

Faith Festivals April 2018

1st April Sunday is Easter Day for all our **Christian** friends. The culmination of the Holy week Easter commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is **the most important Christian festival**, and the one celebrated with the greatest joy. The date of Easter changes each year, and several other Christian festivals fix their dates by reference to Easter. Churches are filled with flowers, and there are special hymns and songs. But not all Easter customs are Christian; some, such as the Easter Bunny, are pagan in origin. The Easter story is at the heart of Christianity. On Good Friday, Jesus Christ was executed by crucifixion. His body was taken down from the cross, and buried in a cave. The tomb was guarded and an enormous stone was put over the entrance, so that no-one could steal the body. On the following Sunday, some women visited the grave and found that the stone had been moved, and that the tomb was empty. Jesus himself was seen that day, and for days afterwards by many people. His followers realised that God had raised Jesus from the dead. **The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the centrepiece of the Christian faith.** The Apostle Paul even goes so far to say that if Jesus Christ has not been resurrected then the Christian faith is worthless and futile (1 Cor. 15:14-17). Therefore, without Easter there is no Christianity. Easter is the oldest Christian holiday and the most important day of the church year. All the Christian movable feasts and the entire liturgical year of worship are arranged around Easter. Easter is preceded by the season of Lent, a 40-day period of fasting and repentance culminating in Holy Week, and followed by a 50-day Easter Season that stretches from Easter to Pentecost. See

<http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/holidays/easter.htm> .For more <http://www.historyofeaster.info/>

7th April is The Annunciation of the Lord/ Christian (Anglican). Lady Day celebrates the angel Gabriel announcing to Mary that she is to bear a child, and Mary's response in the Magnificat. The day provides an opportunity to focus on the doctrine of the incarnation. Gabriel told Mary to name her son Jesus, meaning "Saviour". It is one of the twelve Great Feasts of the church year.

8th April PASCHA/EASTER Christian (Orthodox)

For Orthodox Christians Easter Day is the most important festival of the Christian year, as it is when they celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. A vigil is kept during the preceding night and the resurrection of Christ greeted with the lighting of candles and the affirmation 'Christ is risen' Source: <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/religious-festivals>

8th April is Hanamatsuri celebrated in Japan by our **Buddhist** friends. This flower festival marks the Japanese celebration of the Buddha Shakyamuni's birthday, which Mahayana Buddhists fix in 565 BCE. The flowers accentuate the tradition that the Buddha was born in a garden, so floral shrines are made and an image of the infant Buddha is set in it and bathed. Pure Land Buddhists also celebrate the Buddha's birthday at this time. Theravadins celebrate Buddha's birth, enlightenment and passing away, all on the same day, but a little later in the year, at the full moon in May.

9th April (Monday) THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD / Christian (Anglican)

Lady Day celebrates the angel Gabriel announcing to Mary that she is to bear a child, and Mary's response in the Magnificat. The day provides an opportunity to focus on the doctrine of the incarnation. Luke 1:26-38, 46-55

12th April is the Jewish Holocaust Memorial Day or Yom HaShoah for our **Jewish** friends.

Yom HaShoah (begins sundown on the 4th).It is a day of remembrance when Jewish people remember the six million Jews, including one and a half million children, who were victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Memorial candles are lit and special services are held. The date is chosen as the

closest date (in the Jewish calendar) to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. More Information: <http://www.virtualjerusalem.com/holidays/yomhashoa/home.htm> and <http://history1900s.about.com/cs/holocaust/a/yomhashoah.htm>

13th April is **Songkran** for our **Buddhist** friends. This is a traditional New Year's Day festival in Thailand, where containers of water are thrown as a symbol of washing away all that is evil. Fragrant herbs are often placed in the jug or bucket containing the water.

13th April is **The Prophet's Night Journey and Ascent/Lailat Ul Isra Wa-L-Miraj** for our **Muslim** friends. This festival celebrates the journey of the Prophet Muhammad, in the tenth year of his prophethood, from Makkah to Jerusalem, and through the heavens to the presence of God, all in one night. On this night Muslims believe the Prophet received the command that they should pray five times each day. The rock in Jerusalem from which the Prophet ascended is now contained in the Dome of the Rock. Muslims mark this night by reading the Qur'an and saying additional prayers. Source <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/religious-festivals>

14th April is **Vaisakhi /Baisakhi** for our **Sikh** friends. Vaisakhi, the Sikh New Year, is the holiest day of the calendar for over 20m Sikhs worldwide it is of particular importance for the Sikh community and farmers of Punjab and Haryana. On this day in 1699, Sikhism was born as a collective faith. Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the 10th Master of the Sikhs, initiated the Sikhs as the Khalsa or the pure and sincere. He bound the Sikhs to a strict code of conduct and, with uncut hair, beard and turban, gave the Sikhs a distinct identity. The celebration of Vaisakhi takes the form of continuous reading of the Sikh Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, over a period of three days. That is followed by the recitation of sacred hymns. The service ends with a final prayer for the good and well-being of the whole of humanity, and the serving of sacramental food. Source <http://www.sikhismguide.org/vaisakhi.aspx>

19th April (Thursday) YOM HA'ATZMA'UT Jewish
Israeli Independence Day, commemorating the declaration of independence of Israel in 1948

21st April (Saturday) - 2 May (Wednesday) RIDVAN Baha'I is **Ridvan** for our **Baha'I** friends. The most important Baha'i festival. In these 12 days, in the garden outside Baghdad after which the festival is named, Baha'u'llah declared himself the Promised One, prophesied by the Bab. The first, ninth and twelfth days are especially significant and are holy days, when no work is done. It is during this period that Baha'is elect all their governing bodies.

23rd April is **St George's Day**, for our **Christian** friends. "St George's Day in England remembers St George, England's patron saint. The anniversary of his death, which is on April 23, is seen as England's national day. According to legend, he was a soldier in the Roman army who killed a dragon and saved a princess. Many people in England don't observe nor know when the national day is at all. However, in recent years, celebrating St George's Day seems to gradually be regaining popularity in England. From the 15th century, St George's Day used to be a national holiday in England, and was celebrated as widely as Christmas. But the celebrations waned by the end of the 18th century after England had united with Scotland on May 1, 1707. Compared to national day festivities in other countries worldwide, England's national day is not widely celebrated. One exception is in the city of Salisbury, where there's an annual St George's Day pageant, which historians believe dates back to the 13th century. Flags with the image of St George's cross are flown on some buildings, especially pubs, and a few people wear a red rose on their lapel. **Source**

<http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/uk/st-george-day>. More information:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/saints/george_1.shtml

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