



Children's National®

# Holy Days, Celebrations, and Observances of September 2018

## Chaplaincy Services

### *Holy Days With No Fixed Date*

**Miwok Acorn Festival** The Native American Miwok (also Miwuk, Mi-Wuk, or Me-Wuk) people have lived in Northern California for thousands of years, in diverse tribes who were the first to make their homes in what is now Marin County, Sonoma County, the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, and the Sacramento Valley. In the land of towering oaks, acorns were a main source of food, and in the late September of every year, families from all around would gather for the annual acorn harvest, for four nights of prayer, song, and dance ending with a feast. The traditions today also include games and storytelling.

Acorns are high in nutritional value, once the tannins have been leached away with water. Acorn stew, griddle cakes, and bread, were and still are some of the most popular dishes made with this plentiful nut. Also a featured food at such celebrations, frybread is a fried or deep-fried bread that is eaten on its own, with honey, jam, or powdered sugar, or made into tacos.

*Photo: a Miwok dwelling and grinding rock: wanderwisdom.com*



### *Holy Days With Fixed Date*

**September 1** *The Liturgical year for the Orthodox Christian Church begins*

**September 3** **Krishna Janmashtami** *Hindu* The Krishna Janmashtami festival marks the birth of Krishna, one of the most popular Gods in the Hindu pantheon.

Krishna is perceived by most Hindus to be an avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu, who is regarded as the highest avatar. It is believed that all other deities are manifestations of him. Krishna is considered to be a warrior, hero, teacher and philosopher by Hindus.

Krishna's birthday is celebrated eight days after Raksha Bandhan in the month of Sravana and celebrations are spread over two days.



For the 48 hour period Hindus are likely to forego sleep and instead sing bhajans, which are traditional Hindu songs. It is believed that Krishna was born at midnight and it is at this time that the true festivities commence. Food is prepared from milk and curds said to have been favoured by Krishna. Some Hindus choose to fast for the first day of Krishna Janmashtami, choosing only to eat after the midnight celebrations.

Dances and songs are used to venerate and remember this supreme God. Plays are also carried out re-enacting scenes from Krishna's early life. In Temples images of Krishna are bathed and placed in cradles, whilst the shankh (conch shell) is played and bells are rung. Holy mantras are also chanted to venerate Krishna.

Given the significance of Krishna in the Hindu pantheon, Krishna Janmashtami is celebrated with great importance and consideration.

*September 8 Nativity of the Virgin Catholic and Orthodox Christian* The Church has celebrated Mary's birth since at least the sixth century. A September birth was chosen because the Eastern Church begins its Church year with September. The September 8 date helped determine the date for the feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8.

Scripture does not give an account of Mary's birth. However, the apocryphal Protoevangelium of James fills in the gap. This work has no historical value, but it does reflect the development of Christian piety. According to this account, Anna and Joachim are infertile but pray for a child. They receive the promise of a child who will advance God's plan of salvation for the world. Such a story, like many biblical counterparts, stresses the special presence of God in Mary's life from the beginning.



Saint Augustine connects Mary's birth with Jesus' saving work. He tells the earth to rejoice and shine forth in the light of her birth. "She is the flower of the field from whom bloomed the precious lily of the valley. Through her birth the nature inherited from our first parents is changed." The opening prayer at Mass speaks of the birth of Mary's Son as the dawn of our salvation, and asks for an increase of peace.

*September 10/11 Rosh Hashanah Jewish* Rosh Hashana, (Hebrew: "Beginning of the Year"), Hashana also spelled Hashanah or Ha-shanah, also called Day of Judgment or Day of Remembrance, a major Jewish observance now accepted as inaugurating the religious New Year on Tishri 1 (September or October). Because the New Year ushers in a 10-day period of self-examination and penitence, Rosh Hashana is also called the annual Day of Judgment; during this period each Jew reviews his relationship with God, the Supreme Judge. A distinctive feature of the liturgy is the blowing of the ram's horn (shofar) as prescribed in Numbers 29:1; the notes of the shofar call the Jewish people to a spiritual awakening associated with the revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai. During the Additional Service in the synagogue, the shofar is sounded after the recital of each of three groups of prayers.



Rosh Hashana is also known as the Day of Remembrance, for on this day Jews commemorate the creation of the world, and the Jewish nation recalls its responsibilities as God's chosen people.

On the first night of Rosh Hashana a New Year's custom dictates that delicacies be prepared as omens of good luck. On the following night bread and fruit, dipped in honey, are customarily eaten, and a special blessing is recited.

Rosh Hashana is the only festival observed for two days in Israel. Appropriate greeting is L'Shana Tova - "For a good year."

*September 13 Ganesh Chaturthi Hindu* One of the most anticipated and lively festivals in India, Sri Ganesha Chaturthi is dedicated to the beloved elephant-headed god, Ganesha. Worshipped throughout the world wherever large Indian populations are found, the fervent devotion and colorful celebrations which attend this festival reveal just how vital Ganesha is to the spiritual heartbeat of India.

Even though each Hindu deity represents only a few aspects of the one Lord, devotees in India naturally tend to hold dearest one form more than another, for instance maybe Shiva more than Krishna, or Rama more than Kali, etc. However, all easily love and worship Lord Ganesha. He is said to be the remover of obstacles and a bringer of good fortune. Add to this His plump belly and cheerful nature, and it's no wonder that everyone adores Him! Therefore, before any worship is offered, or beginning any undertaking whatsoever, Ganesha is propitiated. This is why His image is found in all temples and on all altars.

As with all of the Hindu deities, the symbolism of Ganesha is multi-layered and profound. He represents Pranava, the seed syllable OM. Just as Ganesha comes first before the other gods, OM comes at the beginning of all other mantras. The symbol for OM even resembles an elephant head! OM represents the Nada, the original substratum of Creation, from which all else arises. That substratum is identical to our essential nature, the Self. Usually depicted riding a mouse (the ego), Ganesha represents the Self in its complete conquest over egoism. He is also depicted holding an ankusha (goad), which represents His Lordship over the entire world.

There is a symbolic story that tells of how Ganesha came by His elephant head, and received the honour of being worshipped before all of the other gods. (read the story: <https://www.amritapuri.org/3714/ganesha.aum>) Traditionally held to be Ganesha's birthday, the Chaturthi day itself falls on the 4th day of the bright fortnight of Bhadrapada (August-September). Following is a week of pujas, bhajans and cultural programs. A clay idol of Ganesha is made and worshipped on all of the festival days with prayers and devotional songs. The festivities culminate with the Ganesha Visarjan, where the idol is carried in a procession to the sea, river, or other large body of water, to be ceremonially immersed. The symbolism of this immersion ceremony reveals that at the heart of worship of different deities there remains the profound understanding that all forms are temporary, having both their origin and final destination in the formless Absolute.



*September 14 Elevation of the Cross Orthodox Christian* The Elevation of the Holy Cross is one of the Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church, celebrated on September 14. This feast is also referred to as the Exaltation of the Cross. This is also a popular name day for Stavroula/Stavros (from "stavros" meaning cross).

This feast commemorates two events:



The finding of the Cross by the Empress Helen (the mother of St. Constantine the Great) on Golgotha in 326 CE, the place where Christ was crucified. On the spot where the Cross was discovered, St. Helen had found a hitherto unknown flower of rare beauty and fragrance, which has been named "Vasiliko," or Basil, meaning the flower of royalty. Note that the word "Vasiliko" means "of the King," since the word "Basileus" in Greek means "King"; so, the plant Vasiliko, Basil, is tied to the Precious Cross of the King of Glory, our Lord Jesus Christ. Underneath the Basil, the Cross of Christ was found, but with it were the other two crosses, those used to crucify the two thieves on either side of Christ. The sign with the inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews", also lay among the three crosses. In order to determine which one was the true cross, a sick woman was told to kiss each of the three crosses. The woman kissed the first cross with no result. She kissed the second cross and again nothing happened. However, when the ailing woman kissed the True Cross, she was immediately made well. It so happened that a funeral procession was passing that way, and so the body of the dead man was placed on each of the crosses, and when it was placed on the True Cross, the dead man came to life — thus the name the "Life-Giving" Cross, which gives life not only to that man, but to each person who believes in the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and His all-glorious three day Resurrection.

When the true Cross was identified, it was lifted on high for all the people to see, who then continually sang Kyrie eleison, a practice which is still enacted at current celebrations of this feast.

The recovery of the Cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified from the Persians. The Persians had captured the True Cross as a prize of war when they sacked Jerusalem in 614 CE. It was recovered by the forces of the Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire) in 627 CE, when Emperor Heraclius decisively defeated the Sassanid Persians at The Battle of Nineveh, surrounding their capital Ctesiphon, recovering the True Cross, and breaking the power of the Sassanid dynasty. The Elevation took place on March 21, 630 CE, when Emperor Heraclius entered Jerusalem amidst great rejoicing, and together with Patriarch Zacharios (609-632), transferred the Cross of Christ with great solemnity into the temple of the Resurrection, joyously held up for veneration by the Christian faithful.

This is one of the two feast days which is held as a strict fast.

*Photo: antiochianarch.org.au*

*September 14 Paryushana Parva Jain* Forgiveness plays a central role in many world religions, but for Jains, it's the focus of the most important festival of the year. This spiritually intense period is known as the festival of Paryushan Parva, or Paryushana. For eight or 10 days (Swetambar Jains observe Paryushana for eight days; Digambar Jains observe for 10), adherents fast, study sacred texts and make a renewal of faith. A vital element of this festival is the asking of forgiveness—from other persons, animals and any other form of life, whether the offense is known or not. This ritual may be referred to as the rite of universal friendship.

Jains ask forgiveness with the words "Micchami Dukkadam," or "Uttam Kshama," which conveys the meaning: "If I have cause you offense in any way, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought or deed, then I seek your forgiveness."

Jainism incorporates an especially deep concern and respect for all living beings, from animals and insects, to plants and root vegetables (Jain monks uphold this value to the highest level). Though known by several different names, Paryushan Parva unites Jains through 10 key virtues: kshama (forgiveness); mardav (humility); arjav(straightforwardness); sauch (contentedness); satya(truth); samyam (control over senses); tappa(austerity); tyaga (renunciation); akinchan (lack of attachment); brahmacharya (celibacy).

Together, the 10 virtues represent the ideal characteristics of the soul; by achieving the supreme virtues, the soul has a chance at salvation. Jains hold that only through these virtues may people realize the sublime trio: "the True, the Good and the Beautiful."

Paryushan Parva means daily fasting, inner reflection and confession. In India, monks and nuns take up residence in Jain centers during this period, providing guidance to the laity; the custom is now practiced in the United States, too. Each evening of Paryushan, the laity gather for prayer, meditation and readings from holy texts. During the eight-day festival for Svetambar Jains, the Kalpa Sutra is recited, which includes a portion on the birth of Mahavira, the final Tirthankara, or spiritual exemplar. Some Svetambar Jains recite the Antagada Sutra, which describes the lives of men and women who attained moksha, or soul liberation, during the era of Mahavira. In many communities, a procession is made to the main temple during Paryushana.

The end of Paryushan brings the grand day when forgiveness is requested from all living beings, and Jains forgive one another in full. It's believed that all negative karmic matter attached to the soul is overpowered when total forgiveness is asked, resulting in renewal and self-purification.



*September 18 - 19 Yom Kippur Jewish The Lord said to Moses, "The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. Do no work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the LORD your God." Leviticus 23:26-28*

Yom Kippur, the most sacred and solemn day of the Jewish year, brings the Days of Repentance to a close. On Yom Kippur, God makes the final decision on what the next year will be like for each person. The Book of Life is closed and sealed, and those who have properly repented for their sins will be granted a happy New Year.

The special day is marked by Jews in several ways: They abstain from food or drink for 25 hours, They do not wear perfume, They don't have sex, They don't wash, They don't wear leather shoes.

The most important part of Yom Kippur is the time spent in the synagogue. Even Jews who are not particularly religious will want to attend synagogue on Yom Kippur, the only day of the year with five services. The first service, in the evening, begins with the Kol Nidre prayer. Kol Nidre's words and music have a transforming effect on every Jew—it's probably the most powerful single item in the Jewish liturgy. The actual words of the prayer are very pedestrian when written down - it's like something a lawyer might have drafted asking God to render null and void any promises that a person might make and then break in the year to come - but when sung by a cantor it shakes the soul.

To emphasize the special nature of the service the men in the synagogue will put on their prayer shawls, which are not normally used in an evening service.

Another element in the liturgy for Yom Kippur is the confession of sins (vidui). Sins are confessed aloud by the congregation and in the plural.

The fifth service is "Neilah", and brings the day to a close as God's judgement is finally sealed. The service beseeches God to hear the prayers of the community. For this service the whole congregation stands throughout, as the doors of the Ark are open. At the end of the service the shofar is blown for the final time. An appropriate greeting is: G'mar Hatimah Tovah - "May you be sealed for a good year."



*September 21 Ashura Islam* The day of Ashura is marked by Muslims as a whole. It falls on the 10th of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is marked by Muslims with a voluntary day of fasting which commemorates the day Noah left the Ark, and the day that Moses was saved from the Egyptians by God. An appropriate greeting might simply be “blessed Ashura.”

*September 22 Mabon Wicca/Pagan* Mabon is a minor Sabbat in Wicca, the second of the three harvest festivals (the first is Lughnasadh, the third is Samhain). At Mabon, day and night are of equal length—but this is the point on the Wheel of the Year at which the darkness overtakes the light, and night becomes longer than day. It is what we call the dark half of the year.

It is a feast of thanks-giving, a celebration of the Earth’s bounty. And as with all Wiccan Sabbats, the cycles of the seasons mirror the cycles of our lives. At Mabon, it’s a time to reflect and wrap things up.

Mabon was not an ancient holiday, contrary to popular belief. Most ancient Pagans did not mark the equinoxes at all. But the spirit of the season—the harvest festival—is indeed an ancient and world-wide concept. Of course, the harvest season differs in timing from region to region, but celebrating the earth’s bounty and the fruits of one’s labor has long been a part of just about every culture. It is essentially the Wiccan Thanksgiving celebration.

Being a harvest festival, Mabon celebrations should reflect a spirit of joy and an attitude of gratitude. If you have friends who are Wiccan or who identify as Pagan, or who are at least open to

Pagan celebrations, invite them—for this more than any other time of year is meant to be a communal celebration. Hold a ritual and make offerings to your Gods, household spirits, the Earth, etc. to show your thankfulness—give back a part of the harvest (or some things you’ve picked up at the harvest markets) as a sacrifice to show your gratitude. Then make a feast part of your ritual.

If you are celebrating alone, you may wish to go somewhere like the forest or the fertile fields to hold your celebration. Meditate on the abundance and beauty of the earth, how it provides all of our needs, and be thankful.



*September 24 Sukkot Jewish* Sukkot, a Hebrew word meaning “booths” or “huts,” refers to the annual Jewish festival of giving thanks for a bountiful fall harvest and commemorates the 40 years of Jewish wandering in the desert after the giving of the Torah atop Mt. Sinai. Sukkot begins five days after Yom Kippur. It is observed for seven days by Israelis and many Reform Jews, and for eight days by other Jews living outside Israel.

Like many societies, the ancient Hebrews had a variety of agricultural festivals. Sukkot likely has its roots in one of these ceremonial expressions of thanks to God for a good crop. By biblical times, Sukkot had evolved into a celebration of the summer fruit harvest: “At the end of the year, when you gather in your produce from the fields” (Exodus 23:16).

Initially, the holiday that became Sukkot had no fixed date and was observed whenever the harvest had been completed, depending on climatic conditions. By Torah times, however, the Book of Leviticus (23:24) declared: “On the fifteen day of the seventh month, there shall be a Feast of Tabernacles to God for seven days.” The date, then was standardized.

Sukkot later became one of the three Jewish Pilgrimage Festivals (Shalosh R’galim). As on Passover and Shavuot, the people would bring a portion of their harvest’s first fruits to the Temple in Jerusalem. There, it would be offered as a sacrifice to God by the High Priest. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., Sukkot became a synagogue and home celebration, marked by unique rituals and symbols. As was the case with other agricultural celebrations, the holiday also is invested with strong historical significance.

Just as Passover is tied to the Exodus from Egypt and Shavuot is associated with the giving of the Torah, Sukkot has come to reflect the experience of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness. The 40 years of wandering in the desert prior to entering the Land of Israel is captured, symbolically, in the frail sukkah.

The Book of Leviticus (23:42–43) portrays God as commanding: “You shall dwell in booths for seven days...that your generations may know that I made the Children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.” This passage is the biblical basis for building a sukkah.

There are two additional symbols associated with Sukkot that are historically based—the lulav and the etrog. Lulav is a Hebrew word meaning “palm branch” and refers to a unique ceremonial object associated with Sukkot. Lulav also is a generic term that describes a three-sectioned holder with a single palm branch in the center, two willow branches on the left, and three myrtle branches on the right. Etrog is a Hebrew word meaning “citron,” and refers to the special lemon-like fruit used together with the lulav in the Sukkot ritual.

As part of the biblical celebration of Sukkot, Leviticus 23:40 commands: “On the first day, you shall take the fruit of a goodly tree [literally etrog], palm branches, myrtle boughs, and willows, and rejoice before Adonai. With this passage, we know that the use of the lulav and etrog originated in biblical times. Over time, the combination of citron, palm, myrtle, and willow also became known as the arbaah minim (four species).

In Israel, Sukkot marks the beginning of the rainy season, which lasts until Passover.

An appropriate for Sukkot is Chag Sameach! or simply, happy Sukkot.



*September 27 Meskel Ethiopian Christian* Today, Ethiopian Orthodox and Eritrean Orthodox Christians celebrate Meskel, a colorful, grand and rich festival recalling that ancient discovery of parts of the true Cross. On Meskel, the people of Ethiopia attend religious services, gather with family and feast together.

Ethiopians remember a traditional Christian story during Meskel and on Meskel eve: the story of St. Helena instructing the people of Jerusalem to bring wood for a bonfire, and, after adding incense, the bonfire’s smoke rising high into the sky and returning to the ground to touch the precise spot where the true Cross was located. It’s believed that a part of the true Cross was brought to Ethiopia, where it lies at the mountain of Amba Geshen. Ethiopian legend has it that when one stands too close to the true Cross, he is made naked by its strong light; in a preventative measure, the Cross was buried on the sacred mountain. The monastery of Gishen Mariam houses a volume that records the ancient story of the true Cross and how it was obtained.



The Meskel festival traces its roots back 1,600 years. Colorful processions begin in the early evening of Meskel eve; firewood is gathered by community members, and the bonfire site is sprinkled with fresh yellow daisies. Bonfires burn the night through, and when the flames at last begin to smolder, leftover ash is used to mark the foreheads of the faithful, in an act similar to that of Ash Wednesday.

Ethiopia is the only country in the world that celebrates the finding of the cross on a national level. Ethiopia recently petitioned—and succeeded, in December of 2013—in requesting UNESCO to register the Meskel events in Addis Ababa as a cultural heritage experience, for its “ancient nature ... color and significance ... and the attraction it has for a growing number of tourists as well as the immense participation of the society.”

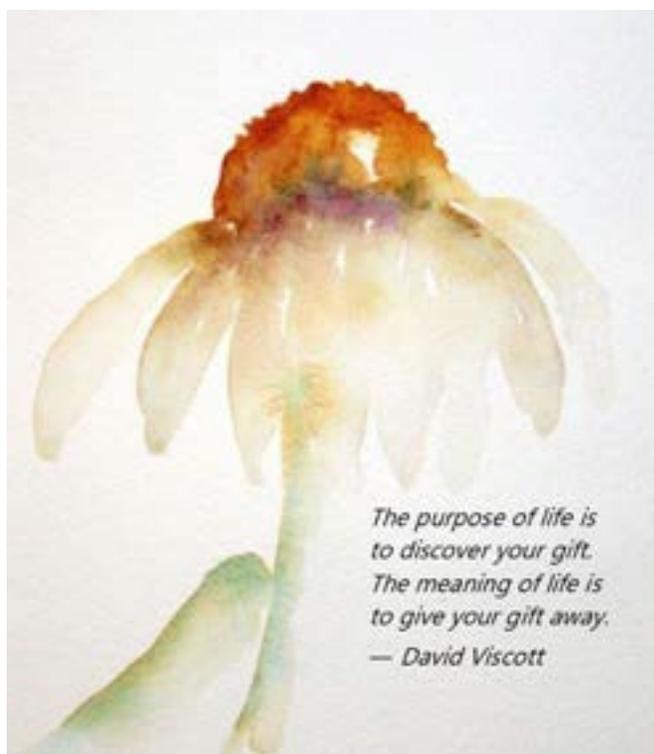
Ethiopian honey wine, exotic spices and spicy hot peppers complement plates mounded with food, as family-honored recipes fill the table. In community settings, dozens of women gather to prepare food for hungry churchgoers, humming and singing traditional songs while they work. Homemade cheese, tomatoes and lentils are served with injera flatbread. Following food, the time-honored Ethiopian coffee ceremony commences.

Sources for this newsletter: [saturncafe.com](http://saturncafe.com), [britannica.com](http://britannica.com), [wanderwisdom.com](http://wanderwisdom.com), [amritapuri.org](http://amritapuri.org), [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk), [franciscanmedia.org](http://franciscanmedia.org), [readthespirit.com](http://readthespirit.com), [orthodoxwiki.org](http://orthodoxwiki.org), [islamicity.org](http://islamicity.org), [exemplore.com](http://exemplore.com), [reformjudaism.org](http://reformjudaism.org). All pictures are from the subscription service Shutterstock unless otherwise noted.

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Catholic Mass is held Thursday at noon and Saturday at 4 pm in the Main Chapel, third floor Main, room 3201

Jumma Prayer is held Friday at 12:15 pm in the Main Chapel, third floor Main, room 3201