



# The Holy Days of June

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

**Office of InterFaith  
Pastoral and Spiritual Care**  
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Fr. Tukura Michael  
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**Catholic Mass: Thursday at 12:00 p.m.**  
*(East Chapel, room 3033, 3rd floor East Tower) and Saturday at 4:00 p.m.*  
*(Main Chapel, room 3201, 3rd Floor Main Hospital)*

**Prayer and Meditation: Tuesday 12:45 p.m.**  
*East Chapel, room 3033, 3rd floor East Tower—please listen for the announcement\**

**Friday: JummaH Prayer R-114, floor 3.5**  
*main hospital at 1:15 p.m.*

**Sunday Worship: 4:00 p.m. Room 3201,**  
*Main Chapel, 3rd 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 30 minutes prior to the service.**

Please see the information boards and brochure racks for other information.



JUNE is full of observances that are both serious and silly: Antiphospholipid Antibody Syndrome Awareness Month, Corn and Cucumber Month, International Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, Lane Courtesy Month, National Aphasia Awareness Month, National Candy Month, National Smile Month, National Soul Food Month, Pharmacists Declare War on Alcoholism Month, Potty Training Awareness Month, Skyscraper Month; International Clothesline Week ( 4—11), World Dystonia Awareness Week ( 5—12), Superman Week ( 10—13), Nursing Assistants Week ( 10—17), Watermelon Seed Spitting Week (23—26), National Prevention of Eye Injuries Awareness Week (26—7/2), Fish are Friends, Not Food! Week (27—7/3); Heimlich Maneuver Day (1), Stand for Children Day (1), Leave the Office Early Day (2), Audacity to Hope Day (4), International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression (4), Hot Air Balloon Day (4), Ball Point Pen Day (10), Abused Women and Children's Awareness Day (12), Fudge Day (16), World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought (17), International Sushi Day (18), World Sauntering Day (19), Take Your Dog to Work Day (24), International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking Day (26) AND MORE!

## Holy Days with No Fixed Date

### Hopi Kachina Dances Continue (See the May Newsletter)

**Sun Dance—Native American:** This Ceremony last 16 days and typically occurs in late June or early July. Many tribes perform this dance. The first 8 days are spent in preparation, then the dance is held for 4 days followed by 4 days of vision quest. It is a time of renewal and healing; participants must have a powerful reason to engage in the dance. The entire community supports the dances. During the actual ceremony participants fast throughout and purify themselves in sweat lodges each day. The dance area is circular with a large Sun Pole set in the center, typically of cottonwood. The pole is a symbol of god ; Wakan Tanka, the Great Mystery. Dancers circle the pole to the beat of drums (the heartbeat of the nation) and sacred chants passed down for generations. Different tribes have some varied ways of performing the Sun Dance, yet there is much in common between many of these Plains Tribes. More detail at <http://www.crystalinks.com/sundance.html>

## Malaysian Banana Coconut Pudding

### Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon small pearl tapioca (not quick-cooking)
  - 1 (14 ounce) can light unsweetened coconut milk
  - 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped crystallized ginger
  - 1/3 cup sugar
  - 3 firm-ripe bananas
  - minced crystallized ginger
1. In a small bowl, soften tapioca in warm water to cover 1 hour.
  2. While tapioca is soaking, in a small saucepan, cook coconut milk, ginger and sugar over moderate heat, stirring, until sugar is dissolved.
  3. Remove pan from heat and let mixture stand 10 minutes.
  4. Drain tapioca.
  5. Peel bananas and quarter lengthwise. Cut quarters into ½ inch pieces.
  6. Heat coconut milk mixture over low heat and gently stir in tapioca and bananas.
  7. Cook pudding, stirring (be careful not to break up bananas), until thickened slightly and bananas are heated through, about 5 minutes, and cool.
  8. Divide pudding among six ramekins and chill, covered, until cold.
  9. Garnish puddings with crystallized ginger.



Iban girls dressed in full women's Iban attire during the Gawai Dayak

## Holy Days with Fixed Dates

**June 1: Ascension Day *Orthodox Christian (sundown on the 31)*:** The Feast of the Ascension is one of the great feasts in the Christian liturgical calendar, and commemorates the bodily Ascension of Jesus into heaven. Ascension Day is traditionally celebrated on a Thursday, the 40th day from Easter day. However, some Roman Catholic provinces have moved the observance to the following Sunday. The feast is one of the ecumenical feasts (i.e., universally celebrated), ranking with the feasts of the Passion, of Easter, and Pentecost.

The observance of this feast is of great antiquity. Although no documentary evidence of it exists prior to the beginning of the 5th century, St. Augustine says that it is of Apostolic origin, and he speaks of it in a way that shows it was the universal observance of the Church long before his time. Frequent mention of it is made in the writings of St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and in the Constitution of the Apostles. Representations of the mystery are found in diptychs and frescoes dating as early as the 5th century.

**June 1: Yom Yerushalayim *Jewish*:** The day celebrates Jerusalem, the eternal center of the Jewish people.

**June 1: Gawai Dayak Iban *New Year and Harvest Festival/ Malaysia*:** The word Gawai means a ritual or festival. Dayak is a collective name for the native ethnic groups of Sarawak (and neighboring Indonesian Kalimantan): the Iban, also known as Sea Dayak and the Bidayuh people, also known as Land Dayak. The mode of celebration varies from place to place. Preparation starts early. *Tuak* (rice wine) is brewed (at least one month before the celebration) and traditional delicacies like *penganan* (cakes from rice flour, sugar and coconut milk) are prepared. As the big day approaches, everyone will be busy with general cleaning and preparing food and cakes. On Gawai Eve, glutinous rice is steamed in bamboo (*ngelulun pulut*). In the longhouse, new mats will be laid out on the *ruai* (an open gallery which runs through the entire length of the longhouse). The walls of most *bilik* (rooms) and the *ruai* are decorated with *Pua Kumbu* (traditional blankets). A visit to clean the graveyard is also conducted and offerings offered to the dead. After the visit, it is important to bathe before entering the longhouse to ward off bad luck.

The celebration starts on the evening of May 31. In most Iban longhouses, it starts with a ceremony called *Muai Antu Rua* (to cast away the spirit of greed), signifying the non-interference of the spirit of bad luck in the celebration. Two children or men each dragging a *chapan* (winnowing basket) will pass each family's room. Every family will throw some unwanted article into the basket. The unwanted articles will be tossed to the ground from the end of the longhouse for the spirit of bad luck.

Around 6:00 p.m. or as the sun sets, *miring* (offering ceremony) will take place before the ceremony, and *gendang rayah* (ritual music) is performed. The Feast Chief thanks the gods for the good harvest, and asks for guidance, blessings and long life as he waves a cockerel over the offerings. He then sacrifices the cockerel and a little blood is used together with the offerings.

Once the offering ceremony is done, dinner is then served at the *ruai*. Just before midnight, a procession up and down the *ruai* seven times called *Ngalu Petara* (welcoming the spirit gods) is performed. During this procession, a beauty pageant to choose the festival's queen and king (*Kumang & Keling Gawai*) is sometimes conducted. Meanwhile, drinks, traditional cakes, and delicacies are served.

At midnight, the gong is beaten to call the celebrants to attention. The longhouse Chief (*tuai rumah*) or Festival Chief will lead everyone to drink the *Ai Pengayu* (normally *tuak* for long life) and at the same time wish each other "*gayu-guru, gerai-nyama!*" (long life, health and prosperity). The celebration then becomes merrier and less formal. Some will dance to the traditional music played, others will sing the *pantun* (poems). In urban areas, Dayaks will organize gatherings at community centers or restaurants to celebrate the evening.



#### Why Do Jewish People Write G-d in English?

The custom of substituting the word "God" with G-d in English is based on the traditional practice in Jewish law of giving God's Hebrew name a high degree of respect and reverence. When written or printed, God's Hebrew name cannot be erased or destroyed. There is no prohibition against writing out or erasing the word "God" in English. However, many Jews have afforded the word "God" with the same level of respect as the Hebrew equivalents.

Over the centuries the Hebrew name for God has accumulated many layers of tradition in Judaism.

\* The Hebrew name for God, YHWH, is never pronounced out loud in Judaism. When it appears in Jewish scripture or liturgy, the reader substitutes the Hebrew word "adonai" which means "my lord" or often just "the Lord." Any book that contains this name written in Hebrew is treated with reverence. The name is never destroyed, erased, or effaced and any books or writings containing the name cannot be thrown away. They are stored in a *genizah* (special gathering place in a synagogue) until they can be given a proper burial in a Jewish cemetery.

\* Among many Jews even the word "adonai" is not spoken outside of prayer services. Because "adonai" is so closely linked to the name of God, it has been accorded more and more reverence. Outside of prayer services, traditional Jews will replace "adonai" with "HaShem" meaning "the Name."

\*Other Names to Refer to God: Because YHWH and adonai are not used casually, dozens of different ways to refer to God have developed in Judaism. Each name is linked to different conceptions of God's nature and aspects of the divine. For example, God can be referred to in Hebrew as "the Merciful One," "Master of the Universe," "the Creator," and "our King," amongst many other names.



*The Abbey at Iona*

#### June 2: Ascension Day/Catholic, Anglican, Protestant Christian

#### June 5: Ascension Sunday/Catholic Christian

**June 7—9: Shavuot: Feast of Weeks: Jewish (sundown to sundown):** The Torah was given by G-d to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai more than 3,300 years ago. Every year on the holiday of Shavuot, Jewish people renew their acceptance of G-d's gift and G-d "re-gives" the Torah. The word Shavuot means "weeks." It marks the completion of the seven week counting period between Passover and Shavuot.

The giving of the Torah was a far-reaching spiritual event—one that touched the essence of the Jewish soul for all times. The Sages have compared it to a wedding between G-d and the Jewish people. Shavuot also means "oaths," and on this day G-d swore eternal devotion to us, and, in turn, the Jewish people pledged everlasting loyalty to Him.

The holiday of Shavuot is a two-day holiday, beginning at sundown of the 5th of Sivan and lasting until nightfall of the 7th of Sivan.

- Women and girls light holiday candles to usher in the holiday, both on the first and second nights of the holidays.
- It is customary to stay up all night learning Torah on the first night of Shavuot.
- All men, women, and children should go to the synagogue on the first day of Shavuot to hear the reading of the *Ten Commandments*.
- As on other holidays, special meals are eaten, and no "work" may be performed.
- It is customary to eat dairy foods on Shavuot. Among other reasons, this commemorates the fact that upon receiving the Torah, including the Kosher laws, the Jewish people could not cook meat in their pots which had yet to be rendered Kosher.
- On the second day of Shavuot, the Yizkor memorial service is recited.
- Some communities read the Book of Ruth, as King David – whose passing occurred on this day – was a descendant of Ruth the Moabite.

(Information from [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/609663/jewish/What-is-Shavuot.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/609663/jewish/What-is-Shavuot.htm)—there is a lot of good information on this site.)

**June 9: Saint Columba of Iona Orthodox/Christian/Celtic:** Our venerable and God-bearing Father Columba of Iona, Enlightener of Scotland (December 7, 521 - June 9, 597) (also known as Columcille, meaning "Dove of the Church") was an Irish missionary who helped re-introduce Christianity to Scotland and the north of England.

He was born to Fedhlimidh and Eithne of the Ui Neill clan in Gartan, near Lough Gartan, Donegal. On his father's side he was great-great-grandson of Niall of the Nine Hostages, an Irish king of the fourth century. He became a monk and soon rose in the church hierarchy to the rank of priest. Tradition asserts that, sometime around 560, he became involved in a copyright wrangle with St. Finnian of Moville over a psalter. The dispute eventually led to the pitched Battle of Cul Dremhe in 561, during which many men were killed. (Columba's copy of the psalter has been traditionally associated with the Cathach of St. Columba.) As penance for these deaths, Columba was ordered to make the same number of new converts as had been killed. He was also ordered to leave Ireland and move such that he could not see his native country.

He traveled to Scotland, where it is believed that he first landed at the southern tip of the Kintyre peninsula, near Southend. However, being still in sight of his native land he moved further north, up the west coast of Scotland. In 563 he founded a monastery on the island of Iona off the west coast of Scotland which became the centre of his evangelizing mission to Scotland. There are many stories of miracles which he performed during his mission  
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## A Prayer for Midsummer

We give thanks for the joy of creation:  
for all that is made and given;  
for all that we shape and create;  
for the springing forth of new vision.

WE CELEBRATE THE FLOWERING  
OF HOPE.

WE GIVE THANKS FOR THE FRUITS  
OF THE EARTH.

WE PRAISE THE GODDESS OF  
GROWTH.

We give thanks for the vitality of re-  
creation:

for times of rest and stillness that renew us;  
for times of play and laughter that refresh  
us;

for all that nourishes and restores our spir-  
its.

WE CELEBRATE THE FLOWERING  
OF HOPE.

WE GIVE THANKS FOR THE FRUITS  
OF THE EARTH.

WE PRAISE THE GODDESS OF  
GROWTH.

We give thanks for the depth of passion:

for the vision that inspires our longing;  
for love that brings strength and tenderness;  
for all that touches our deepest core.

WE CELEBRATE THE FLOWERING  
OF HOPE.

WE GIVE THANKS FOR THE FRUITS  
OF THE EARTH.

WE PRAISE THE GODDESS OF  
GROWTH.

We give thanks for the rhythm of the sea-  
sons:

for all that grows, blossoms and fades;  
for the seeds that are buried and spring  
again;

for the constant renewal of life from the  
earth.

WE CELEBRATE THE FLOWERING  
OF HOPE.

WE GIVE THANKS FOR THE FRUITS  
OF THE EARTH.

WE PRAISE THE GODDESS OF  
GROWTH.

Jan Berry

*Note: If you prefer, the last line of the response could  
be:*

WE PRAISE GOD FOR THE  
GOODNESS OF GROWTH.

*From the Iona Community. Check them out at*

<http://www.isle-of-iona.com/index.htm>

and <http://www.ionabooks.com/>

(so many resources!)

to convert the Picts.

Columba is also the source of the first known refer-  
ence to the Loch Ness Monster. According to the story, in 565  
he came across a group of Picts who were burying a man killed  
by the monster, and brought the man back to life. In another  
version, he is said to have saved the man while the man was  
being attacked, driving away the monster with the sign of the  
cross.



**June 11/12: Pentecost/Feast of Pentecost/Whitsunday Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Anglican Christian:** Pentecost is the great festival that marks the birth of the Christian church by the power of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost means "fiftieth day" and is celebrated 50 days after Easter.

Ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, the 12 apostles, Jesus' mother and family, and many of His other disciples gathered together in Jerusalem for the Jewish harvest festival that was celebrated on the 50th day after Passover.

While they were indoors praying, a sound like that of a rushing wind filled the house and tongues of fire descended and rested over each of their heads. This was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on human flesh promised by God through the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-29).

The disciples were suddenly empowered to proclaim the gospel of the risen Christ. They went out into the streets of Jerusalem and began preaching to the crowds gathered for the festival. Not only did the disciples preach with boldness and vigor, but by a miracle of the Holy Spirit they spoke in the native languages of the people present, many who had come from all corners of the Roman Empire. This created a sensation. The apostle Peter seized the moment and addressed the crowd, preaching to them about Jesus' death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins. The result was that about 3,000 converts were baptized that day. (You can read the Biblical account of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-41).

Red is the liturgical color for this day. Red recalls the tongues of flame in which the Holy Spirit descended on the first Pentecost.

A tradition of some churches in ancient times was to baptize adult converts to the faith on Pentecost. The newly baptized catechumens would wear white robes on that day, so Pentecost was often called "Whitsunday" or "White Sunday" after these white baptismal garments. Many Christian calendars, liturgies, and hymnals (particularly those from the Episcopal/Anglican tradition) still use this term.

**June 16: Martyrdom Day of Guru Arjan Dev Sikh:** Guru Arjan Ji (15 April 1563 – 30 May 1606) was the fifth of the Ten Gurus of Sikhism. He was born in Goindval, Punjab, India, the youngest son of Guru Ram. He became the Guru of the Sikhs on September 1, 1581 after the death of his father Guru Ram Das. Before his death, he nominated his son Har Gobind as the next Guru of the Sikhs.

Guru Arjan was head of Sikhism for a quarter of a century and accomplished much during his regime. He completed the construction of Amritsar and founded other cities. The most important work of Guru Arjan was the compilation of Adi Granth. He collected all the work of the first four Gurus and dictated it in the form of verses in 1604. It is, perhaps, the only script which still exists in  
(continued)





## GRACE NOTES

Grace Notes is a daily inspirational e-mail message

If you would like to receive Grace Notes, please email the Senior Chaplain at: [kennisdu@childrensnational.org](mailto:kennisdu@childrensnational.org) and ask to be added to the distribution list.

*Below is a sample of a GRACE NOTE.*

Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time like dew on the tip of a leaf.



Tagore

the form first published (a hand-written manuscript) by the Guru. It, and the Guru Granth Sahib, which includes the writing of the later Gurus have managed to avoid the embellishments, additions and alterations that have plagued the original writing of other more ancient religious texts. Guru Arjan organized the *Masand* system, a group of representatives who taught and spread the teachings of the Gurus and also collected the *Dasvand*, one-tenth of a Sikh's income (in money, goods, or service) that Sikhs paid to support the building of *Gurdwara Sahib*, the all important *Guru ka Langars* (free communal kitchens); the *Langars* were open to any visitors and were designed from the start to stress the idea of equality and a casteless society.

In late May 1606 Guru Arjan was arrested and taken to Lahore at the prompting of the Mughal clergy who were angry about the many converts to Sikhism from Islam and Hinduism. There he was tortured; after several days, he was permitted to take a cooling bath in the River Ravi. He walked into the river, never to be seen again.

**June 18/19: All Saints Day Orthodox Christian:** A Christian holiday which honors the lives of saints and martyrs. The celebration of this day expresses gratitude for their unique contributions and sacrifices, and acknowledges their continued spiritual presence in the lives of people today. It is celebrated on November 1st in Western churches and the first Sunday after Pentecost in Eastern rite churches.

In the early church, Christians would acknowledge the anniversary of a martyr's death at the place of martyrdom. Sometimes groups of martyrs suffered death together on the same day. This gave rise to larger commemorations. Over time, the church feeling that every martyr should be venerated, appointed a common day for all. This practice is believed to be the origin of All Saints Day.

**June 19: Trinity Sunday Anglican, Catholic, Protestant Christian:** Trinity Sunday, officially "The Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity," is one of the few feasts of the Christian Year that celebrates a reality and doctrine rather than an event or person. On Trinity Sunday Christians remember and honor the eternal God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



Icon of the Trinity by Rublev

The Trinity is one of the most fascinating - and controversial - Christian dogmas. The Trinity is a mystery. By mystery the Church does not mean a riddle, but rather the Trinity is a reality above our human comprehension that we may begin to grasp, but ultimately must know through worship, symbol, and faith. The Trinity is best described in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, commonly called the Nicene Creed.

Essentially the Trinity is the belief that God is one in essence (Greek *ousia*), but distinct in person (Greek *hypostasis*). Don't let the word "person" fool you. The Greek word for person means "that which stands on its own," or "individual reality," and does not mean the persons of the Trinity are three human persons. Therefore Christians believe that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are somehow distinct from one another, yet completely united in will and essence. An illustration to explain the Trinity is the musical chord. The notes are all distinct notes, but joined together as one chord the sound is richer and more dynamic than had the notes been played individually. The notes are all equally important in producing the rich sound, and the sound is lacking and thin if one of the notes is left out.

The Son is said to be eternally *begotten* of the Father, while the Holy Spirit is said to *proceed* from the Father through the Son. Each member of the Trinity interpenetrates one another, and each has distinct roles in creation and redemption, which is called the Divine economy. For instance, God the Father created the world through the Son and the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters at creation.

Ultimately, Trinitarianism posits a dynamic God, whose ultimate nature is beyond human conception, yet who voluntarily operates within the created world.

### Learn About First Nations Inuit

Traditionally, Inuit have used oral communication to pass on stories and information about their culture. From birth, Inuit children have listened to their parents recite stories and songs in the Inuktitut language, and then have shared the same songs and tales with their own children. Some Inuit stories are for children's amusement and involve word play or rhyming. The stories might also provide lessons, such as why killing is wrong. Someone who commits murder, for example, is prohibited from eating certain foods and interacting with people; therefore, he or she cannot live life to the fullest. Other stories are more for the amusement of adults, with songs within the stories that require wit to be understood. And still other stories tell about how people lived in the past, what tools and equipment they used, and how and where they hunted.

Nobody knows the historical origin of these stories, although real places are mentioned in many of them. We do know that these stories have taught-and continue to teach-Inuit about their ancestors and how they lived-everything from how objects were placed in *igluit* (snow houses) and in tents, how rocks were used to cover corpses in Inuit burial grounds, how to use Inuit tools, and how to show respect to Elders, as well as Inuit beliefs and taboos. The stories have also provided information about the animal world, the living land and even words that are no longer used by the present-day Inuit, who live in a very different world than their ancestors.

There are wonderful resources at the website below.

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/stories/index-e.html>

**June 19: Enlightenment of Kwan Yin Bodhisattva Buddhist:** Kwan Yin ("She Who Hears the Prayers of the World") was originally the mother goddess of China, who proved so popular She was adopted into the Buddhist pantheon as a bodhisattva. A bodhisattva is a person who has attained enlightenment but chooses to forgo Nirvana and remain in the world to help others attain enlightenment. Kwan Yin's specialty is compassion, and She is known as the Goddess of Mercy. Before She became a bodhisattva, Kwan Yin was a princess named Miao Shan. As Miao Shan She endured many trials, especially from Her father, who wanted Her to marry. But She refused, and instead dedicated Her life to Buddhism.



As the still-popular mother goddess of China, Kwan Yin is known as a great healer who can cure all ills. She is also a goddess of fertility, and is often shown holding a child. In this aspect, She is known as *Sung-tzu niang-niang*, "The Lady Who Brings Children". She is shown holding a crystal vase, pouring out the waters of creation. Simply calling her name in time of crisis is believed to grant deliverance.

Kwan Yin is sometimes also depicted as male, especially in Japan, where She is called Kwannon, and

equated with the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, Lord of Compassion.

**June 21: Summer Feast Native American:** This is a day to honor the seasons. It is celebrated with prayer, song and storytelling.

**June 21: First Nations' Day Native American:** First Nations is a term of ethnicity that refers to the Aboriginal peoples in Canada who are neither Inuit nor Métis. There are currently over 630 recognized First Nations governments or bands spread across Canada, roughly half of which are in the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia

North American indigenous peoples have cultures spanning thousands of years. Some of their oral traditions accurately describe historical events, such as the Cascadia Earthquake of 1700. Written records began with the arrival of European explorers and colonists beginning in the late 15th century

Although not without conflict or slavery, Euro-Canadians' early interactions with First Nations and Inuit populations were relatively non-combative compared to the often violent battles between colonists and native peoples in the United States. Combined with later economic development, this relatively non-combative history has allowed First Nations peoples to have a strong influence on the national culture, while preserving their own identities.

A long and well footnoted article can be found at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_nations)



*A First Nations' Totem in Alert Bay, British Columbia  
Thunderbird and Copper*



### Activities for Children Related to the Solstice of Summer

Watch sunrises and sunsets together as a family with picnics, wildlife hikes, a farmer's market, or u-pick seasonal fruit.

Make wreaths decorated with flowers and bright ribbons, or suns out of clay. Use toothpicks or chopsticks for the sunrays and happy faces, or make suns out of paper plates, construction paper, or painted wooden disks.

Midsummer celebrations have traditionally included bonfires to keep away bad spirits and to encourage fertility, purification, health, and love. Play drums and other instruments, sing songs, and tell stories of the sun, the gods, and heroes. Burn the remnants of a Yule tree or a Wicker Man built out of dead branches tied together with cotton twine.

Smaller children will enjoy building a fairy shelter from a small box (a shoebox will work). Paint the shelter or decorate it with ribbons, sticks, feathers, flowers, or leaves. Leave a small gift for the child as a "thank you" from the fairies—a shell, a flower, a pretty rock, or perhaps a small trinket that had been "lost" around the house.

Many NeoPagans believe this holiday is represented by the Sun (or Oak) King. He is radiant, but the Holly King appears and begins to wrestle with him. Children will enjoy participating in a play in which they act this battle out. They can wear green masks made by cutting eyeholes in paper plates and gluing on real or construction paper leaves.

Give away items children have outgrown—toys, clothing, books—to friends or to charity, as the summer solstice reminds us that a constant cycle of growth and change governs our lives.

**June 21: Summer Solstice/Litha:** Midsummer may simply refer to the period of time centered upon the summer solstice, but more often refers to specific European celebrations that accompany the actual solstice, or that take place on a day between June 21 and June 24, and the preceding evening. The exact dates vary between different cultures.

European midsummer-related holidays, traditions, and celebrations are pre-Christian in origin. They are particularly important in Northern Europe - Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania - but are found also in Ireland, parts of Britain (Cornwall especially), France, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Ukraine, other parts of Europe, and elsewhere - such as Canada, the United States, Puerto Rico, and also in the Southern Hemisphere (mostly in Brazil, Argentina and Australia), where this imported European celebration would be more appropriately called Midwinter.

Midsummer is also sometimes referred to by Neopagans and others as Litha, stemming from Bede's *De temporum ratione* in which he gave the Anglo-Saxon names for the months roughly corresponding to June and July as "se Ærra Liþa" and "se Æfterra Liþa" (the "early Litha month" and the "later Litha month") with an intercalary month of "Liþa" appearing after se Æfterra Liþa on leap years. The fire festival or Lith- Summer solstice is a tradition for many pagans.

The celebration of Midsummer's Eve was from ancient times linked to the summer solstice. Some people believed that mid-summer plants, especially Calendula, had miraculous healing powers and they therefore picked them on this night. Bonfires were lit to protect against evil spirits which were believed to roam freely when the sun was turning southwards again. In later years, witches were also thought to be on their way to meetings with other powerful beings.

The solstice itself has remained a special moment of the annual cycle of the year since Neolithic times. In Sweden, Finland, and Estonia, Midsummer's Eve is considered the greatest festival of the year, comparable only with Walpurgis Night, Christmas Eve, and New Year's Eve.

As Christianity entered pagan areas, midsummer celebrations came to be often borrowed and transferred into new Christian holidays, often resulting in celebrations that mixed Christian traditions with traditions derived from pagan Midsummer festivities.

**June 23: Corpus Christi Anglican Christian:** Corpus Christi (Latin for Body of Christ) is a Western Catholic feast. It is also celebrated in some Anglican, Lutheran churches and some Liberal Catholic Churches. It honors the Eucharist, and as such it does not commemorate a particular event in Jesus' life. It is held on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday or, in some places, on the following Sunday. Its celebration on a Thursday is meant to associate it with institution by Jesus of the Eucharist during the Last Supper, commemorated on Maundy Thursday, and this is the first free Thursday after Paschaltide.

**June 23: Festival of Wianki—Festival of Wreathes:** This has been a special Washington, DC festival for some time. It originates from Poland, where the word *wianki* means "wreathes." On St. John's Eve (the 23rd) girls make wreathes from fresh greens, put a lit candle in the middle, and set them afloat on the reflecting pool in front of the Lincoln Memorial (in 2011 the reflecting pool in being renovated). Young men gather around the pool, hoping that the wind will blow their girlfriend's wreath toward them. The origin is pagan, where for generations Polish girls would wear a garland of wildflowers on St. John's Eve, decorated with ribbons and a candle. They would throw the wreathes into a river—if it drifts to shore it is a sign that girl will soon marry; if it sinks she will die within the year; if it floats downstream, she will definitely be married. The wreath symbolizes immortality, victory, and mourning. A myrtle wreath is a traditional symbol for a bride.



Summer Solstice at Stonehenge

**June 24: Nativity of St. John the Baptist Anglican/Catholic Christian:** The Nativity of St. John the Baptist (or Birth of John the Baptist, or Nativity of the Forerunner) is a Christian feast day celebrating the birth of John the Baptist, a prophet who foretold the coming of the Messiah in the person of Jesus and who baptized Jesus.

Christians have long interpreted the life of John the Baptist as a preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ, and the circumstances of his birth, as recorded in the New Testament, are miraculous. The sole biblical account of birth of John the Baptist comes from the Gospel of Luke. John's parents, Zechariah — a Jewish priest — and Elizabeth, were without children and both were beyond the age of child-bearing. During Zechariah's rotation to serve in the Temple in Jerusalem, he was chosen by lot to offer incense at the Golden Altar in the Holy Place. The Archangel Gabriel appeared to him and announced that he and his wife would give birth to a child, and that they should name him John. However, because Zechariah did not believe the message of Gabriel, he was rendered speechless until the time of John's birth; at that time, his relatives wanted to name the child after his father, and Zechariah wrote, "His name is John" and could speak (Luke 1:5-25; 1:57-66). Following Zechariah's obedience to the command of God, he was given the gift of prophecy, and foretold the future ministry of John (Luke 1:67-79).



Birth of the Baptist by Jacopo Pontormo  
1526

At the Annunciation, when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary to inform her that she would conceive of the Holy Ghost Jesus, he also informed her that Elizabeth, her cousin, was already six months pregnant (Luke 1:36). Mary then journeyed to visit Elizabeth. Luke's Gospel recounts that the baby "leapt" in Elizabeth's womb at the greeting of Mary (Luke 1:44).

**June 24: Kupalo Festival:** This is a Ukrainian festival. The name comes from the god of summer and fertility. The god sleeps under a tree all winter, awakening in the spring. Young women gather flowers to make a wreath which is tossed in a nearby river (see Wianki above). Another custom is for girls to make an effigy of Marena, the goddess of cold, death, and winter. After special songs, they burn or drown this effigy to reduce the goddess's power over the coming winter. Young men go into the forest to seek for a fern that blooms according to legend only on midsummer's day. They take a special cloth, white powder, and a knife. If they find one they make a circle around it with the powder, sit in the circle and wait for it to bloom; when it does they cut the blossom and wrap it in the cloth—it symbolizes luck.



**June 26: Corpus Christi Catholic (see above, June 23)**

**June 28/29: Isra/Miraj: Night of the Prophet's Journey to Heaven:** The Prophet Mohammad (also written as Muhammad) lived in and around the area that is now Saudi Arabia in the years 570 CE to 632 CE in the Gregorian calendar. According to Islamic belief, God (Allah) took him on a two-part journey sometime around the year 620 CE. The first part of the journey, known as Isra, was from Mecca to the "furthest" mosque. There is some debate about the "furthest" mosque's location. Some Muslims believe that it signifies a mosque that was far away from Mecca, while others believe that it was the Dome of the Rock (Masjid Qubbat As-Sakhrah) on the Temple Mount (Haram al-Sharif) in Jerusalem.

It is believed that Mohammad was shown heaven and hell in the second part of the journey, known as Mi'raj. He talked with many prophets, including Jesus and Moses, in heaven. He also received instructions on Islamic prayer. Mohammad returned to Mecca before the end of the night. Some Islamic scholars regard Mohammed's journey as a spiritual experience while others see it as a physical journey. His journey is remembered and commemorated on Isra and Mi'raj.

**June 29: Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles Anglican/Catholic Christian—Feast of the Holy Apostles Orthodox Christian (29/30):** Celebrates the two apostles of Christ who preached the Gospel in Rome. Peter and Paul are seen as co-evangelists of the Church of Rome.

**June 29: Maidyoshem Gahambar Zoroastrian:** This is the second of six Gahambar festivals during the Zoroastrian year. This particular seasonal festival celebrates the creation of water, the harvest of grain, and the sowing of summer crops.

**June 30: Feast of the Holy Apostles Orthodox Christian:** The 12 apostles followed Christ as He traveled and were eye witnesses to His numerous wonders. After the Ascension of Jesus, they continued His work of redemption. In fact, at the Ascension, Jesus commanded the apostles to go out and make disciples of all nations through baptism and to teach nations all that they had observed and all that He commanded of them. He enabled them to succeed in that he bestowed the Holy Spirit upon them (at Pentecost) as they traveled to far away lands. The authority of the Apostles in the Church was unquestionable from the very beginning. Their powers were derived from Christ Himself. They preached boldly and acted as His representatives, teaching and speaking "in the Holy Spirit." The place of honor accorded to them by the Church has no equal except for that of the Theotokos. They each have their own separate date of commemoration and they have a joint commemoration on June 30th, a feast whose importance is shown by the fact that it is preceded by a period of fasting.