



Children's National™

Holy Days of July and August 2017
Celebrations, Observances, and Information
Religious, Spiritual, and Cultural Occasions

Chaplaincy Services

HOLY DAYS WITH NO FIXED DATE

Apache Girls Sunrise Ceremony The Apache Sunrise Ceremony or *na'ii'ees* is an arduous communal four-day ceremony that Apache girls of the past and present experience soon after their first menstruation. Through numerous sacred ceremonies, dances, songs, and enactments, the girls become imbued with the physical and spiritual power of White Painted Woman, and embrace their role as women of the Apache nation.

For most of the four days and nights, to songs and prayers, they dance, as well as run toward the four directions. During this time, they also participate in and conduct sacred rituals, receiving and giving both gifts and blessings, and experiencing their own capacity to heal.

The first woman, White Painted Woman (also known as *Esdzanadehe*, and Changing Woman) survives the great Flood in an abalone shell, then wanders the land as the waters recede. Atop a mountain, she is impregnated by the sun, and gives birth of a son, Killer of Enemies. Soon afterwards, she is impregnated by the Rain, and gives birth to Son of Water.

However, the world the People live in is not safe until White Painted Woman's sons kill the Owl Man Giant who has been terrorizing the tribe. When they return from their victory, bringing the meat they have hunted, White Painted Woman expresses a cry of triumph and delight, which later will be echoed by the godmother at the Sunrise Ceremony. She then is guided by spirits to establish a puberty rite to be given for all daughter born to her people, and to instruct the women of the tribe in the ritual, and the rites of womanhood.

When she becomes old, White Painted Woman walks east toward the sun until she meets her younger self, merges with it, and becomes young again. Thus repeatedly, she is born again and again, from generation to generation.

The Sunrise Ceremony serves many purposes - personally, spiritually and communally - and is often one of the most memorable and significant experiences of Apache females today, just as it was for Apache women in the past.

First, by re-enacting the Creation myth, and personifying White Painted Woman, the girl connects deeply to her spiritual

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Catholic Mass: Thursday at 12:00 pm
(Main Chapel, room 3201, 3rd floor)
Saturday at 4:00 pm (Main Chapel, room 3201, 3rd floor)

Friday: Jumma Prayer at 12:30 pm
R-114/ floor 3.5 Main

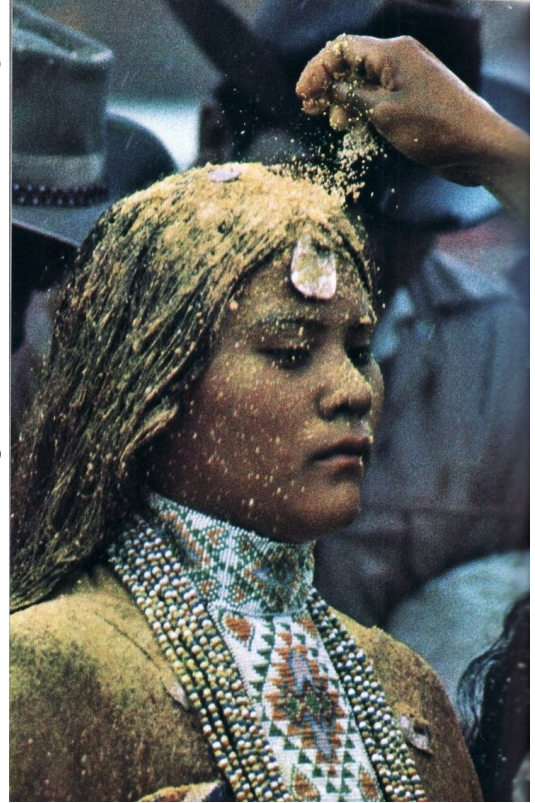
heritage, which she experiences, often for the first time, as the core of her self. In her connection to Changing Woman/ White Painted Woman, she gains command over her weaknesses and the dark forces of her nature, and knows her own spiritual power, sacredness and her goodness. She also may discover her own ability to heal. Second, she learns about what it means to become a woman, first through attunement to the physical manifestations of womanhood such as as menstruation (and learning about sexuality), as well as the development of physical strength and endurance. The rigorous physical training she must go through in order to survive four days of dancing and running is considerable, and surviving and triumphing during the "sacred ordeal" strengthens her both physically and emotionally. Most Apache women who have experienced the Sunrise Ceremony say afterwards that it significantly increased their self-esteem and confidence. When it ended, they no longer felt themselves to be a child; they truly experienced themselves as "becoming woman."

Third, the Apache girl entering womanhood experiences the interpersonal and communal manifestations of womanhood in her culture - the necessity to work hard, to meet the needs and demands of others, to exercise her power for others' benefit, and to present herself to the world, even when suffering or exhausted, with dignity and a pleasant disposition. Her temperament during the ceremony is believed to be the primary indicator of her temperament throughout her future life.

Not only does she give to the community - food, gifts, healings, blessings, but she also joyfully receives from the community blessings, acceptance and love. Throughout the ceremony, she receives prayers and heartfelt wishes for prosperity, wellbeing, fruitfulness, a long life, and a healthy old age.

Finally, the Sunrise ceremony serves the community as well as the girls entering womanhood. It brings extended families and tribes together, strengthening clan obligations, reciprocity and emotional bonds, and deepening the Apache's connection to his or her own spiritual heritage. Photo: *TraditionalNativeHealing.com*

(read more at: <http://www.webwinds.com/yupanqui/apachesunrise.htm>)



Hopi Niman Katchina Ceremony *Niman* takes place shortly after Summer Solstice as the Hopi move from *Katsina* season to Non-*Katsina* season. Also called "The Going Home of the *Katsina*," *Niman* is a ceremony to say goodbye to the winter and spring *Katsinam*. During this beautiful last ceremony of the *Katsina* season, *Katsinam* bring the first harvest of the season to the villagers as well as presents for the children.

Niman is a time for Hopi families to reunite with family members who live away from the villages and who are returning to take part in the ceremonies. This 16-day festival includes feasting and a ceremonial performance by masked dancers representing the *Katsinam* who are now leaving the village to return to the spirit world in the San Francisco Peaks for the rest of the year. Dancers carry musical instruments, the first green cornstalks of the harvest, and sacred meal, which is sprinkled on the *Katsinam* as a thank you for the summer harvest to come.

Priests carry a water bowl and a ceremonial pipe. Smoke from the pipe symbolizes clouds, and water from the bowl is flung with a feather, symbolizing the rain that will nourish the crops.

During this final *Katsina* ceremony, women who have been married during the year are presented to the people of the Pueblo and given their robes by their husbands.

There are over 400 *Katsinam* in Hopi culture, representing the many different elements of the natural world. *Katsina* dolls are given to Hopi children to teach them about the specific deities and the lessons they teach during their visits to the village.

Eagle Dance The Native American Eagle dance performed by Indian 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.

Different Indian tribes perform the Eagle dance during a sacred ceremony. 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. The dance can be performed during any season, but it is normally performed in the early part of the Spring season.

Photo: blankinship-web.com



Hopi Flute Ceremony 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 bull-roarers. 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*



Hope Snake Ceremony The most widely publicized of Hopi rituals was the Snake Dance, held annually in late August, during which the performers dance with live snakes in their mouths. The dance is thought to have originated as a water ceremony because snakes were the traditional guardians of springs. Today, it is primarily a rain ceremony and to honor Hopi ancestors. The tribe regards snakes as their "brothers" and rely on them to carry their prayers for rain to the gods and spirits of their ancestors.

The Snake Dance requires two weeks of ritual preparation, during which time the snakes are gathered and watched over by children until time for the dance. On the last day of the 16-day celebration, the dance is performed. By percentage of the local snake population most are rattlesnakes, but all are handled freely.

Before the dance begins the participants take an emetic (probably a sedative herb) which is not an anti-venom and then dance with the snakes in their mouths. There is usually an Antelope Priest in attendance who helps with the dance, sometimes stroking the snakes with a feather or supporting their weight. The dance includes swaying, rattles, a guttural chant and circling of the plaza with snakes. After the dance the snakes are released in the four directions to carry the prayers of the dancers. Although part of the Snake Dance is performed for the tribe, this is only a portion of a lengthy ceremony, most of which is conducted privately in kivas.

Though the dance was once open to the public, it is now open to only tribal members due to illegal photography and a lack of respect for the traditions and ceremonial practices of the Hopi.

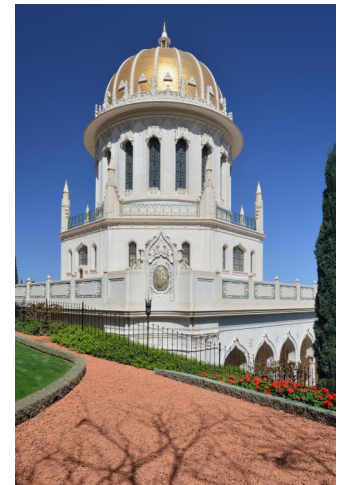
HOLY DAYS WITH FIXED DATE

July 9 Martyrdom of the Bab Baha'i On July 9, Baha'is around the world commemorate the date in 1850 that the Bab - one of two main figures in the founding of their Faith - was executed by a firing squad in Iran, then called Persia.

The Bab, whose name means "gate" in Arabic, had declared in 1844 that He was a messenger of God sent to prepare the way for the long-awaited promised one of all religions who would come to establish an age of universal peace. In 1863 Baha'u'llah announced publicly that He was that promised one.

The Bab attracted tens of thousands of followers, and the unease and commotion created by His message led the authorities to put him to death on a charge of heresy. He and a disciple who begged to share His martyrdom were executed by a firing squad of 750 soldiers in a public square in Tabriz.

The remains of the Bab are now entombed in Haifa, Israel, in a beautiful shrine on Mount Carmel.



July 9 Asalha Puja Day Buddhist One of the most important festivals of the *Thervada* Buddhists, the *Asalha Puja Day* or the *Dhamma Day* celebrates the first teaching of the Buddha. Elaborating on this, the Buddha gained enlightenment on the full moon of *Vesakha* - the sixth month. After this, He was not too keen to teach, but on the insistence of His friends who had spent several years journeying the Gangetic plains with Him, He decided to go to Benaras. From Gaya, the distance to Benaras where His friends were staying was around 150 miles and it took Him around two months to reach there. On reaching Benaras, He delivered His first discourse which consisted of the essence, of the all future teachings. At the conclusion of His discourse, one of His five friends *Kondañña*, exclaimed his understanding of the Truths just preached and urged the Buddha to accept him as a disciple. This was followed by an extremely simple ordination process that gave birth to the the order of monks. The preaching delivered by the Buddha is quiet often referred to as "setting into motion the wheel of dhamma," It comprises the four noble truths - life means suffering (*dukka*); origin of suffering is attachment (*tanha*); cessation of suffering is attainable and finally, the way to cessation is via the eightfold path. Throughout the world, whatever school of thought a Buddhist might belong to, the central doctrine of Buddhism for him still remains the four noble truths.

The festival is celebrated on the full moon day of the 8th lunar month, *Asalha*, of the old Indian calendar. *Asalha* is also the month of the starting of the monsoon. During this period the Buddha and His monks and nuns would stop their wanderings. Even today, monasteries keep a three month long 'rains retreat' which commences on the *Dhamma* day and the concludes on *Pavarana*. For all those who desire to join the order but just cannot renounce their present life, ordination as short term monks is also possible in this period.

July 13 (15) Ulambana/Obon Buddhist/Shinto *Ullambana* is a transliteration of the Sanskrit word meaning "deliverance from suffering," and specifically refers to the salvation of anguished souls in Hell. This concept originates from the story of "*Mulien Saving His Mother from Hades*."

In this Buddhist legend, the protagonist *Mulien* learns that his mother's ghost is being tortured in Hades by starvation and hanging and thus embarks on a grueling journey to the underworld bringing food to ease her hunger. When he finally succeeds in finding his mother, *Mulien* offers the food to her but it erupts into flames before she is able to swallow. Despairing, he begs *Sakymuni* to show him a way to bring salvation to his mother, and is answered by the Buddha, who tells him, "The past sins of your mother are too great for you alone to save her. You must thus find ten monks and pray together on the 15th day of the seventh moon." Heeding *Sakymuni's* instructions, *Mulien* begins a ritual Buddhist fast and chants the sutras until finally he succeeds in releasing his mother from hell. This legend has been passed down through the ages and is today is celebrated on Chung Yuan by Buddhists around the world, holding ceremonies of charity so that the outcast and famished ghosts may cross over to salvation. Thus, the 15th day of the seventh moon has become an occasion for teaching the virtues of filial piety.

Obon or Bon is the Japanese festival celebrated to honor the dead and spirits of their ancestors. It is the equivalent of the Western or Christian's All Soul's Day except that Obon is a 3 day celebration and is marked by numerous religious and festive activities. Based on tradition, the festivity falls on the 13th to 15th day of the lunar calendar (August 13-15) but other regions, particularly those using the modern Gregorian calendar like Tokyo, will observe Obon on July 13-15. Though it's not an official national holiday, many companies and businesses are closed allowing their employees to take a leave, be with their family and celebrate.

The celebrations held today are noticeably getting more secular focusing much more on the festive activities. But Obon has its deep cultural and religious roots. Obon is primarily a Buddhist celebration. The Japanese believe on the interconnection and interdependence of almost everything on earth from humans, nature, the elements and including the spirits. They give honor and express their gratitude not only to their immediate relatives who have recently passed away but also to their earliest human ancestors who lived decades, centuries and millenniums ago.

The Japanese believe that at the start of Obon, the spirits of their relatives and ancestors come back to the physical world and visit them. Aside from offering prayers and holding memorial services at Buddhist temples, individual houses and establishments hang lanterns believing that their lights will guide the spirits. And on the last night of Obon, people send off the spirits back to their world with the help of floating or paper lanterns, candles, bon fires, etc.

Major activities during the festivity

The highlight of the Obon festival is the dance parade or carnival called Bon Odori. In Bon Odori, the participants dance and sing in a circle around a raised platform called a yagura. Those in the parade usually dance in unison but the rest of the crowd is welcome to have their own steps, let loose and simply celebrate. In the festival's long history, the different Japanese regions have come up with their own variation of the Bon Odori dance including its accompanying music.

Bon Odori has its Buddhist story. It is said that a disciple of Buddha (Mokuren or Maha Maudgalyayana) used his powers to peek into his deceased mother's condition. Upon learning that his mother's spirit was suffering in the Realm of Hungry Ghosts, he asked Buddha that her mother be released from that realm. Buddha instructed his disciple to make food offerings to the sangha or monks who came from their summer retreat. Mokuren did so and out of joy on his mother's eventual release, the disciple danced and celebrated resulting to the tradition of Bon Odori.

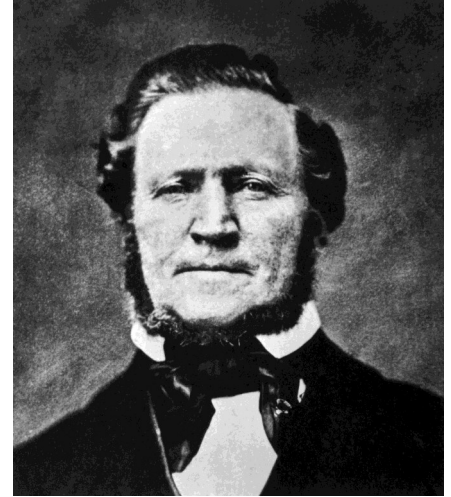


July 23 Khordal Sal Zoroastrian The birthday of Zoroaster: Khordad Sal is celebrated as the birthday of Zoroaster. This is known as the 'Greater *Noruz*' and happens six days after *Noruz*.

The chosen date is symbolic since the actual date of the Prophet's birth cannot be identified accurately. This festival is considered one of the most important in the Zoroastrian calendar. Zoroastrians gather in Fire temples for prayers and then celebrate with feasting.

July 24 Pioneer Day Latter Day Saints This day commemorates the entry of Brigham Young and the first group of Mormon pioneers into Utah's Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847. The Mormon pioneers viewed their arrival as the founding of a Mormon homeland, hence Pioneer Day. The Mormons, as they were commonly known, left their settlement in Nauvoo, Illinois, and journeyed west seeking refuge from religious persecution. The final impetus for their trek was the murder of founder and prophet Joseph Smith on June 27, 1844.

Determined to settle in an isolated region, the pioneers made their way across the plains and over the Rocky Mountains to Utah. They lost many of their party to disease during the winter months. By the time that they reached Utah, the desolate valley was a welcome sight. Potatoes and turnips were soon planted, and a dam was built. With solemn ceremonies, the settlers consecrated the two-square-mile city, and sent back word that the "promised land" was found. By the end of 1847, nearly 2000 Mormons settled in the Salt Lake Valley. The first Pioneer Day was celebrated in 1849 with a parade, band music and speeches. In modern times July 24 is celebrated annually as Pioneer Day, a state holiday, in Utah.



August 1 Lammas Lammas, also called Lughnasadh (pronounced loo'nass'ah), comes at the beginning of August. It is one of the Pagan festivals of Celtic origin which split the year into four.



Celts held the festival of the Irish god Lugh at this time and later, the Anglo-Saxons marked the festival of hlaefmass - loaf mass or Lammas - at this time.

For these agricultural communities this was the first day of the harvest, when the fields would be glowing with corn and reaping would begin. The harvest period would continue until Samhain when the last stores for the winter months would be put away.

Although farming is not an important part of modern life, Lughnasadh is still seen as a harvest festival by Pagans and symbols connected with the reaping of corn predominate in its rites

Photo: the goddessandthe greenman.com

August 1 Tish'a B'av Jewish *Tisha B'Av*, also known as the Jewish Fast of Av, is a period of fasting, lamentation and prayer to remember the destruction of the First and Second Temples of Jerusalem. The Jewish people still continued the fast day even after they rebuilt the First Temple after the Babylonians destroyed it in 586 BCE. The Romans destroyed the Second Temple by burning it in 70 CE and this marked the start of a long exile period for Jewish people. These are two of five sad events or calamities that occurred on the ninth day of the month of Av. The other three were when:

Ten of the 12 scouts sent by Moses to Canaan gave negative reports of the area, leading to the Israelites' despair.

The Romans captured the fortress city of *Beitar*, the last stronghold of the leaders of the Bar Kochba revolt, and thousands of Jewish people, including *Bar Kokhba* (or *Kochba*), were massacred in 135 CE.

The city of Jerusalem was destroyed in 136 CE.

Tisha B'Av is a sad day that observes other major disasters and tragedies that Jewish people experienced throughout history, including the expulsion of the Jewish people from England in 1290 and from Spain in 1492, as well as the mass deportation of Jewish people from the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II.

Tisha B'Av begins at sunset on the previous day and lasts for more than 24 hours. It is the culmination of a three-week period of mourning. Weddings and other parties are generally not permitted and people refrain from cutting their hair during this period. It is customary to refrain from activities such as eating meat or drinking wine (except on the Shabbat) from the first to the ninth day of Av.

August 1 Fast of the Holy Mother Orthodox Christian Jesus's mother Mary is a major figure for most of the world's 2 billion Christians who are either Catholic or Eastern Orthodox, however, Eastern Christians have a more extensive and enduring tradition of fasting throughout the Christian year. In the opening 14 days of August, Orthodox Christians look ahead to the August 15 Great Feast of the Dormition (or the "falling asleep" or death) of the Theotokos. The title Theotokos refers to Jesus's mother and is Greek for "birth-giver" or "bearer of God."

Unlike Western Christians, observant Orthodox families spend a little over half of each year living with some form of dietary limitation, described in general as fasting. The two-week fast in early August is sometimes called the Dormition Fast and bars consumption of red meat, poultry, dairy products including eggs, fish, oil and wine.



August 6 Transfiguration Orthodox Christian Transfiguration is considered a major feast, numbered among the twelve Great Feasts in Orthodoxy. In all these churches, if the feast falls on a Sunday, its liturgy is not combined with the Sunday liturgy, but completely replaces it.

The Transfiguration is the second of the "Three Feasts of the Saviour in August", the other two being the Procession of the Cross on August 1 and the Icon of Christ Not Made by Hand on August 16. The Transfiguration is preceded by a one-day Forefeast and is followed by an Afterfeast of eight days, ending the day before the Forefeast of the Dormition.

The Transfiguration of Jesus is an event reported in the New Testament in which Jesus is transfigured and becomes radiant upon a mountain. Jesus and three of his apostles go to a mountain (the Mount of Transfiguration). On the mountain, Jesus begins to shine with bright rays of light, the prophets Moses and Elijah appear next to him and he speaks with them. Jesus is then called "Son" by a voice in the sky, assumed to be God the Father, as in the Baptism of Jesus.

In Christian teachings, the Transfiguration is a pivotal moment, and the setting on the mountain is presented as the point where human nature meets God: the meeting place for the temporal and the eternal, with Jesus himself as the connecting point, acting as the bridge between heaven and earth.

August 7 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 *honour* 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-colored 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.
(continued)

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. It is a significant festival in the Hindu calendar, followed eight days later by *Janamashtami*.

August 15 *Dormition of the Theotokos (Assumption) Orthodox Christian* The feast of the Dormition or Falling-asleep of the Theotokos is celebrated on the fifteenth of August, preceded by a two-week fast. This feast, 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.

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 Tradition of the Church is that Mary 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 Orthodox Church teaches that Mary is without personal sins. In the Gospel of the feast, however, in the liturgical services and in the Dormition icon, the Church proclaims 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; and that having truly died, she was raised up by her Son as the Mother of Life and participates already in the eternal life of paradise which is prepared and promised to all who "hear the word of God and keep it" (Lk11.27–28).



August 15 *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.

The first day is called *Krishan ashtami* or *Gokul ashtami*. The second day is known as *Kaal ashtami* or more popularly *Janam ashtami*. (continued)

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 favored 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.



August 26 Paryushan Parva Jain *Paryushan* is the most important Jain religious observance of the year. For both *Shvetambars*, who observe the festival over a period of eight days, and *Digambars*, for whom *Paryushan Parva* lasts 10 days, this is a time of intensive study, reflection and purification. It takes place in the middle of the rainy season, a time when Jain monks and nuns cease travelling and stay with a community and are available to them for instruction and guidance.

Paryushan means, literally, "abiding" or "coming together". It is also a time when the laity take on vows of study and fasting with a spiritual intensity similar to temporary monasticism. *Paryushan* concludes with a time of confession and forgiveness for the transgressions of the previous year.

The most important part of *Paryushan* is daily meditation and prayer, which provides an opportunity for looking within and towards the teachings of the *Tirthankaras* for guidance. Beginning on the fourth day of *Paryushan*, it is customary for *Murtipujak Shvetambars* to read from the *Kalpa Sutra*, a scripture which recounts the life of Mahavira the 14 dreams of his mother before his birth, followed by the story of his birth, life and liberation. It also recounts the lives of other *Tirthankaras* and the rules of *Paryushan*.

The book of scripture would be carried ceremonially through the streets, water sprinkled in its path along the way, purifying the entire town. Jains often take time off from work during this period and eat a much simpler diet in addition to their normal vegetarian diet. They avoid potatoes, onions and garlic, the eating of which entails killing the entire plant.

For *Shvetambars*, the final day of *Paryushan* is *Samvatsari Pratikraman*, the annual confession. The ritual of asking forgiveness from the teacher is widened in scope to include family and friends and, finally, all living beings. The culmination of confession is receiving forgiveness from all living beings and also granting forgiveness to all. This ritual of forgiveness is sometimes called the rite of "universal friendship". The spirit of the day is contained in this verse: "I grant forgiveness to all living beings, May all living beings grant me forgiveness; My friendship is with all living beings, My enmity is totally non-existent. Let there be peace, harmony and prosperity for all".

August 31 Waqf al Arafah Islam The Day of *Arafah* is the day on which Muslim Hajj pilgrims gather on Mount *Arafah*, praying and supplicating to their Lord. Crowds of people stand on Mount *Arafah*, which is meant to remind those standing of the Day of Resurrection, when crowds of people stand waiting for judgment. Standing as a singular community encourages pilgrims to rid themselves of false pride.

The Day of *Arafah* is on the ninth day of *Dhul-Hijjah*, the last month of the Islamic year. Those who are not on the holy pilgrimage (not in *Arafah*) are highly recommended by Islamic tradition to fast.

Day of Arafat Facts

It is common Muslim belief that the Prophet Muhammad said that fasting on the day of *Arafah* forgives all the minor sins of the past year and coming year.

The Prophet Muhammad gave his last sermon standing on Mount *Arafah*. For that reason, it is visited by pilgrims during the Hajj.

Standing on top of Mount *Arafah* completes the Hajj (Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca). It is believed to be the singular most significant act Muslim pilgrims undertake.

The day of *Arafah* was declared by Prophet Muhammad as a day of celebration and feasting.

Day of Arafat Top Events and Things to Do: Buy gifts for children. "As for him who gives (gifts) and guards against evil and accepts the best, we will facilitate for him the easy end" (Quran, 92:5). According to Islamic tradition, those that spend on their children on this day are rewarded by God very generously. As a result, many Muslim parents buy toys and other gifts for their children on the day of *Arafah*.

At Mount *Arafah*, pilgrims cast stones at a pillar that represents the devil as part of Hajj. According to tradition, at least forty-nine stones need to be cast.

Although not required by Islamic tradition, many pilgrims spend the night at Mount *Arafah* and on the surrounding plains keeping vigil and praying for forgiveness.

Sources for this newsletter: webwinds.com, kachinahouse.com, oureverydaylife.com, legendsofamerica.com, bahai.org, grad.cmu.ac.th, chuadieuphap.us, bbc.co.uk, timeanddate.com, cuteocalendar.com, oac.org, indiatimes.com, wincalendar.com. All pictures are from the subscription services, Shutterstock, unless otherwise noted.

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