



# The Holy Days of May

## 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 Hospital)

**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

May give us the opportunity to celebrate: ALS Awareness Month, APS (Antiphospholipid Antibody Syndrome) Awareness Month, Arthritis Awareness Month, Awareness of Medical Orphans Month, Better Hearing and Speech Month, Borderline Personality Disorder Month, Brain Tumor Awareness Month, Fibromyalgia Education and Awareness Month, Heal the Children Month, Healthy Vision Month, Huntington's Disease Awareness Month, Lupus Awareness Month, National Allergy/Asthma Awareness Month, National Hepatitis Awareness Month, National Physiotherapy Month, National Stroke Awareness Month,, Tay-Sachs and Canavan Diseases Month, Tourette Syndrome Awareness Month (WOW!). For Fun: Bread Pudding Recipe Exchange Week (1-7), National Wildflower Week (6-12), Teacher Appreciation Week (7-11), **National Hospital Week (14—19)**, EMS Week (15-21), National Backyard Games Week (25-31), Old-Time Player Piano Week (25-28). A few days to appreciate are: Childhood Depression Awareness Day (1), World Asthma Day (1), Roberts Rule of Order Day (2), Respect for Chickens Day (4), Childhood Stroke Awareness Day (5), Nurses Day (6), No Socks Day (8), National School Nurse Day (9), World Crohn's and Colitis Day (23), National Missing Children's Day (25), World MS Day (30), and not to be forgotten—Hug Your Cat Day (31).



### **Holy Days with no fixed date**

**The Ute Bear Dance** Typically occurs during late May or early June in the Ute community of Colorado. It is one of the oldest dances of the tribe. The Bear Dance is both a celebration of spring and a courtship dance. Tradition is that two brothers went hunting and came across a bear clawing a tree. One brother stayed to watch while the other went on. As a favor to the bear for not killing him, the bear taught him the dance and the song and told him to teach all the people so that they could show respect for the bear and draw strength from the bear's spirit.

**The Green Corn Dance** This dance is performed by many tribes throughout the country at different times of the year. The Seminole people of Florida observe it in May. The dance is held several weeks before the harvest when the corn is nearly ripe, but still green. It is a rite of renewal and purification and dedicated to the god who controls the growth of corn and maize. Often this is considered a time for getting rid of old, worn out items; hold annual council meetings, and forgive one another any sins of the prior year.

### **Holy Days with fixed date**

**May 1 Beltane** Beltane is the second principal Celtic festival (the other being Samhain). Celebrated approximately halfway between Vernal (spring) equinox and the midsummer (Summer Solstice). Beltane traditionally marked the arrival of summer in ancient times. Beltane, like Samhain, is a time of "no time" when the veils between the two worlds are at their thinnest. On the night before Beltane, in times past, folks would place rowan branches at their windows and doors for protection, many otherworldly occurrences could transpire during this time of "no time". Traditionally on the Isle of Man, the youngest member of the family gathers primroses on the eve before Beltane and throws the flowers at the door of the home for protection. In Ireland it is believed that food left over from May Eve must not be eaten, but rather buried or left as an offering to the faery instead. Beltane marks that the winter's journey has passed and summer (continued)

## Irish Bannock Bread



### Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour  
 2 tablespoons white sugar  
 1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
 1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
 1/2 teaspoon salt  
 2 tablespoons butter  
 1 cup buttermilk  
 1/2 cup dried currants

### Directions

Combine flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Cut butter into flour mixture with pastry cutter. Add buttermilk until dough is soft. Stir in currants.

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead for 5 minutes, or until smooth. Form dough into a 7 inch round. Place on a lightly oiled cake pan or cookie sheet. Cut 1/2 inch deep cross side to side. Score with cross 1/2 inch deep on the top. Bake in a preheated 375 degrees F (190 degrees C) oven for 40 minutes.

has begun, it is a festival of rapturous gaiety as it joyfully heralds the arrival of summer in her full garb. Beltane, however, is still a precarious time, the crops are still very young and tender, susceptible to frost and blight. As was the way of ancient thought, the Wheel would not turn without human intervention. People did everything in their power to encourage the growth of the Sun and His light, for the Earth will not produce without the warm love of the strong Sun. Fires, celebration and rituals were an important part of the Beltane festivities, as to insure that the warmth of the Sun's light would promote the fecundity of the earth.

Beltane translated means "fire of Bel" or "bright fire" - the "bale-fire". (English - bale; Anglo-Saxon bael; Lithuanian baltas (white)) Bel (Bel, Bile, Beli, Belinus, Belenos) is known as the bright and shining one, a Celtic Sun God. Beli is the father, protector, and the husband of the Mother Goddess.

The Maypole is an important element to Beltane festivities, it is a tall pole decorated with long brightly colored ribbons, leaves, flowers and wreaths. Young maidens and lads each hold the end of a ribbon, and dance revolving around the base of the pole, interweaving the ribbons. The circle of dancers should begin, as far out from the pole as the length of ribbon allows, so the ribbons are taut. There should be an even number of boys & girls. Boys should be facing clockwise and girls counterclockwise. They each move in the direction that they are facing, weaving with the next, to braid the ribbons over-and-under around the pole. Those passing on the inside will have to duck, those passing on the outside raise their ribbons to slide over. As the dances revolve around the pole the ribbons will create a pattern, which will indicate the abundance of harvest year.

The central color of Beltane is green. Green is the color of growth, abundance, plentiful harvest, abundant crops, fertility, and luck. White is another color that is customary, white brings the energies of cleansing, peace, spirituality, and the power to dispel negativity. Another color is red who brings along the qualities of energy, strength, sex, vibrancy, quickening, health, consummation and retention. Sun energy, life force and happiness are brought to Beltane by the color yellow. It is customary to bake a colorful fruit and spiced filled bread for festivals in the Celtic lands, traditionally this festival bread is sweet dough made with sweetmeat and spices. In Scotland they are the bannock - Bonnach Bealtain - for Beltane, in Wales - Bara Brith, Ireland it is Barm Brack and in Brittany Morlaix Brioche.

### May 2 *Ridvan Ends (see April)*

**May 2 Birthday of Guru Arjan Dev (Nanakshahi calendar) Sikh** 1563-1606 Guru Arjan was the fifth Sikh Guru and the first Sikh martyr: he gave up his life for the Sikh people.



The Guru laid the foundation of the Golden Temple (Harmandir Sahib) in Amritsar. He also designed the four doors in a Gurdwara (place of worship), proclaiming that "My faith is for the people of all castes and all creeds from whichever direction they come and to whichever direction they bow."

He also declared that all Sikhs should donate a tenth of their earnings to charity.

The greatest contribution he made to the Sikh faith was to compile all of the past Gurus' writings into one book, now the holy scripture: the Guru Granth Sahib. It was this holy book that made him a martyr. Guru Arjan Dev included the compositions of both Hindu and Muslim saints which he considered consistent with the teachings of Sikhism and the Gurus.

In 1606, the Muslim Emperor Jahangir ordered that he be tortured and sentenced to death after he refused to remove all Islamic and Hindu references from the Holy book. He was made to sit on a burning hot sheet while boiling hot sand was poured over his burnt body. After enduring five days of unrelenting torture Guru Arjan Dev was taken for a bath in the river. As thousands watched he entered the river never to be seen again.

**May 5 Wesak or Buddha Day Buddhist** Wesak is the most important of the Buddhist festivals and is celebrated on the full moon in May. It celebrates the Buddha's birthday, and, for some Buddhists, also marks his enlightenment and death.

Buddha literally means 'one who is awake' and has become enlightened. It is a term that denotes a person who has attained the supreme wisdom and compassion (continued)

of Enlightenment. To Buddhists Enlightenment is a blessed state in which the individual attains Nirvana - the transcendence of desire and suffering.

The celebration of Wesak is a chance to remember the story of how the Buddha gained Enlightenment, and to reflect on what it might mean for individual Buddhists to move towards Enlightenment themselves.

The festival is celebrated with much color and gaiety. Homes may be cleaned and decorated. In Thailand, for example, special Wesak lanterns are made of paper and wood, and often there are large ceremonial releases of caged birds. In many countries during the festival, Buddhists will visit their local temple for services and teaching, and will give offerings to the monks of food, candles and flowers. Chanting and praying are an important part of Wesak. The 'Bathing the Buddha' ceremony is also often included. Water is poured over the shoulders of the Buddha and serves as a reminder to purify the mind from greed, hatred and ignorance.

Chinese Buddhists incorporate elements of their country's culture into their religious celebrations like the traditional dancing dragons.

Gifts are taken to an altar to be offered to the Buddha statues. This shows respect and gratitude to the Buddha for his life and teachings.

If there is food it is usually vegetarian as Buddhists try not to harm animals.

**May 10 Lag B'Omer Jewish** The Omer are forty-nine days between the holiday of Passover and the holiday of Shavuot. Also known as Sefirat HaOmer (Counting the Omer), these forty-nine days are counted aloud during evening services. First the service leader recites a special blessing that goes: "Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has commanded us to count the Omer." Then the congregation responds by saying: "Today is the third day [or fifth or thirtieth] day in the Omer." Shavuot is celebrated at the end of this period, on the fiftieth day after the second day of Passover.

In Leviticus, the third book of the Torah, it says: "You shall count... from the day that you brought the omer as a wave offering" (23:15). "Omer" is a Hebrew word that means "sheaves of a harvested crop" and in ancient times Jews brought the omer to the Temple as an offering on the second day of Passover. The Torah says to count seven weeks from the bringing of the Omer until the evening of Shavuot, hence the custom of counting the Omer.

Scholars are not sure why but historically the Omer has been a time of semi-mourning. The Talmud mentions a plague that is thought to have killed 24,000 of Rabbi Akiva's students during one Omer, and some think this is the reason the Omer are not joyous.

Lag Ba'Omer is a joyous holiday but no one is sure what it celebrates. The Talmud mentions a plague that is thought to have killed 24,000 of Rabbi Akiva's students during one Omer, and some have suggested that Lag Ba'Omer is celebratory because the plague abated on the 33rd day. Lag Ba'Omer is a time during the Counting of the Omer when people can celebrate. While the Omer is a time of mourning, on Lag Ba'Omer marriages can be performed, children are taken to parks to play, and people often gather for large bonfires. The fires represent the light of the Torah.

**May 17 Ascension Day Christian** Ascension Day celebrates Jesus' ascension to heaven after he was resurrected on Easter Day.

A quotation from Mark 16:9-20 tells the story.

*He appeared first to Mary of Magdala. She went and carried the news to his mourning and sorrowful followers, but when she told them that he was alive they did not believe her. Later he appeared to two of the disciples as they were walking into the countryside. They also went and took the news to the others, but again they did not believe that the Lord was alive. Then, when the eleven disciples were at the table. He appeared to them and reproached them because they had not believed those who had seen him after he was raised from the dead. Then he said to them: 'Go forth to every part of the world, and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. Those who believe it and receive baptism will find salvation; those who do not believe will be condemned, Faith will bring with it these miracles: believers will cast out devils in my name and speak in strange tongues; if they handle snakes or drink any deadly poison, they will come to no harm; and the sick on whom they lay their hands will recover.'* So after talking with them the Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven, and he took his seat at the right hand of God.

Jesus' prophecy in this passage is believed to foreshadow the later events of Pentecost.



## Today

BY BILLY COLLINS

If ever there were a spring day  
so perfect,  
so uplifted by a warm intermit-  
tent breeze

that it made you want to throw  
open all the windows in the  
house

and unlatch the door to the ca-  
nary's cage,  
indeed, rip the little door from its  
jamb,

a day when the cool brick paths  
and the garden bursting with  
peonies

seemed so etched in sunlight  
that you felt like taking

a hammer to the glass paper-  
weight  
on the living room end table,

releasing the inhabitants  
from their snow-covered cottage

so they could walk out,  
holding hands and squinting

into this larger dome of blue and  
white,  
well, today is just that kind of  
day.



**May 20 Ascension Day Catholic Church in England and Wales** The churches in England and Wales celebrate the ascension not on the 40th day after Easter, but on the following Sunday.

**May 23 Declaration of the Báb Bahá'í** Siyyid `Alí Muḥammad Shírází (October 20, 1819 – July 9, 1850) was the founder of Bábism, and one of three central figures of the Bahá'í Faith. He was a merchant from Shíráz, Persia, who at the age of twenty-four (on May 23, 1844) claimed to be the promised Qá'im (or Mahdi). After his declaration he took the title of Báb meaning "Gate". He composed hundreds of letters and books (often termed tablets) in which he stated his messianic claims and defined his teachings, which constituted a new shari'ah or religious law. His movement eventually acquired tens of thousands of supporters, was opposed by Iran's Shi'a clergy, and was suppressed by the Iranian government, leading to the persecution and killing of thousands of his followers, called Bábís. In 1850, at the age of thirty, the Báb was shot by a firing squad in Tabriz.

Bahá'ís claim that the Báb was also the spiritual return of Elijah and John the Baptist, that he was the "Ushídar-Máh" referred to in the Zoroastrian scriptures,[1] and that he was the forerunner of their own religion. Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, was a follower of the Báb and claimed to be the fulfillment of his promise that God would send another messenger. Read the entire story at: <http://www.planetbahai.org/cgi-bin/articles.pl?article=37>

**May 23 Birthday of Guru Amar Das (Nanakshahi Calendar) Sikh** Sikhs celebrate the birthday of Guru Amar Das on May 23, he was the third of the ten Sikh Gurus. He had a great influence in Sikhism. He did not come in contact with Sikhism until he was over 50 years of age.

He met with Guru Angad and became his disciple as the Guru immediately recognized the spiritual maturity of Amar Das. Later as his teacher was about to die, he was chosen as the new Guru; Sikhs followed his teachings. He made many innovations and took brave steps forward in the Sikh religion.

One of his great ideas was to create what is still today practiced, the Langar, which is the serving of free vegetarian food. He instituted that anyone who wanted to see him had to sit at the Langar with everyone else and eat from the same meals prepared at the common kitchen. This came to contradict the injustice that prevailed from the Indian caste system. He also protected women from injustices, he allowed widow remarriage and he prohibited widows to be burned in their husband's funeral pyres.

He promoted the idea that the body is the temple of God and should be kept healthy until death, he did not approve the ascetics practices of self torture. He died in 1574, September 1.

The Birthday celebrations of Guru Amar Das lasts for 3 days. Two days before the birthday there is a team of men and women that start reading the Guru Granth Sahib, the Holy Scriptures of Sikhs, from start to end without interruption, this is called the Akhand Path and is done at any Gurdwara, Sikh worship place.

The day before the birthday a procession is organized; on the day of the birthday at early morning there are morning hymns, or Asa di Var, followed by an exposition of the Guru Granth Sahib. During the day there is food serving and everybody joins in prayers and joyous singing. Around sunset it is time for the Rehras, evening prayers. You can read a more complete story of his life and work at: <http://www.sikhs.org/guru3.htm>



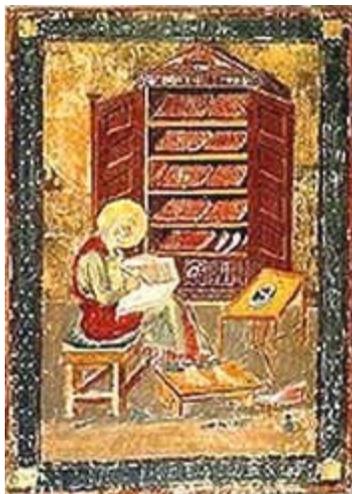
*Ascension of Christ*



*Guru Amar Das*

**May 24 All Ascension Day Orthodox Christian (See above)**

**May 25 St. Bede the Venerable (Christian)** St. Bede, born around 673AD in the northeast area of what is now England, entered the Benedictine monastery of Wearmouth at age 7. Celtic monasticism had existed in the British isles for centuries, but Benedictine Monasticism was a rather recent arrival when Bede entered monastic life. He devoted himself from the time he entered the monastery to prayer, the study of Scripture and history, and ultimately teaching and writing after becoming a deacon and then a priest. Even in his lifetime he was renowned for the greatness of his biblical teaching and historical writing for which he is known as the father of British history. There is much about the early secular and ecclesiastical history of the British isles that we would simply not know were it not for the writings of Saint Bede. It was not long after his death in 735 AD that Bede was given the popular title "Venerable." Known as one of the last Fathers of the Church, he was also accorded the title of Doctor of the Church by Pope Leo XIII in 1899. His tomb is located in the beautiful Anglican cathedral of Durham, which dates back to Norman times and also houses the relics of another great saint of early Britain, Saint Cuthbert.



Bede wrote scientific, historical and theological works, reflecting the range of his writings from music and metrics to exegetical Scripture commentaries. He knew patristic literature, as well as Pliny the Elder, Virgil, Lucretius, Ovid, Horace and other classical writers. He knew some Greek and Hebrew. His Latin is generally clear, but his Biblical commentaries are more technical.

Bede's scriptural commentaries employed the allegorical method of interpretation and his history includes accounts of miracles, which to modern historians has seemed at odds with his critical approach to the materials in his history. Modern studies have shown the important role such concepts played in the world-view of Early Medieval scholars.

Modern historians have completed many studies of Bede's works. His life and work have been celebrated by a series of annual scholarly lectures at St. Paul's Church, Jarrow from 1958 to the present. The historian Walter Goffart says of Bede that he "holds a privileged and unrivalled place among first historians of Christian Europe".

Although Bede is mainly studied as a historian now, in his time his works on grammar, chronology, and biblical studies were as important as his historical and hagiographical works. The non-historical works contributed greatly to the Carolingian renaissance.

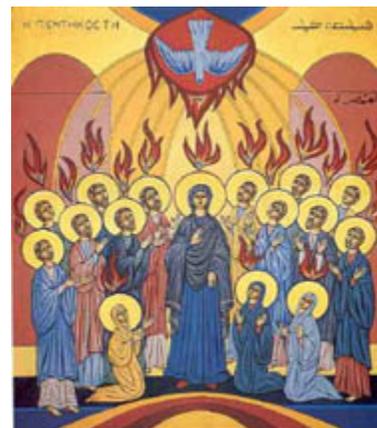
**May 27 Pentecost/Whitsun Christian** Pentecost is the great festival that marks the birth of the Christian church by the power of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost means "fiftieth day" and is celebrated fifty days after Easter.

Ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, the twelve apostles, Jesus' mother and family, and many other of His disciples gathered together in Jerusalem for the Jewish harvest festival that was celebrated on the fiftieth 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 three thousand 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. The color red also reminds us of the blood of the martyrs. These are the believers of every generation who by the power of the Holy Spirit hold firm to the true faith even at the cost of their lives.

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.

Confirmation Sunday is the day when young people who have been instructed in basic Christian doctrine confess their faith in the presence of the church. The key to understanding confirmation is to recognize that the faith the confirmands confess is not of their own making; it is the gift of God that He gives through His means of grace. The Holy Spirit who empowered the disciples to preach the risen Christ two thousand years ago is the same Spirit who empowers the confirmands to make their confession. This is why many churches celebrate the rite of confirmation on Pentecost.



**May 27 Shavuot Jewish** Shavu'ot, the Festival of Weeks, is the second of the three major festivals with both historical and agricultural significance (the other two are Passover and Sukkot). Agriculturally, it commemorates the time when the first fruits were harvested and brought to the Temple, and is known as Hag ha-Bikkurim (the Festival of the First Fruits). Historically, it celebrates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, and is also known as Hag Matan Torateinu (the Festival of the Giving of Our Torah).

The period from Passover to Shavu'ot is a time of great anticipation. We count each of the days from the second day of Passover to the day before Shavu'ot, 49 days or 7 full weeks, hence the name of the festival. See The Counting of the Omer. The counting reminds us of the important connection between Passover and Shavu'ot: Passover freed the Jewish people physically from bondage, but the giving of the Torah on Shavu'ot redeemed them spiritually from bondage to idolatry and immorality. Shavu'ot is also known as Pentecost, because it falls on the 50th day; however, Shavu'ot has no particular similarity to the Christian holiday of Pentecost, which occurs 50 days after their Easter.

It is noteworthy that the holiday is called the time of the giving of the Torah, rather than the time of the receiving of the Torah. The sages point out that we are constantly in the process of receiving the Torah, that we receive it every day, but it was first given at this time. Thus it is the giving, not the receiving, that makes this holiday significant.

Shavu'ot is not tied to a particular calendar date, but to a counting from Passover. Work is not permitted during Shavu'ot. It is customary to stay up the entire first night of Shavu'ot and study Torah, then pray as early as possible in the morning. It is customary to eat a dairy meal at least once during Shavu'ot. There are varying opinions as to why this is done. Some say it is a reminder of the promise regarding the land of Israel, a land flowing with "milk and honey." According to another view, it is because our ancestors had just received the Torah (and the dietary laws therein), and did not have both meat and dairy dishes available. The book of Ruth is read at this time.

**May 29 Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh Bahá'í** This important holy day is celebrated on the 29th May, at 3am. It commemorates the anniversary of the death of the founder of the Bahá'í faith, Bahá'u'lláh, and his teachings. Bahá'u'lláh died peacefully on the morning of 29th May 1892. He now lies buried in Bahji, in a shrine surrounded by a stunning garden, which is designed to symbolize the order of the world in the future. Pilgrims to the Bahá'í shrines in Israel visit the tomb to pray there. This solemn anniversary is a day of rest, and is often observed by reading or chanting from the scriptures. There is a very interesting pictorial life of Bahá'u'lláh at : <http://www.bahauallah.org/>



*Entrance to the shrine of Bahá'u'lláh*

The trading of joy comes naturally because it is of the nature of joy to proclaim and share itself. Joy cannot contain itself . . . It overflows.

Frederick Buechner  
Source: The Clown in the Belfry



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