

# The Holy Days of February

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

### Office of InterFaith Pastoral and Spiritual Care

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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 Hospital)

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

Friday: Jummah 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 the middle of the winter celebrate:
American Heart Month, International
Boost Self Esteem Month, National
African American History Month,
National Children's Dental Health
Month, National Parent Leadership
Month, Plant the Seeds of Greatness
Month, Wise Health Care Consumer
Month: Several celebrative weeks also
help stave off the winter blues, such
as: International Snow Sculpting
Week (1-5), Children's Authors and



Illustrators Week (5-11), Love Makes the World Go Round, But Laughter Keeps us From Getting Dizzy Week (8-14), NCCDP Alzheimer's and Dementia Staff Education Week (14-21), National Pancake Week (19-25), and Telecommuter Appreciation Week (27-3/5). If you just need a day or two, try one of these: Robinson Crusoe Day (1), Give Kids a Smile Day (3), Ice Cream for Breakfast Day (4), Opera Day (8), Read in the Bathtub Day (9), Clean Out Your Computer Day (13), Library Lovers Day (14), World Thinking Day (22), or National Tooth Fairy Day (28). And of course, this year is Leap Year—an extra day at the end of February.

### Holy Days with no Fixed Date

**Kwakiutle Midwinter Ceremonies** The Kwakiutl are one of the Indian tribes who inhabit the northwestern coast of the United States, stretching from northern California to southeastern Alaska. They believe that long ago, before their people even existed, powerful supernatural animals—including bears, wolves, seals, ravens, bees, owls, and killer whales—held dominion over the world. These beings endowed early humans, who were the ancestors of today's Kwakiutl, with a measure of that power.

During their winter ceremonial season, the Kwakiutl acknowledge and reaffirm their connection with the supernatural world by performing sacred dance dramas, or tseka. The performers dress in strips of cedar bark and wear masks elaborately designed to invoke the spirits of their supernatural forebears. The dances themselves illustrate characters and incidents from Kwakiutl mythology.

The Raven and the Salmon are two of the most important animals/symbols for the Kwakiutle people. Salmon has long been the staple food of the Kwakiutle; legend says the salmon are supernatural beings and their strength, epitomized in their swim upstream, is a symbol of extraordinary power and perseverance. The legend of the Raven includes the belief that Raven places (continued)



Kwakiutle Crooked Bead Mask



St. Brigid

The sun, moon, and stars in the sky as well as the fish in the sea. He also gave the Kwakiutl fire and water and various foods. Raven was so powerful he could change into any form he wanted, and loved to play tricks on people.

An important aspect of the midwinter celebrations is the potlatch ceremony. Families host a gathering during which they will give away a significant part of their own possessions and wealth. This demonstrates their care and commitment to the tribe, and conversely, increases their social standing within it.

### Holy Days with Fixed Date

**February 1 St.Brigid** St. Brigid of Kildare, the beloved holy woman of Ireland, was born in the middle of the fifth century, Brigid became a pivotal figure in the development of Irish Christianity. We know few concrete details of her life, but the surviving stories offer a compelling depiction of a woman renowned for her hospitality and for the monasteries she established, the most famous being the one at Cill Dara (Kildare), the Church of the Oak.

Many of the tales of Brigid's life read much like those of other female saints: her saintly qualities were evident from an early age she was a wonder-worker who brought healing and justice; she exercised miraculous influence over the weather, animals, and the landscape.

There is a strong domestic quality that pervades Brigid's wonderworking, a homeliness to the miraculous that runs throughout her tales. Most of her recorded miracles are feats of provisioning by which she secures an abundance of fare for daily sustenance as well as for festive occasions. The symbol of fire illuminates and underscores Brigid's role as not only a worker of domestic miracles but also a woman of transcendent power. In her stories she appears as a charismatic leader who wields influence in monastic, civic, and natural realms; she is ever at ease among kings and bishops; she brings healing to body and soul; she displays gifts of exhortation; she has prophetic dreams and sees far into the hidden reaches of the heart. Brigid possesses a sense of justice that prompts her to secure the freedom of prisoners and slaves.

The Annals of Ulster variously give the date of Brigid's death as 524, 526, and 528. According to one of her early biographers, Brigid was buried in the abbey church she established at Kildare, and she continued to work miracles after her death. Tradition tells that she was moved from Kildare and laid to rest in Dunpatrick alongside two other great saints of Ireland, Patrick and Columba. Her physical grave remains a mystery, but the landscape of Ireland continues to testify to her presence, with forms of the name Brigid appearing in the names of towns, holy wells, and churches

**February 2** Candlemas/Presentation of Christ The date of February 2nd places the Candlemas celebration forty days after Christmas and continues the religious cycle that leads up to Easter Sunday. Additionally, it is also the mid-point between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox, which is the basis for various ancient European celebrations that commemorate the annual beginnings of the agricultural season.

### Have an Custard for Dessert on Imbolc!



The word "Imbolc" comes in part from the phrase "ewe's milk," so dairy products become a big part of February celebrations. For our ancestors, this time of year was hard the winter stores were running low and there were no fresh crops. The livestock was typically preparing for birth, and the lambing season would begin soon. At that time, the ewes came into milk, and once milk arrived, you knew your family would have a source of food again. Sheep's milk is highly nutritious, and sheep were considered a dairy animal long before cattle. If you have eggs, then you've got the makings of custard, a perfect dairy dessert.

Prep Time: 20 minutes Cook Time: 1 hour

Total Time: 1 hour, 20 minutes

Ingredients: •4 eggs •3 C. milk

•1/2 C. sugar

•1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg

•1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon

•1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

•A pinch of salt Preparation:

Preheat your oven to 350. Combine all the ingredients into the bowl of a food processor, and blend for about 15 seconds, or until well mixed. Pour custard mix into ramekins or custard cups. Place the ramekins into a baking dish, and fill the dish with hot water up to a depth of about ¾". Bake the custards for one hour.

\*\*Note: If you don't have a food processor, you can use a hand mixer, it just takes a little bit longer to get everything mixed up. The celebration of Candlemas originated in the late fifth century as a tribute to the light of God's glory that was manifested in Christ Jesus. The earliest known observance within the Church was in the year AD 496, during the time of Pope Gelasius. In AD 542 the Emperor Justinian ordained that the Eastern Church celebrate the festival, which he called Hypapante, or "Meeting". The name was derived from the Gospel of Luke 2:22-40, wherein Simeon the priest and Anna the prophetess met the infant Jesus in the temple at the time of his consecration. Simeon's prophecy declared Jesus to be the Lord's salvation and "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." This passage continues to be the focus of the celebration.

During Candlemas, candles are blessed, lit, and borne in a procession in celebration to Jesus being the light of the world. In AD 638, Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, proclaimed the importance of the celebration in his sermon to the church, stating: "Our bright shining candles are a sign of divine splendor of the one who comes to expel the dark shadows of evil and to make the whole universe radiant with the brilliance of his eternal light. Our candles also show how bright our souls should be when we go to meet Christ." The candles are generally considered to represent the inner light of Christ, which he brought to share with the world.

**February 2 Imbolc Pagan/Wiccan** The ancient Lunar fire festival occurs on February 2<sup>nd</sup>; called Imbolc which means "around the belly" in ancient Irish. This title refers to the womb of the mother earth as the land or soil. It is a festival of waxing light and purification, heralding the potential of spring

Even though Imbolc occurs at the coldest time of the year, it marks the time at which days become noticeably longer. Oimelc, an alternative name for this festival, means "sheep milk", as this is the lambing season.

Rituals included re-lighting the Brigid fire which was the sacred fire at Cill Dara

(Kildare), the Church of the Oak. At one time the fire was tended by nineteen priestesses and later a group of Catholic nuns.

Imbolc traditions center around light and purification. Candles may be lit in each room of a house to honor the returning sun, or in each window from sundown on Candlemas Eve (February 1st) until dawn. This is an appropriate time to cleanse or bless your house, to seek inspiration, and to purify yourself of limiting thoughts and negative attitudes. Dairy foods are particular appropriate to eat on this festival of calving and lambing.



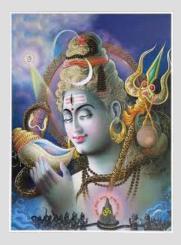
**February 3 Maha Shivratri Hindu** Maha Shivratri, the night of the worship of Lord Shiva, occurs on the 14th night of the new moon during the dark half of the month of Phalguna. It falls on a moonless February night, when Hindus offer special prayer to the lord of destruction. Shivratri (Sanskrit 'ratri' = night) is the night when he is said to have performed the Tandava Nritya or the dance of primordial creation, preservation and destruction. The festival is observed for one day and one night only.

According to the Puranas, during the great mythical churning of the ocean called Samudra Manthan, a pot of poison emerged from the ocean. The gods and the demons were terrified as it could destroy the entire world. When they ran to Shiva for help, he in order to protect the world, drank the deadly poison but held it in his throat instead of swallowing it. This turned his throat blue, and since then he came to be known as 'Nilkantha', the blue-throated one. Shivratri celebrates this event by which Shiva saved the world. Shivratri is considered especially auspicious for women. Married women pray for the well being of their husbands and sons, while unmarried women pray for an ideal husband like Shiva, who is the spouse of Kali, Parvati and Durga. But generally it is believed that anyone who utters the name of Shiva during Shivratri with pure devotion is freed from all sins. He or she reaches the abode of Shiva and is liberated from the cycle of birth and death.

All through the day the devotees keep severe fast, chant the sacred Panchakshara mantra "Om Namah Shivaya", make offerings of flowers and incense to the Lord amidst ringing of temple bells. They maintain long vigils during the night, keeping awake to listen to stories, hymns and songs. The fast is broken only the next morning, after the nightlong worship. In Kashmir, the festival is held for 15 days. The 13th day is observed as a day of followed by a family feast.

February 3 Setsubun Shinto Setsubun, Bean-Throwing Festival or Bean-Throwing Ceremony) is the day before the beginning of spring in Japan. The name literally means "seasonal division", but usually the term refers to the spring Setsubun, properly called Risshun celebrated yearly on February 3 as part of the Spring Festival. In its association with the Lunar New Year, Spring Setsubun can be and was previously thought of as a sort of New Year's Eve, and so was accompanied by a special ritual to cleanse away all the evil of the former year and drive away disease-bringing evil spirits for the year to come. This special ritual is called mamemaki (literally "bean throwing").

The custom of Mamemaki is usually performed by the toshiotoko of the household (the male who was born on the corresponding animal year on the Chinese zodiac), or else the male head of the household. Roasted soybeans (called "fortune beans" are thrown either out the door or at a member of the family wearing an Oni (demon or ogre) mask, while the people say "Demons out! Luck in!" and slam the door. The beans are thought to symbolically purify the home by driving away the evil spirits that bring misfortune and bad health with them. Then, as part of bringing luck in, it is customary to eat roasted soybeans, one for each year of one's life, and in some areas, one for each year of one's life plus one more for bringing good luck for the year to come.



Shiva



**Oni Mask and Beans** 



Wood Print/ Hokusai Casting out a demon

### **The Four Chaplains**



This painting of chaplains Fox, Goode, Poling and Washington is at the U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School in Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

Of the 902 men aboard the U.S.A.T. Dorchester, only 230 survived. Before boarding the Dorchester back in January, Chaplain Poling had asked his father to pray for him, "Not for my safe return, that wouldn't be fair. Just pray that I shall do my duty...never be a coward...and have the strength, courage and understanding of men. Just pray that I shall be adequate."

Although the Distinguished Service
Cross and Purple Heart were later
awarded posthumously Congress
wished to confer the Medal of Honor
but was blocked by the stringent requirements which required heroism
performed under fire. So a posthumous Special Medal for Heroism, The
Four Chaplains' Medal, was authorized
by Congress and awarded by the President on January 18, 1961.

**February 4 Milad un Nabi** (**Birthday of the Prophet**) Milad un Nabi marks the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslim parents will tell stories of the Prophet's life to their children. Those Muslims who celebrate this festival do so joyfully. Many Muslims do not believe in celebrating birthdays or death anniversaries because there is no historical evidence that the Prophet Muhammad ever did this. Large numbers of Muslims do commemorate the birth anniversary of the Holy Prophet, which falls on 12 Rabi-ul-Awwal of the Islamic lunar calendar. This date is important to Muslims because the birth of the Prophet Muhammad is regarded as a great blessing for the whole of humanity. The Prophet Muhammad is deemed to be the chief of all the Prophets sent on earth and it is to him that the Holy Qur'an was revealed.

The event is marked by public gatherings of Muslims. At these meetings religious leaders make speeches about the life of the Prophet. Stories are told about different aspects of the life of the Prophet, his birth, childhood, youth and adult life. The most important part of Eid Milad-Un-Nabi is focusing upon the character of the Prophet; on his teachings, sufferings, and how he forgave even his most bitter enemies. Muslims think about the leadership of the Prophet, his bravery, wisdom, and preaching.

As well as recounting the Prophet's life, salutations and songs in his praise are recited. In some countries, streets and mosques are decorated and illuminated at night. Some Muslims donate to charity. Families gather together, feasts are arranged and food is served to guests and the poor.

Four Chaplain's Day Interfaith The Four Chaplains, also sometimes referred to as the "Immortal Chaplains," were four United States Army chaplains who gave their lives to save other civilian and military personnel during the sinking of the troop ship USAT Dorchester during World War II. They helped other soldiers board lifeboats and gave up their own life jackets when the supply ran out. The chaplains joined arms, said prayers, and sang hymns as they went down with the ship.

The four men were relatively new chaplains, who all held the rank of lieutenant. They included Methodist minister the Reverend George L. Fox, Rabbi Alexander D. Goode, Roman Catholic priest the Reverend John P. Washington, and Reformed Church in America minister the Reverend Clark V. Poling. Their backgrounds, personalities, and faiths were different. They met at the Army Chaplains School at Harvard University, where they prepared for assignments in the European theater, sailing on board USAT Dorchester to report to their new assignments.

February 7 Magha Puja Buddhist Māgha Pūjā or Makha Bucha is an important Buddhist festival celebrated in Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos on the full moon day of the third lunar month (this usually falls in February). Makha Bucha Day is for the veneration of Buddha and his teachings on the full moon day of the third lunar month. The spiritual aims of the day are: not to commit any kind of sins; do only good; purify one's mind. Māgha Pūjā is a public holiday in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia - and is an occasion when Buddhists tend to go to the temple to perform merit-making activities. Māgha Pūjā day marks four auspicious occasions, which happened nine months after the Enlightenment of the Buddha.. On that occasion, as recorded in the commentary to the Mahāsamayasutta, DN-Comm 20) four marvelous events occurred:

- 1. There were 1,250 Arahata, that came to see the Buddha that evening without any schedule.
- 2.All of them were Arhantas, the Enlightened One, and all of them were ordained by the Buddha himself.
- 3.The Buddha gave the Arhantas principles of the Buddhism, called "The ovadhapatimokha". Those principles are: To cease from all evil,- To do what is good,- To cleanse one's mind; (continued)

4.it was the full-moon day.

The Buddha gave an important teaching to the assembled monks on that day 2,500 years ago called the 'Ovādapātimokha' which laid down the principles of the Buddhist teachings. In Thailand, this teaching has been dubbed the 'Heart of Buddhism'.

1.In the evening of Magha full-moon day, each temple in Thailand holds a candlelight procession called a wian tian (wian meaning circle; tian meaning candle). Holding flowers, incense and a lighted candle, the monks and congregation members circumambulate clockwise three times around the Uposatha Hall - once for each of the Three Jewels – the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

2.Tum Boon: Making merit by going to temples for special observances and join in the other Buddhist activities.

3.Rub Sil': Keeping the Five Precepts. Practise of renunciation: Observe the Eight Precepts, practice of meditation and mental discipline, stay in the temple, wearing white robes, for a number of days.

**February 8 Parinirvana Buddhist** A Mahayana Buddhist festival that marks the death of the Buddha. It is also known as Nirvana Day. Buddhists celebrate the death of the Buddha, because they believe that having attained Enlightenment he achieved freedom from physical existence and its sufferings.

The Buddha's death came when he was eighty years old, and had spent forty years teaching after his Enlightenment. He died in a state of meditation, and attained nirvana, a release from the cycle of death and rebirth. The Parinirvana Sutra describes the Buddha's last days, and passages from it are often read on Parinirvana Day. Buddhists celebrate Parinirvana Day by meditating or by going to Buddhist temples or monasteries. As with other Buddhist festivals, celebrations vary throughout the world. In monasteries Parinirvana Day is treated as a social occasion. Food is prepared and some people bring presents such as money, household goods or clothes. The day is used as an opportunity to reflect on the fact of one's own future death, and on friends or relations who have recently passed away. The idea that all things are transient is central to Buddhist teaching. Loss and impermanence are things to be accepted rather than causes of grief. Meditations are carried out for the newly deceased to give them help and support wherever they might be now.

**February 8 Tu B'shevat Jewish** Tu B'Shevat is the day that marks the beginning of a "New Year for Trees." This is the season in which the earliest-blooming trees in the Land of Israel emerge from their winter sleep and begin a new fruit-bearing cycle.

Legally, the "New Year for Trees" relates to the various tithes that are separated from produce grown in the Holy Land. These tithes differ from year to year in the seven-year Shemittah cycle; the point at which a budding fruit is considered to belong to the next year of the cycle is the 15th of Shevat.

Jews mark the day of Tu B'Shevat by eating fruit, particularly from the kinds that are singled out by the Torah in its praise of the bounty of the Holy Land: grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. On this day it is also important to remember that "man is a tree of the field" (Deuteronomy 20:19) and reflect on the lessons possible to be learned from this analogy.

Interesting facts for kids at: <a href="http://www.chabad.org/kids/article\_cdo/aid/819712/jewish/Tu-B'Shevat-for-Kids.htm">http://www.chabad.org/kids/article\_cdo/aid/819712/jewish/Tu-B'Shevat-for-Kids.htm</a>

### A Tree's New Year's Resolution

- Did I shelter the seedlings that live in my shade -- so they will grow up to be a next generation like myself?
- Did I grow towards the sun as a tree should, reaching up higher and higher towards that which I can never grasp, but which nurtures me all the same the more I strive towards it?
- Did I make sure my roots remain firmly planted in the soil that nurtures them, and did I drop my leaves there in the fall to give back life to that which sustains me?
- Did I ensure that my fruits were sweet and nourished all that came to enjoy them? Did everyone walk away from me with a smile?
- Did I bend gently in the wind, accepting what G-d sends but never breaking or giving up hope?
- Did I grow in strength and wisdom with each new ring this year?
   Come to think of it, not a bad checklist for us humans either!





## Some Fun Facts about Valentine's Day

- About 1 billion Valentine's Day cards are exchanged in US each year.
   That's the largest seasonal cardsending occasion of the year, next to Christmas.
- In order of popularity, Valentine's Day cards are given to teachers, children, mothers, wives, sweethearts and pets.
- Parents receive 1 out of every 5 valentines.
- About 3% of pet owners will give Valentine's Day gifts to their pets.
- Worldwide, over 50 million roses are given for Valentine's Day each year.
- The Italian city of Verona, where Shakespeare's lovers Romeo and Juliet lived, receives about 1,000 letters addressed to Juliet every Valentine's Day.
- Richard Cadbury invented the first Valentines Day candy box in the late 1800s.

The oldest surviving love poem till date is written in a clay tablet from the times of the Sumerians, inventors of writing, around 3500 B.C

### February 9 Milad un Nabi—- the Shia date for this observance

**February 11 Our Lady of Lourdes** Our Lady of Lourdes is the name used to refer to the Marian apparition said to have appeared before various individuals on separate occasions around Lourdes, France. The apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes began on 11 February 1858, when Saint Bernadette Soubirous, a 14-year-old peasant girl from Lourdes, told her mother, after being asked, that she had seen a "lady" in the cave of Massabielle, about a mile from the town, while gathering firewood with her sister and a friend.[1] Similar appearances of the "lady" were reported on seventeen further occasions that year.

Bernadette Soubirous was canonized as a saint, and most Catholics and some Protestants believe her apparitions to have been of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In 1862, Pope Pius IX authorized the local bishop to permit the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lourdes.

On 18 January 1862, Bishop Laurence, the Bishop of Tarbes, gave the solemn decla-

ration: "We are inspired by the Commission comprising wise, holy, learned and experienced priests who questioned the child, studied the facts, examined everything and weighed all the evidence. We have also called on science, and we remain convinced that the Apparitions are supernatural and divine, and that by consequence, what Bernadette saw was the Most Blessed Virgin. Our convictions are based on the testimony of Bernadette, but above on the things that have happened, things which can be nothing other than divine intervention".



The Catholic Church celebrates a mass in honor "Our Lady of Lourdes" (optional memorial) in many countries on February 11 of each year — the anniversary of the first apparition.

### February 14 St. Valentine's Day

The history of Valentine's Day is obscure, and further clouded by various fanciful legends. The holiday's roots are in the ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia, a fertility celebration commemorated annually on February 15. Pope Gelasius I recast this pagan festival as a Christian feast day circa 496, declaring February 14 to be St. Valentine's Day.

Which St. Valentine this early pope intended to honor remains a mystery: according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, there were at least three early Christian saints by that name. One was a priest in Rome, another a bishop in Terni, and of a third St. Valentine almost nothing is known except that he met his end in Africa. Rather astonishingly, all three Valentines were said to have been martyred on Feb. 14.

Most scholars believe that the St. Valentine of the holiday was a priest who attracted the disfavor of Roman emperor Claudius II around 270. At this stage, the factual ends and the mythic begins. According to one legend, Claudius II had prohibited marriage for young men, claiming that bachelors made better soldiers. Valentine continued to secretly perform marriage ceremonies but was eventually apprehended by the Romans and put to death. Another legend has it that Valentine, imprisoned by Claudius, fell in love with the daughter of his jailer. Before he was executed, he allegedly sent her a letter signed "from your Valentine." Probably the most plausible story surrounding St. Valentine is one not focused on Eros (passionate love) but on agape (Christian love): he was martyred for refusing to renounce his religion.

In 1969, the Catholic Church revised its liturgical calendar, removing the feast days of saints whose historical origins were questionable. St. Valentine was one of the casualties

#### Irish Shrove Tuesday Pancakes

Eggs and fat were once forbidden during the 40-day Lenten fast, so on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Lent, Irish bakers would make pancakes to use up their stores of those ingredients.

Ingredients4 large eggs

1 cup whole milk, 1 tablespoon butter, melted 1 tablespoon sugar, 1 teaspoon vanilla, extract 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1 cup all purpose flour Additional melted butter

Powdered sugar; Fresh lemon juice Preparation:Preheat oven to 350°F. Blend first 6 ingredients in blender. Gradually add flour; blend until smooth. Let stand 15 minutes.

Heat medium nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Brush with butter. Add 2 generous tablespoons batter, tilting pan to coat bottom. Cook until golden on bottom, about 45 seconds. Turn pancake over. Cook until bottom is speckled with brown, about 30 seconds. Turn out onto paper towel. Cover with another paper towel. Repeat with remaining batter, brushing skillet with butter as needed.

Butter ovenproof dish. Sift powdered sugar over speckled side of each pancake, then sprinkle lightly with lemon juice; fold pancakes into quarters. Overlap pancakes in prepared dish. Cover; bake until heated through, about 10 minutes. Serve with more powdered sugar and lemon juice.

### February 27 Clean Monday Orthodox Christian

Clean Monday is the first day of the Eastern Orthodox Christian and Eastern Catholic Great Lent. It is a movable feast that occurs at the beginning of the 7th week before Orthodox Easter Sunday.

The common term for this day, "Clean Monday", refers to the leaving behind of sinful attitudes and non-fasting foods. Liturgically, Clean Monday—and thus Lent itself—begins on the preceding (Sunday) night,[1] at a special service called Forgiveness Vespers, which culminates with the Ceremony of Mutual Forgiveness, at which all present will bow down before one another and ask forgiveness. In this way, the faithful begin Lent with a clean conscience, with forgiveness, and with renewed Christian love. The entire first week of Great Lent is often referred to as "Clean Week," and it is customary to go to Confession during this week, and to clean the house thoroughly.

### February 15 Nirvana Day — Alternate Date

**February 20 Mahashivratri Hindu** Maha Shivaratri is celebrated with great devotion and religious fervor by Hindus, in honor of Lord Shiva, one of the Hindu Gods forming the Trinity. According to one of the most popular legends, Shivaratri is the wedding day of Lord Shiva and Parvati. It is also believed that Lord Shiva performed 'Tandava', the dance of the primal creation, preservation and destruction on this auspicious night of Shivaratri. Another popular legend, described in Linga Purana, says it was on Shivaratri that Lord Shiva manifested himself in the form of a Linga for the first time

Shiva devotees observe strict fast on Maha Shivaratri, with many people having only fruits and milk and some not even consuming a drop of water. Worshippers dutifully follow all the traditions and customs related to Shivaratri festival, as they strongly believe that sincere worship of Lord Shiva, on the auspicious day, releases a person of his sins and also liberates him from the cycle of birth and death. As Shiva is regarded as the ideal husband, unmarried women pray for a husband like Him, on Shivaratri. On the other hand, married women pray for the well being of their husbands.

On Maha Shivratri, devotees wake up early in the morning and take a bath, if possible in river Ganga. After wearing fresh clothes, they visit the nearest Shiva temple, to give a ritual bath to the Shiva Lingum (with milk, honey, water etc). The worship continues the whole day and whole night. Jaagran (nightlong vigil) might also be observed in Lord Shiva temples, where a large number of devotees sing hymns and devotional songs, in praise of Lord Shiva.

**February 21 Shrove Tuesday Christian** Shrove Tuesday (also known as Pancake Day, Pancake Tuesday, Fat Tuesday, and Mardi Gras) is a term used in English-speaking countries for the day preceding Ash Wednesday, the first day of the season of fasting and prayer called Lent

The word shrove is the past tense of the English verb to shrive, which means to obtain absolution for one's sins by way of confession and doing penance. During the week before Lent, sometimes called Shrovetide in English, Christians were expected to go to confession in

preparation for the penitential season of turning to God. Shrove Tuesday was the last day before the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday, and noted in histories dating back to 1000 AD. The popular celebratory aspect of the day had developed long before the Protestant Reformation, and was associated with releasing high spirits before the somber season of Lent. It is analogous to the continuing Carnival tradition associated with Mardi Gras (and its various names in different countries) that continued separately in European Catholic countries.



In the United Kingdom and many other countries, the day is often known as Pancake Day. Making and eating such foods was considered a last feast with ingredients such as sugar, fat and eggs, whose consumption was traditionally restricted during the ritual fasting associated with Lent.

**February 22 Ash Wednesday Christian** Ash Wednesday, in the calendar of Western Christianity, is the first day of Lent and occurs 46 days before Easter. It is a moveable fast, falling on a different date each year because it is dependent on the date of Easter. It can occur as early as February 4 or as late as March 10.

According to the Canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus spent forty days fasting in the desert before the beginning of his public ministry, during which he endured temptation by Satan. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of this forty day liturgical period of prayer and fasting.

Ash Wednesday derives its name from the practice of placing ashes on the foreheads of adherents as a sign of mourning and repentance to God. The ashes used are typically gathered after the palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday are burned.