the object of their compassion and activities. It signifies the symbol of *Ek Om Kar*, the Oneness of God, who is without beginning or end. The circle signifies oneness, unity, justice, humanity and morality. The Chakra was also used as a weapon against injustice and oppression. The two *Kirpans* (swords) flanking the Chakra represent the two swords of Guru HARGOBIND signifying the spiritual and temporal leadership of Gurus. Apart from giving it symmetry, the two *Kirpans* impart a conceptual balance to the *Khandalike* the Yin and Yang of ancient Chinese philosophy. The left side signifies the sword of spiritual sovereignty or *Piri*. The right sword signifies the sword of political sovereignty, *Miri*.



The Khanda to the left is shown in a slightly different manner using ears of Wheat, the basis of all bread on earth - the common food for all people. The Khanda is dedicated to all those seeking freedom from suffering where ever they may be.

April 13 Vaisakhi or Baisakhi Sikh For Sikh people of Punjab, Visakhi is a mega event. It's a religious as well as harvest festival and New Year Day also. For the Sikh community, it has a very special meaning. Sikhs celebrate Visakhi as the day of the formation of the Khalsa (the pure one). On the day, in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh (the tenth Sikh Guru) established the Khalsa and eliminated the differences of high and low and established that all human beings are equal. Sikhism, in its present form, owes its existence to that Visakhi day. After the Visakhi day of 1699, the tradition of Gurus was put to an end by the Sikhs and later the Guru Granth Sahib was declared as their eternal guide and Holy Book by the tenth Guru.

April 14 Birthday of Guru Nanak Sikh Guru Nanak (1469-1539) was one of the greatest religious innovators of all time and the founder of the Sikh religion. Guru Nanak's birthday is celebrated by Sikhs on April 14th by the Nanakshahi calendar. Nanak's religious ideas draw on both Hindu and Islamic thought, but are far more than just a synthesis. Nanak was an original spiritual thinker and expressed his thoughts in extraordinary poetry that forms the basis of Sikh scripture. Little is known about the life of Nanak, but Sikh tradition has a much-loved set of stories or *janam sakhis* which relate various incidents from his life, and include many of his important teachings. More information can be found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/sikhism/people/nanak.shtml>

April 14 Hola Mohalla Sikh Holla Mohalla, or Hola Mohalla, is a festival of Punjab. Celebrated over three days, is a community festival that brings people together in an atmosphere of sharing and caring. It is also an occasion to remember the valor of the Sikhs in battling the enemies of the land. The festival day begins with early morning prayers at the Gurdwaras. The Guru Granth Sahib is ceremoniously taken out and bathed ritually with milk and water. Thereafter, it is placed on a platform and venerated.

Kirtans are sung, the *prasad* (a holy meal) is consecrated and everyone shares a part of it. After the service, community lunch is served at the common hall. Evening is a time for numerous cultural activities. The Nihang Sikhs, who are part of the Sikh army that Guru Gobind Singh founded, exhibit their martial skills and daring through mock battles, sword-fighting displays, archery, and horse-riding exercises. The Nihangs also splash color on the spectators, and everyone follows suit. Stories and songs about the life, valor and wisdom of the ten Sikh gurus, right from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, are told and recited. Music, dance and poetry programs and competitions are held at many venues. A procession is carried through the important Gurdwaras in town marking the highlights of the last day celebrations. Holla Mohalla, while being an occasion to rejoice, is also a time to restore faith in the Khalsa Panth and rededicate oneself to the service of the community. Everyone, irrespective of their social standing, involves themselves in *kar seva* - manual labor, such as helping in the langars or public kitchens, cleaning the Gurdwaras and washing dishes.



April 15 Easter Orthodox Christian

April 18 Birthday of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur, 1621-1675 Born in Amritsar, Guru Tegh Bahadur was the ninth of the ten Gurus who founded Sikhism. He's honored and remembered as the man who championed the rights for all religious freedom. He taught liberation from attachment, fear and dependence. Strength should be gained through truth, worship, sacrifice and knowledge. During the reign of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, Islam was imposed on the people. Hindu temples were demolished and turned into mosques, higher taxes were charged to non-Muslims and the Emperor persecuted those who would not conform to Islamic law. Guru Tegh Bahadur spoke out amid this persecution. He refused to convert to Islam and in 1675, he was beheaded in Delhi. The site of his execution was later turned into an important Gurdwara. He's also remembered for his poetry, much of which is included in the Guru Granth Sahib.



April 18 Birthday of Guru Angad Dev Sikh Guru Angad Dev, 1504-1552 Guru Angad Dev was the second of the ten Gurus who founded Sikhism. He was born a Hindu with the name Bhai Lehna in Ferozepur, Punjab.

After coming across a Sikh man reciting a prayer composed by Guru Nanak, he expressed a desire to meet him. It's believed that it took just one meeting for him to renounce his faith and begin to follow the practices of Guru Nanak.

Guru Angad devoted 7 years proving himself under the guidance of Guru Nanak and after many tests he appointed him as his successor in 1539. When Guru Nanak died, Guru Angad went into seclusion and meditated for six months. He continued the work that Guru Nanak started and also made many notable contributions to Sikhism.

He popularized the use of a simplified alphabet by modifying the old Punjabi characters now known as the Gurmukhi script and wrote many verses that were included in the Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Angad made sure that the institution of Langar, the communal meal served at the Gurdwara (temple), became an obligation. He also created many Sikh religious institutions and schools. As a new faith, Sikhism was in danger of being overshadowed by the long-established religions. Guru Angad helped Sikhism to become a more accepted and respected faith.

April 19 Yom Hashoah Jewish The Jewish Holocaust Memorial Day. The date is chosen as the closest date (in the Jewish calendar) to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

April 21 Ridvan Bahá'í The Ridván Festival is celebrated from sunset 21 April to sunset 2 May. The festival marks Bahá'u'lláh's time in the garden of Ridván in 1863 and his announcement that he was the prophet promised by the Báb. Bahá'u'lláh ordained this festival 'Most Great Festival'. The 1st, 9th and 12th days are especially holy days. They commemorate the arrival of Bahá'u'lláh at the Ridván Garden, the arrival of his family and his departure. These three holy days are marked by communal prayers and celebrations, and are days on which no work is done.

Since Abdu'l-Bahá's time, Bahá'í elections have normally been held during Ridván. Local spiritual assemblies are elected on the first day of Ridván, while elections for national spiritual assemblies happen later in the festival. Bahá'u'lláh's declaration that he was the prophet heralded by the Báb was not made public for over a year. Bahá'u'lláh made the announcement when he arrived in Ridván to Abdu'l-Bahá and four others, but told them to keep it a secret. Bahá'u'lláh did not just announce that he was the prophet. He also said that there would be no other prophet for 1000 years, that his followers could not fight to protect or promote the Bahá'í faith and that "all the names of God were fully manifest in all things". The last statement is taken by Bahá'ís to mean that the world had been mystically transformed and that there was now a new relationship between God and humanity.

The Ridván Garden in Baghdad was originally named Najibiyyih. Bahá'u'lláh renamed it Ridván, which means Paradise. Bahá'u'lláh had been exiled to Baghdad from Tehran in Persia in 1853, but in 1863 the authorities began to fear that he might be a focus for political unrest there. It was decided that Bahá'u'lláh would now be exiled to Istanbul. So that his family and followers could prepare for the journey, Bahá'u'lláh left his house on 22 April 1863 and moved to the Najibiyyih Garden, where he proclaimed the Festival of Ridván. The festival begins 2 hours before sunset on 22 April, as that was the time he arrived in the Garden. Bahá'u'lláh also had a garden called 'Ridván' outside Akka during the final part of his life.



April 23 St. George's Day Christian Saint George is the patron saint of England. He's popularly identified with England and English ideals of honor, bravery and gallantry - but actually he wasn't English at all. Very little, if anything, is known about the real Saint George. Pope Gelasius said that George is one of the saints "whose names are rightly revered among us, but whose actions are known only to God."

Everything about Saint George is dubious, so the information below should be taken as mythical rather than real. Born in Cappadocia, an area which is now in Turkey. Lived in 3rd century CE. His parents were Christian. Later he lived in Palestine. He became a Roman soldier. He protested against Rome's persecution of Christians. He was imprisoned and tortured, but stayed true to his faith. He was beheaded at Lydda in Palestine. 23rd April was named as Saint George's day in 1222.



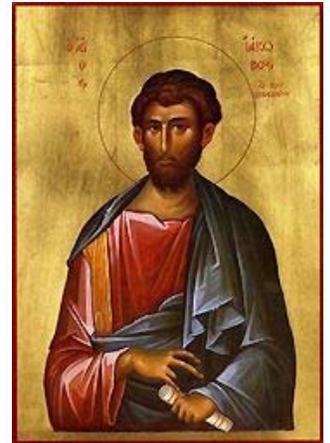
He is patron saint not only of England but also of Aragon, Catalonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Palestine, Portugal, Germany and Greece; and of Moscow, Istanbul, Genoa and Venice (second to Saint Mark). He's also patron saint of soldiers, archers, cavalry and chivalry, farmers and field workers, riders and saddlers, and he helps those suffering from leprosy, plague and syphilis. In recent

years he has been adopted as patron saint of Scouts.

April 30 St. James the Great Orthodox Christian Apostle James was a son of Zebedee, the brother of the Apostle John and a fisherman. The Orthodox Church remembers St. James on April 30, and on June 30 among the Twelve.

At the invitation of Jesus he left his nets to follow him and is counted among the Twelve Great Apostles. Belonging to Christ's 'inner circle', James was present on Mount Tabor for Christ's transfiguration and also for his suffering in the garden of Gethsemane. Following Pentecost, St. James preached in Spain, and upon his return to Jerusalem the Jews would argue with him vehemently concerning the Holy Scriptures. His wisdom countered all arguments, however.

Seeing this, he was accused before Herod and among some of the false witnesses there was a certain Josias. But in hearing St. James' testimony, Josias believed and was then also condemned to death with James. Before their death, St. James embraced and kissed this repentant false witness and said, "Peace and forgiveness to you!" St. James was martyred in the year 45 CE. His body was transported to Spain where his relics continue to work miracles even to this day.



Grace Notes

Grace Notes is a daily inspirational e-note sent to those who subscribe. If you would like to receive Grace Notes please email the Senior Chaplain, Kathleen Ennis-Durstine at kennisdu@childrensnational.org

Below is an example of a Grace Note

*When you do things from your soul, you
feel a river moving in you, a joy.*



Rumi