



# Chaplaincy Services

Holy Days, Celebrations and  
Observances  
of August 2018

## *Holy Days with no fixed dates*

**Eagle Dance** The Native American Eagle dance performed by many Native American tribes consists of movements that emulate an eagle. The dancers are clothed with replications of eagle attire. The performance includes sequences of songs and dances. In Native American tribes, the eagle has a symbolic meaning. These Native American tribes believe that the eagle has a spiritual connection to their prayers.

The Native American tribes that perform the Eagle dance believe that the eagle has the theoretical ability to move about between heaven and earth. In times gone by, the Native Americans have believed that the eagle has supernatural powers. Also, these Native American tribes believe that the eagle has the power to control rain and thunder. Therefore, the Eagle dance originated as a result of this figurative meaning.

The Native American tribes performed the Eagle dance when there was a need for divine intervention. Historically, the Native Americans performed the dance for a variety of reasons, including friendship creation and curing a sickness. They traditionally believed that the eagle has the supernatural power to transport prayers to the gods.

The Native Americans believe that the eagle symbolizes wisdom, strength and power. Some tribes believe that the eagle's flight signifies the passage of the sun's movements. Eagle's feathers are sacred, especially the Golden Eagle and Bald Eagle. Therefore, it is a privilege to wear the eagle's feathers. Also, these Native American tribes believe that the eagle's feathers should never touch the ground. Moreover, the eagle's feathers are used as object decorations in the eagle dance ceremonies.

The performance of the Eagle dance is a depiction of the eagle's life cycle from birth to death. In olden times, Native American tribes may have performed the dance to bring rain for crops. Two central dancers perform an imitation of the eagle's movements. Also, a group of male dancers provide background singing and drum music.

However, there is no specific method to perform the dance. It varies with each tribe. In general, the dance consists of the eagle's day to day movements. For instance, the dancers may perform a replica of the animal's hunting and feeding progressions. The dancers make flapping movements to imitate the eagle's flight.

Traditionally, the Iroquois, Comanche and Calumet tribes have performed the dance during spiritual ceremonies. In the present day, it's usually performed by the Jemez and Tesuque tribes located in New Mexico.



## Hopi Snake Dance

The Snake Dance held every two years by the Native American Hopi tribe dates back to the earliest era of human life in what is now the southwestern United States. Scholars believe that the dance was originally a water ceremony, because snakes were the traditional guardians of springs. Today it is primarily a rain ceremony, since the Hopis regard snakes as their "brothers" and rely on them to carry their prayers for rain to the underworld where the gods and the spirits of the ancestors live.

Performed by members of the Snake and Antelope clans on the three mesas in Arizona where the Hopis live, the dance represents the grand finale of a sixteen-day ceremony that begins a few days after the *NIMAN KACHINA FESTIVAL* or Going Away of the Gods. Preparations for the dance take place during the last nine days, and they include making the *PAHOS* or prayer sticks, designing the *SAND PAINTING*, and building an altar around the painting that includes bowls of water from a sacred spring, green cornstalks, and trailing vines of melons and beans—all symbolic of the rain that is needed for the survival of the Hopis and their crops.

During the last four days, the Snake priests leave their villages to gather snakes, often taking young boys with them. According to Hopi legend, boys of the Snake clan can capture and handle snakes without fear from the time they are born. They stroke the snakes with a feather to make them straighten out of their dangerous coils, then grab them behind the head. The priests are usually armed with a digging stick to dig the snakes out of their holes and a snake whip, which is a rod with two eagle feathers attached. *Photo: ancient-origins.net*

On the day of the dance itself, the snakes are washed in a large jar filled with water and herbs and then thrown on a bed of clean sand. Young boys guard the snakes to keep them from slithering away, and they use their snake whips to prevent them from coiling. Finally the snakes are gathered up in a huge bag, carried to the village plaza and placed in the *KISI* or snake-shrine. The highlight of the ceremony occurs when the Snake priests reach into the kisi and grab a snake, carrying it first in their hands and then in their mouths. Each priest is accompanied by an attendant who uses the snake whip to prevent the reptile from coiling. As the pairs dance around the plaza, each is followed by a third man called the gatherer, whose job it is to make sure that when the time comes for the dancer to drop his snake, it doesn't wander into the crowd. At just the right moment, the gatherer touches the snake with his feathered wand, drops meal on it, and catches it behind the head. Then he lays it over his arm and goes after another one. As many as 50 or 60 small whip-snakes, long bullsnakes and even rattlesnakes can often be seen curling around the gatherers' arms and necks.

When the bag of snakes is empty, one of the Snake priests makes a large circle of meal on the ground. The gatherers throw all of their snakes into the circle, while women and girls scatter meal on the wriggling pile. Then the Snake priests dash in, scooping up armfuls of snakes and rush out of the plaza. They carry them off to special shrines, where they are released so they can carry the prayer for rain from the mouths of the priests to the underworld where the rain-gods live.





### *Hopi Flute Dance*

Held on opposite years from the Snake Dance, the Flute ceremony is held in August. This nine-day celebration is held to encourage rain and the growth of the corn crop, as well as the continuity of life after death. During the days leading up to the ceremony, an altar is constructed with carvings and paintings to represent the clouds that will bring rain to the villages.

The Flute Ceremony begins with a procession through the village. The clan chief leads a group that includes the flute boy, flute girls, men carrying cornstalks and warriors with bullroarers. Prayers for rain are said and a priest scatters corn meal on the ground before the flute altar. Water is poured into a bowl from all

directions to symbolize the rain clouds and a bullroarer is used to represent the sound of thunder.

The unwrapping of the tiponi occurs on the sixth day of celebration. The tiponi is made of wood, shaped like a cup and decorated with rain cloud and corn symbols. Inside the cup rests a single ear of corn or corn grains. This corn represents the seed that was carried by the early tribes throughout their migrations. Wrapped in cotton string and feathers, the tiponi is unwrapped by a flute priest so the corn within can be planted. A new ear of corn is then placed within it and re-wrapped until the following year.

*Photo: kachinahouse.com*

### *Holy Days with fixed date*

**August 1 Lammas Wicca/Pagan** As July breaks into August and grains turn golden in the fields, Christians, Pagans and many others from areas of England, Ireland and Scotland mark the feast of Lammas. An ancient festival of the wheat harvest, Lammas—or Lughnasadh—has long been called “the feast of first fruits.” In England and in some English-speaking countries, August 1 is “Lammas Day”; historically, it was customary to bring a loaf of bread made from the new wheat crop to the church for a blessing.

For Christians, Lammas has been a time for blessing loaves made of fresh wheat. In time, Christians also created a version of the Scottish Highland Quarter Cake for Lammas, which bore Christian symbols on the top. (Catholic Culture has a recipe.)

In the Neopagan and Wiccan faiths, Lughnasadh is one of eight sabbats and is the first of three harvest festivals. Ancient Celtic myth describes a god of sun, of light and brightness: He is Lugh, the deity for whom Lughnasadh is named. Ever mirthful, Lugh is honored alongside his foster mother, Tailtiu, who is said to be responsible for introducing agriculture to Ireland. The story of Lughnasadh is one of the cycle of life, of the harvesting of grains and crops, and of one season’s fruits dropping seeds for the next. Today, common foods on the table at Lughnasadh are apples, grains, breads and berries.





### **August 1** *The Fast in Honor of Mary* **Orthodox Christian**

As Orthodox Christians look to the Feast of the Dormition, millions enter a fasting period stricter even than that before the Nativity (Christmas).

For Eastern Christians, including many families in the U.S., the two weeks prior to the feast recalling the “falling asleep” of the Virgin Mary are focused on prayers to the Theotokos (“God-bearer”). In this fast, the observant abstain from red meat, poultry, dairy products, fish, oil and wine. The Dormition Fast continues until the Feast of the Dormition, on August 15. (Note: Certain restrictions of the fast are lifted on the Feast of the Transfiguration, on August 6).

The first day of the Dormition Fast hosts the Procession of the Cross, during which an outdoor procession complements the Lesser Blessing of Water.  
*Picture is of the Mother of God of Ostrobram in Vilnius*

**August 6** *Transfiguration* **Christian** The feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ celebrates the revelation of Christ’s divine glory on Mount Tabor in Galilee (Matthew 17:1-6; Mark 9:1-8; Luke 9:28-36). After revealing to His disciples that He would be put to death in Jerusalem (Matthew 16:21), Christ, along with Ss. Peter, James, and John went up the mountain. There, Saint Matthew writes, “he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow.”

The brightness with which He shone on Mount Tabor was not something added to Christ but the manifestation of His true divine nature. For Peter, James, and John, it was also a glimpse of the glories of Heaven and of the resurrected body promised to all Christians. When Christ was transfigured, two others appeared with Him: Moses, representing the Old Testament Law, and Elijah, representing the prophets. Thus Christ, Who stood between the two and spoke with them, appeared to the disciples as the fulfillment of both the Law and the prophets.

At Christ’s baptism in the Jordan, the voice of God the Father was heard to proclaim that “This is my beloved Son” (Matthew 3:17). During the Transfiguration, God the Father pronounced the same words (Matthew 17:5).

Despite the importance of this event, the Feast of the Transfiguration was not among the earliest of feasts celebrated by Christians. It was first celebrated in Asia starting in the fourth or fifth century and spread throughout the Christian East in the centuries following. The Catholic Encyclopedia notes that it wasn’t commonly celebrated in the West until the tenth century. Pope Callixtus III elevated the Transfiguration to a feast of the universal Church and established August 6 as the date of its celebration.



### **August 15** *Assumption/Dormition of Mary* **Catholic/Orthodox Christian**

The Dormition (Falling Asleep) of the Theotokos is one of the Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church, celebrated on August 15. For those churches using the Julian Calendar, this feast falls on August 28 in the secular calendar. The Feast of the Dormition, which is also sometimes called the Assumption, commemorates the death, resurrection and glorification of Christ’s mother. It proclaims that Mary has been “assumed” by God into the heavenly kingdom of Christ in the fullness of her spiritual and bodily existence.

(continued)

According to Orthodox Tradition, Mary died like all humanity, "falling asleep," so to speak, as the name of the feast indicates. She died as all people die, not "voluntarily" as her Son, but by the necessity of her mortal human nature which is indivisibly bound up with the corruption of this world. The feast was added to the Roman calendar in the seventh century as the Dormitio. In the eighth century, the title was changed to the Assumptio (Assumption).

The Apostles were miraculously summoned to this event, and all were present except Thomas when Mary passed from this life. She was then buried.

Thomas arrived a few days later, and desiring to see her one more time, convinced the others to open her tomb. Upon doing so, the Apostles discovered that her body was no longer present. This event is seen as a firstfruits of the resurrection of the faithful that will occur at the Second Coming of Christ. The event is normally called the Dormition, though there are many Orthodox parishes in English-speaking countries with the name Assumption. In Greek, Dormition is *Koimisis*—falling asleep in death—from which the word cemetery derives.

As with the nativity of the Virgin and the feast of her entrance to the temple, there are no biblical or historical sources for this feast. The Orthodox Church teaches that Mary is without personal sins[1], as well that Mary truly needed to be saved by Christ as all human persons are saved from the trials, sufferings and death of this world. She truly died and was raised up by her Son as the Mother of Life and participates already in the eternal life of paradise. This life of paradise is prepared and promised to all who "hear the word of God and keep it." (Luke 11:27-28)



**August 22 - 25 Eod al Adha Muslim** The Eid al-Adha, or "Festival of the Sacrifice," marks the end of the Hajj, the holy pilgrimage to Mecca. This Eid commemorates the willingness of the Prophet Abraham to sacrifice his son, Ishmael, in obedience to God and God's mercy on Abraham by replacing Ishmael with a ram. Muslims honor this event by sacrificing an animal, usually a lamb, which is then divided among their families and the poor. In the U.S., Muslims pay a halal butcher to perform the sacrifice or they make a donation through charities. (Halal refers to the dietary practices required according to Qu'ran and tradition of the Prophet Muhammad.) The Eid al-Adha is a major religious event in the lives of Muslims. Usually, communities in the Muslim world celebrate this occasion over a period of several days.

Muslims dressed in their best attire begin the day with special prayers performed at large indoor or outdoor gatherings. A sermon is given after the completion of Eid prayers. Muslims then greet their fellow worshippers with "Eid Mubarak," meaning "May your holiday be blessed." Families visit their relatives and friends to celebrate, exchange greetings and enjoy festive meals. Children are often rewarded with gifts, money and sweets.

**August 29 Raksha Bandhan Hindu** Raksha Bandhan, also abbreviated to Rakhi, is the Hindu festival that celebrates brotherhood and love. It is celebrated on the full moon in the month of Sravana in the lunar calendar. The word Raksha means protection, whilst Bandhan is the verb to tie. Traditionally, during the festival sisters tie a rakhi, a bracelet made of interwoven red and gold threads, around their brothers' wrists to celebrate their relationship.

It is believed that when a woman ties a rakhi around the hand of a man it becomes obligatory for him to honor his religious duty and protect her. Traditional stories state that rakhis are blessed with sacred verses and are encompassed by them. Sometimes rakhis are consecrated in rice and grass before they are given, and they are traditionally tied by people familiar with the Vedas. Following these customs the rakhi is believed to remove sin from one hand and provide safety to the other. The protection offered by a rakhi is believed to remain for a year.



As the rakhi is tied, a prayer is offered asking for happiness and prosperity. Today rakhis are often decorated with multi-coloured silk thread, and often adorned with stones and beads. Once the rakhi has been tied a mantra is chanted either in Sanskrit or Punjabi. At the end of the ceremony the sister places a sweet in her mouth. Following this her brother gives her a small monetary gift of appreciation. This festival has evolved over the years to encompass the importance of many people in Hindu society,

yet foremost it continues to honor and uphold the relationship between a sister and brother.

Sources: ancient-origins.net, classroom.synonym.com, kachinahouse.com, encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com, readthespirit.com, thughtco.com, orthowiki.org, pbslearningmedia.org, bbc.co.uk. All pictures are from the subscription service Shutterstock unless otherwise identified.

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The quality of strength lined with tenderness is an unbeatable combination.  
Maya Angelou

### **Chaplaincy Staff**

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Catholic Mass:  
Thursday at 12 noon and Saturday at 4 pm in the chapel, 3M, room 3201

Jummah Prayer:  
Friday at 12:15 in the chapel, 3M, room 3201