

2020-2021

Major Religious Holidays and Observances

JULY 2020

July 5

DHARMA DAY • Buddhist

Also known as *Asala Puja*, it commemorates the historical Buddha's first discourse following his spiritual awakening.

July 9

MARTYRDOM OF THE BÁB • Bahá'í

Observance of the anniversary of the execution by a firing squad in Tabríz, Persia, of the 30-year-old Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad, the BáB, the prophet-herald of the Bahá'í Faith.

July 13–15

ULLAMBANA (also known as Obon) • Buddhist

Ullambana, a Sanskrit term that means “hanging upside down and suffering,” honors the spirits of past ancestors and strives to relieve aching souls from suffering. It lasts about half of the month of August. Obon, the Japanese transliteration of Ullambana, is only three days and varies from region to region—July in the eastern region and August in the western region.

July 30

TISHA B'AV • Jewish

Mourning of the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem in 586 BCE and 70 CE.

July 31–August 3

EID AL-ADHA • Islamic

Commemoration of Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience of a command from God. Marks the end of the annual Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca).

AUGUST 2020

August 3

RAKSHA BANDHAN • Hindu

Also called *Rakhi*, this festival celebrates the protective relationship between brothers and their sisters.

August 12

KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI (Also known as JAYANTI) • Hindu

Celebrates Krishna's birthday, Vishnu's eighth incarnation on earth.

August 20

MUHARRAM • Islamic

The month of Muharram marks the beginning of the Islamic liturgical year. This first day, al-Hijra, remembers the migration

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of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE. It also marks the beginning of the ten-day Shī'ite Remembrance of Muharram, a period of intense grief and martyrdom of Hussein, the son of Ali and grandson of Muhammad.

August 22

GANESH CHATURTHI • Hindu

Celebrates the birthday of Ganesha, the elephant-deity.

August 29

ASHURA • Islamic

A day of fasting observed on the 10th day of the month of Muharram to celebrate Moses' exodus from Egypt. For Shi'a Muslims, it also marks the climax of the ten-day Remembrance of Muharram, which mourns the martyrdom of Hussein at the Battle of Kerbala.

SEPTEMBER 2020

September 19–20

ROSH HASHANAH • Jewish

Beginning of the Jewish New Year and first of the High Holy Days, which marks the beginning of a ten-day period of penitence and spiritual renewal.

September 28

YOM KIPPUR • Jewish

The "Day of Atonement" marks the end of the Ten Days of Penitence that begin with Rosh Hashanah.

OCTOBER 2020

October 3–9

SUKKOT • Jewish

The week-long "Feast of Booths" commemorates the 40-year wandering of the Israelites in the desert on the way to the Promised Land.

October 10

SHEMINI ATZERET • Jewish

"The Eighth (Day) of Assembly" is observed on the day immediately following Sukkot.

October 11

SIMCHAT TORAH • Jewish

"Rejoicing in the Torah" celebrates the conclusion of the public reading of the Pentateuch and its beginning anew.

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October 17–25	NAVARATRI • Hindu Nine-day festival celebrating the triumph of good over evil. It worships God in the form of the universal mother commonly referred to as Durga, Devi or Shakti, and marks the start of fall.
October 18	BIRTH OF THE BÁB • Bahá'í Bahá'í observance of the anniversary of the birth in 1819 of Siyyid, “the Báb,” the prophet-herald of the Bahá'í Faith, in Shíráz, Persia.
October 19	BIRTH OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH • Bahá'í Observance of the anniversary of the birth in 1817 of Bahá'u'lláh, prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith, in Núr, Persia.
October 20	GUR-GADDI GURU GRANTH SAHIB • Sikh Since 1708, Sikhs have accepted Sri Guru Granth Sahib as their eternal Guru that holds the spirit of all Ten Gurus of the Sikhs. They consider Guru Granth Sahib to be a spiritual guide not only for Sikhs but for all of mankind; it plays a central role in guiding the Sikhs' way of life.
October 25	DUSSEHRA/DASSERA • Hindu Anniversary of the day when Rama killed the evil demon Ravana. Also known as Durga Puja, which celebrates the goddess Durga.
October 29	MAWLID AL-NABI (Also known as MILAD AL-NABI) • Islamic (Sunni) The observance of the birthday of Islam founder Prophet Muhammad, which is celebrated in Rabi' al-awwal, the third month in the Islamic calendar. Shi'a Muslims celebrate it five days later than Sunni Muslims.
October 31	HALLOWEEN The eve of All Saints' Day.
October 31	REFORMATION DAY • Christian Commemorates the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in 1517.

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Major Religious Holidays and Observances

NOVEMBER 2020

November 1

ALL SAINTS' DAY • Western Christian

Commemorates all known and unknown Christian saints. Eastern Christianity observes it on the first Sunday after Pentecost.

November 2

ALL SOULS' DAY • Christian

Commemoration of all faithful Christians who are now dead. In Mexican tradition it is celebrated as *Día de los Muertos* between October 31 and November 2, and is an occasion to remember dead ancestors and celebrate the continuity of life.

November 3

MAWLID AL-NABI (Also known as MILAD AL-NABI) • Islamic (Shi'a)

The observance of the birthday of Islam founder Prophet Muhammad, which is celebrated in Rabi' al-awwal, the third month in the Islamic calendar. Sunni Muslims celebrate it five days earlier than Shi'a Muslims.

November 14

BANDI-CHHOR DIWAS • Sikh

A commemorative occasion having no fixed date which occurs in October or November and celebrates the release of the Sixth Guru Har Gobind Sahib from imprisonment and coincides with Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.

November 14

DIWALI • Hindu

Also called *Deepavali*, "Festival of Lights", it celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance.

November 25

DAY OF THE COVENANT • Bahá'í

Day of the Covenant is a festival observed to commemorate Bahá'u'lláh's appointment of His son, Abdu'l-Baha, as His successor.

November 29–December 24

ADVENT • Christian

Advent is a season of spiritual preparation in observance of the birth of Jesus. In Western Christianity, it starts on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. In Eastern Christianity, the season is longer and begins in the middle of November.

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November 30

GURU NANAK DEV JI'S BIRTHDAY • Sikh

A very important holiday in the Sikh faith as Guru Nanak Dev's was the First Guru of the Sikhs and the Founder of Sikhism. He was born in mid-November; the holiday is celebrated according to the lunar date.

DECEMBER 2020

December 8

BODHI DAY • Buddhist

Also known as *Rohatsu*, commemorates the day that the Buddha, Siddharta Gautama, experienced enlightenment or spiritual awakening (bodhi). Celebrated on the eighth day either of December or the 12th month of the lunar calendar.

December 11–18

CHANUKAH • Jewish

Eight-day "Festival of Lights", also known as *Hanukkah*, celebrating the rededication of the Temple to the service of God in 164 BCE. Commemorates the victory of the Maccabees over the Greek King, Antiochus, who sought to suppress freedom of worship.

December 12

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE • Christian

Celebrates the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary (by her title, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patroness of Mexico and the Americas) before Juan Diego, an indigenous convert to Roman Catholicism, on the Mexican hill of Tepeyac in 1531.

December 24

CHRISTMAS EVE • Christian

Celebration of the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus.

December 25

CHRISTMAS • Western Christian

Commemorates the birth of Jesus.

December 26 2020– January 1,
2021

KWANZAA

A seven-day celebration honoring African American heritage and its continued vitality. "Kwanzaa" means "first fruits (of the harvest)" in Swahili.

JANUARY 2021

January 5

GURU GOBIND SINGH JI'S BIRTHDAY • Sikh

Guru Gobindh Singh was the 10th Sikh guru of Nanak and founder of the Khalsa.

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January 6	EPIPHANY • Christian Known as <i>Theophany</i> in Eastern Christianity, it celebrates the manifestation of Jesus as Christ. In addition, the Western Church associates Epiphany with the journey of the Magi to the infant Jesus, and the Eastern Church with the baptism of Jesus by John.
January 6	CHRISTMAS • Armenian Orthodox Christian Armenian Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus on Epiphany, except for Armenians living in Israel, who celebrate Christmas on January 19th.
January 7	CHRISTMAS • Eastern Christian Most Orthodox churches celebrate Christmas 13 days later than other Christian churches based on their use of the Julian rather than the Gregorian version of the Western calendar.
January 14	MAKAR SANKRANTI • Hindu Seasonal celebration marking turning of the sun toward the north.
January 21	WORLD RELIGION DAY • Bahá'í Observance to proclaim the oneness of religion and the belief that world religion will unify the peoples of the earth.
January 27	HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY
January 28	TU B'SHVAT • Jewish New Year's Day for Trees, and traditionally the first of the year for tithing fruit of trees. Now a day for environmental awareness and action, such as tree planting.
January 29–31	MAHAYANA NEW YEAR • Buddhist In Mahayana countries the New Year starts on the first full moon day in January.
FEBRUARY 2021	
February 12	LUNAR NEW YEAR • Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist Also known as the Spring Festival, an important festival celebrated at the turn of the traditional lunisolar Chinese calendar.

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- February 15** **NIRVANA DAY • Buddhist**
Celebrates the day when the historical Buddha achieved Parinirvana, or complete Nirvana, upon the death of his physical body. Sometimes celebrated on February 8.
- February 16** **SHROVE TUESDAY • Western Christian**
A day of penitence as well as the last chance to feast before Lent begins. Also known as Mardi Gras, Fat Tuesday and Carnival Day as this day is observed in many ways worldwide.
- February 17** **ASH WEDNESDAY • Western Christian**
The first day of Lent for Western Christian churches, a 40-day period of spiritual preparation for Easter, not counting Sundays.
- February 25-28** **AYYÁM-I-HA OR INTERCALARY DAYS • Bahá'í**
The Ayyám-i-ha, or “Days of Ha” are devoted to spiritual preparation for the fast, celebrating, hospitality, charity and gift giving. They are celebrated the four days, five in leap year, before the last month of the Bahá'í year by inserting days into the calendar in order to maintain their solar calendar.
- February 26** **PURIM • Jewish**
The “Feast of Lots” marks the salvation of the Jews of ancient Persia from extermination.
- MARCH 2021**
- March 2– March 20** **NINETEEN-DAY FAST • Bahá'í**
Baha'is between 15 and 70 years of age do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset and set aside time for prayer and meditation.
- March 11** **MAHA SHIVARATRI • Hindu**
Also called *Shiva Ratri*, the Great Night of Shiva, is a festival in reverence of the god Shiva. The festival is celebrated at the 13th night or 14th day of the waning moon in the Hindu calendar (month of February or March of the English calendar).
- March 15** **CLEAN MONDAY • Eastern Christian**
The beginning of *Great Lent* for Eastern Christian churches, which starts 40 days before Orthodox Easter (Pascha), counting Sundays.

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March 17	ST. PATRICK'S DAY • Christian Feast day of the patron saint of Ireland. In the U.S., a secular version is celebrated by people of all faiths through appreciation of all things Irish.
March 21	NOWRÚZ • Zoroastrian A traditional ancient Iranian festival celebrating the first day of Spring and the Iranian New Year. Also celebrated as New Year's Day in Baha'i tradition (Naw-Ruz).
March 29	HOLI • Hindu A spring festival in India and Nepal dedicated to the god of pleasure, also known as the festival of colours or the festival of sharing love.
March 28	MAGHA PUJA • Buddhist Also known as Sangha Day, it commemorates the spontaneous assembly of 1,250 disciples, completely enlightened monks, in the historical Buddha's presence.
March 28	PALM SUNDAY • Christian Observed the Sunday before Easter/Pascha to commemorate the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.
March 28	KHORDAD SAL • Zoroastrian The Zoroastrian celebration of the birth of Zoroaster, the founder of the Zoroastrianism religion. The holiday is specifically celebrated in India and Iran, immediately following the Persian new year, Nowruz.
March 28–April 3	PASSOVER/PESACH • Jewish The eight-day "Feast of Unleavened Bread" celebrates Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage.
March 30	HOLLA MOHALLA • Sikh An annual event which is a martial arts parade historically coinciding with Holi, the Hindu festival of colors. Celebrations related to Holla Mohalla may be held in various locations over several weekends preceding the actual date of the holiday.

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APRIL 2021

April 1

HOLY THURSDAY • Christian

Also known as *Maundy Thursday*, it is celebrated on the Thursday before Easter commemorating the Last Supper, at which Jesus and the Apostles were together for the last time before the Crucifixion.

April 2

GOOD FRIDAY • Christian

Known as *Holy Friday* in Eastern Christianity, it commemorates the Crucifixion of Jesus on the Friday before Easter/Pascha.

April 4

EASTER • Christian

Known as *Pascha* in Eastern Christianity, it celebrates the resurrection of Jesus.

April 8

VISAKHA PUJA • Buddhist

Also known as Vesak or Buddha Day, it marks the birth, spiritual awakening and death (nirvana) of the historical Buddha. (This date may vary based on region or sect.)

April 9

YOM HASHOAH • Jewish

“Holocaust Remembrance Day” memorializes the heroic martyrdom of six million Jews who perished in the Nazi Holocaust.

April 13–May 11

RAMADAN • Islamic

Observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting to commemorate the first revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad.

April 14

VAISAKHI (also spelled Baisakhi) • Sikh

The festival which celebrates the founding of the Sikh community as the Khalsa (community of the initiated). On this day, Sikhs gather and celebrate Vaisakhi at their local Gurdwaras (Sikh house of worship) by remembering this day as the birth of the Khalsa.

April 20–May 1

FESTIVAL OF RIDVÁN • Bahá'í

Annual festival commemorating the 12 days when Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith, resided in a garden called Ridván (Paradise) and publicly proclaimed his mission as God's messenger for this age. The first (**April 20**), ninth (**April**

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28), and twelfth (May 1) days are celebrated as holy days when Baha'is suspend work.

April 21

RAMA NAVAMI • Hindu

Celebrates the birthday of Rama, king of ancient India, hero of the epic Ramayana, and seventh incarnation of Vishnu.

April 27-29

THERAVADA NEW YEAR • Buddhist

In Theravada countries the New Year is celebrated on the first full moon day in April.

April 30

LAG B'OMER • Jewish

Celebrates the end of a divine-sent plague and/or Roman occupation during Rabbi Akiva's lifetime (died c. 135 CE).

MAY 2021

May 9

LAILA AL-QADR • Islamic

Commemorates the night that the *Qur'an* was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. It is known as the "Night of Power." Often set on the 27th day of Ramadan, Sunnis may observe it on the 21st, 23rd, 25th or 29th and Shī'ite (Shiite) observe it on the 19th, 21st or 23rd day of Ramadan.

May 13

EID AL-FITR • Islamic

The "Feast of the Breaking of the Fast" marks the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting from dawn until dusk.

May 13

ASCENSION DAY • Christian

Celebrated 40 days after Easter/Pascha, it commemorates the ascension of Jesus into Heaven.

May 17-18

SHAVUOT • Jewish

The "Feast of Weeks" celebrates the covenant established at Sinai between God and Israel, and the revelation of the Ten Commandments.

May 23

DECLARATION OF THE BAB • Bahá'í

Commemoration of May 23, 1844, when the Báb, the prophet-herald of the Bahá'í Faith, announced in Shíráz, Persia, that he was the herald of a new messenger of God.

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May 23

PENTECOST • Christian

Also known as *Whitsunday*, the seventh Sunday after Easter/Pascha commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and women followers of Jesus. Marks the birth of the Christian Church.

May 29

ASCENSION OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH • Bahá'í

Observance of the anniversary of the death in exile of Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith.

May 30

ALL SAINTS' DAY • Eastern Christian

In Orthodox churches observed on the first Sunday after Pentecost, it commemorates all known and unknown Christian saints.

JUNE 2021

June 13

RACE UNITY DAY • Bahá'í

Observance promoting racial harmony and understanding and the essential unity of humanity.