

Faith Festivals August 2018

6th August (Monday), commemorates the **Transfiguration of the Lord** Tradition: **Orthodox and Catholic Christian**.

“The Transfiguration is described in Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-8, and Luke 9:28-36. There is also a reference to it in 2 Peter 1:16–18. The “Transfiguration” refers to the appearance of Jesus Christ in a “glorified form” to his disciples. This is recorded in the synoptic gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke) when Jesus took Peter, James and John to the top of a mountain where he appeared to them alongside Moses and Elijah. At this time a voice was heard which declared Jesus to be the “beloved son” and commanded the disciples to listen to him. After Jesus returned to his normal form, he told the disciples to keep silent about what they saw. Theologically, the Transfiguration story places Jesus on the same level as the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah), making him the true source of divine truth for those who are willing to heed him. Scholars disagree on the origins of this story — some regard it as a misplaced resurrection narrative while others think it might be a report of a mystical experience which some disciples had while in Jesus’ presence. Both the Eastern and Western churches celebrate a feast to commemorate the Transfiguration on August 6. However, while the East has done so since 1000, the West has only done so since 1456. Source

<http://atheism.about.com/od/bibledictionaryonline/p/Transfiguration.htm> For more from an orthodox perspective see http://www.goarch.org/special/listen_learn_share/transfiguration/index.html for more from a Catholic point of view, please see <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15019a.htm> more on liturgy for that day http://www.thisischurch.com/christian_teaching/lectionary_bible_notes/specialfestivals/transfiguration.htm

7th August (Tuesday) - 16 August (Thursday) is **Fravardigan / Muktdad** Tradition : **Zoroastrian Iranian calendar**

The Fravardigan festival (the festival of the fravashis), popularly known as Muktdad (All Souls), commences ten days before Noruz and is the last festival of the old year. The Zoroastrian day commences at sunrise and not midnight, and so during sunrise on the first day of the festival. The immortal souls, together with their fravashis (the guardian spirits of departed ancestors, artistically depicted as half man/half bird), are welcomed by name by the Zoroastrian Mobeds or Magi (priests). For ten days they reside in the place of worship, hovering around a table full of metal vases, each specifically earmarked for an individual family and containing white flowers. They leave the physical world after the last ceremony, held on the tenth evening, but before the dawn of Noruz. The designated priest – as a farewell gesture – will then empty the water from one of the metal vases, which he will turn upside down, signifying that it is time for the immortal souls and the fravashis to return to the spiritual world. Theologically Fravardigan is the most important Zoroastrian festival after Noruz, but, since it deals with one’s departed ancestors, many Zoroastrians regard it to be their holiest festival. During these ten days Zoroastrians often take time off from work, pray extensively, recite the five Gathas (hymns composed by Zarathushtra) and ensure their houses are thoroughly cleaned. They prepare daily samples of sacred food enjoyed by their departed ancestors while still alive, and take these to the place of worship, to be tasted by them during the daily ceremonies. This ritually consecrated food, along with chosen fruits, is then shared by the living in the special Hamaspathmaidyem Gahambar, a communal feast celebrated after the ceremony is over. More Information: <http://www.caissoas.com/CAIS/Celebrations/farvardigan.htm>

13th August (Monday) to 22nd August (Wednesday) - **1st to 10th DHUL-HIJJAH** Muslim Tradition: **Muslim**

For Muslims the first 10 days of the month of Dhul-Hijjah are held to be especially holy when good deeds are particularly rewarded by God. These days encompass the allotted days for the performance of the Hajj (pilgrimage) and the first day of Eid-ul-Adha (the feast of sacrifice).

15th August (Wednesday) celebrates the **Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary** - Tradition: **Catholic Christian**; also celebrated as the **Dormition of the Theotokos** Tradition: **Greek Orthodox Christian**

Roman Catholics believe the doctrine of the Assumption, which teaches that at the end of her life, Mary, the mother of Christ, was taken body and soul (i.e. both physically and spiritually) into heaven to live with her son (Jesus Christ) for ever. Human beings have to wait until the end of time for their bodily resurrection, but Mary's body was able to go straight to heaven because her soul hadn't been tainted by original sin. Catholics celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary on August 15th each year. Eastern Orthodox Christians, following the Julian calendar, mark the event as the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, or the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God on 28th August, while Orthodox Christians on the Gregorian calendar celebrate it on 15th August. This is an ancient teaching, first found in the 5th century, but it remains controversial to Protestants because it is not explicitly referred to in the Bible. The Roman Catholic Church bases the doctrine on other valid authority. A report in 2005 by Anglican and Roman Catholic theologians found common ground (but not common authority) for belief in the Assumption: "...we can affirm together the teaching that God has taken the Blessed Virgin Mary in the fullness of her person into his glory as consonant with Scripture and that it can, indeed, only be understood in the light of Scripture. Roman Catholics can recognize that this teaching about Mary is contained in the dogma. The doctrine of the Assumption was proclaimed as infallible by Pope Pius XII on All Saints Day 1950 in the bull (formal proclamation) *Munificentissimus Deus*." We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory." This made it an important article of faith for Roman Catholics. This was only the second time that a Pope had proclaimed a doctrine to be infallible. The first was the Immaculate Conception, another doctrine that concerns Mary. The Pope justified the Assumption not on Biblical authority but largely on: the "universal consensus of the Church", the theological "suitability" of the doctrine. The "universal consensus of the Church" means that what the Church as a whole teaches and believes must be treated as a revealed and thus indisputable truth. The Church can only reach such a consensus through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit cannot be wrong. This doesn't mean that Church doctrine cannot change - theologians use the idea of dogmatic progression, by which human ideas, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, slowly develop towards the real truth. Once the real truth is established, the "universal consensus" of the Church then confirms it as an eternal truth. Before proclaiming the doctrine Pope Pius XII made sure that there was really was a consensus in the Church. In 1946 he wrote to all the Roman Catholic bishops to ask them a) whether they thought the Assumption should become Catholic dogma, and b) whether the priests and the laity agreed with them. 99% of the bishops said yes. The other main argument for the Assumption was that it fitted well with other Catholic teaching, and would reinforce believers' faith that they too would eventually go to heaven. The Assumption was also clearly in harmony with other Catholic ideas about Mary, namely: her immaculate conception, her perpetual virginity, being the mother of God. Theologians argued that the Mother of God could not be separated from God, and so must have been taken up to be with him in heaven. For more http://www.goarch.org/special/listen_learn_share/dormition/index.html ; <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02006b.htm> . For more from an Orthodox perspective see <http://orthodoxwiki.org/Dormition>

17th August (Friday) NAVROZE / NOWRUZ Tradition: **Zoroastrian (Kadmi)**

New Year's Day on the Shenshai Calendar. In the tenth century a group of Zoroastrians fled from Iran and were given religious sanctuary by the Hindus of Western India, where they became known as Parsis (or Persians). During the twentieth century the Zoroastrians of Iran have revised their calendar to take account of the leap year, while the Parsis of India have continued following the traditional imperial or Shenshai calendar. By the twentieth century the Parsis of India had become the largest group in the world to practise Zoroastrianism, and in the twenty first century over 95% of Zoroastrians in the UK are Parsis. Like their Indian counterparts, they celebrate two new years – giving more time for making merry! Source Like their Indian counterparts, they celebrate two new

years – giving more time for making merry! Source <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/religious-festivals>
<http://www.reonline.org.uk/supporting/festivals-calendar/>

19th August (Sunday) marks the **Transfiguration** Tradition: **Orthodox Christian**.

This date corresponds to the 6th August (when the Western and Greek Orthodox Church celebrates the Transfiguration) in the **Julian calendar** for some of our Eastern European Orthodox friends. This festival commemorates the occasion when Jesus went up a mountain with three of his disciples, Peter, James and John; here, as his death approached, they saw his face change and his clothes become dazzling white. They witnessed him in conversation with Moses and Elijah, and heard a voice saying, 'This is my own dear Son with whom I am pleased – listen to him'. For many Christians this confirms the divine nature of Jesus. For Orthodox Christians this is an especially important festival, pointing to Christ as both human and divine. Although Moses and Elijah had died centuries before, they could both live again in the presence of the Son of God, implying that a similar return to life can apply to all who face death. The texts dealing reporting the transfiguration are Matthew 17:1-17, Mark 9:2-13 and Luke 9:28-36. For more see <https://bible.org/seriespage/transfiguration-matthew-171-13>
http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/culture/religious_holidays/53413/

20th August (Monday) to 24th August (Friday) HAJJ / PILGRIMAGE TO MAKKAH (8th to 12th Dhul-Hijjah) Tradition: **Muslim**

All Muslims who can afford to do so, and are not prevented through ill-health, are required to make this pilgrimage once in their lifetime (although there is no prohibition on making the pilgrimage more than once). A series of ritual acts are performed by the pilgrims during the first two days of Hajj, prior to the three day festival of Eid-ul-Adha which is celebrated in Makkah by the pilgrims.

21st August (Tuesday) THE DAY OF ARAFAT (9th Dhul-Hijjah) Tradition: **Muslim**

For Muslims the first 10 days of the month of Dhul-Hijjah are held to be especially holy when good deeds are particularly rewarded by God. These days encompass the allotted days for the performance of the Hajj (pilgrimage) and the first day of Eid-ul-Adha (the feast of sacrifice).

22nd August (Wednesday) EID-AL-ADHA / THE FESTIVAL OF SACRIFICE (10th Dhul-Hijjah) Muslim

This major festival (al-Eid al-Kabir) commemorates Ibrahim's (Abraham's) willingness to sacrifice his son, Ismail. Muslims all over the world sacrifice an animal if they can afford it. Much of the meat is distributed to the poor, and some is shared with relatives and friends.

22nd August (Wednesday) is **Khordad Sal** (Shenshai/ Qadimi calendar) Tradition: **Zoroastrian**

Khordad means perfection and the festival of Khordad Sal symbolically celebrates the birthday of Prophet Zarathushtra. 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. It is customary on this day to visit the Fire Temple, to give thanks to Ahura Mazda for giving humanity the Prophet Zarathushtra, to participate in a jashan or thanksgiving ceremony, to listen to stories of the miraculous birth and life of Prophet Zarathushtra, and to share in a happy community meal, a drink and a dance. For more see <http://festivalsadvice.com/khordad-sal-birthday-zoroaster/> <http://festivals.iloveindia.com/khordad-sal/khordad-sal-celebration.html> and http://www.mythicmaps.net/Festival_calendar/March/Khordad_Sal.htm

26th August (Sunday) RAKSHA BANDHAN Tradition: **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. 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. The protection offered by a rakhi is believed to remain for a year. It is a significant festival in the Hindu calendar, followed eight days

later by Janamashtami. 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. 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. This year's fashion is for rakhis adorned with cartoon characters <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/City/Navi-Mumbai/Narendra-Modi-cartoon-rakhis-a-rage-across-city-this-Raksha-Bandhan/articleshow/39252384.cms>. Today the festival has developed with others joining in the festivities: Priests tie rakhis around the wrists of congregation members, Rakhis are often shared between close friends, Women tie rakhis around the wrists of the Prime minister, Rakhis are tied around the wrists of soldiers. This festival has evolved over the years to encompass the importance of many people in Hindu society, yet foremost it continues to honour and uphold the relationship between a sister and brother. Source <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/holydays/raksha.shtml> . For more see <http://www.raksha-bandhan.com/> <http://hinduism.about.com/od/rakhi/a/rakshabandhan.htm>

30th August (Thursday) THE FESTIVAL OF THE POOL / EID UL GHADEER Muslim (Shi'a)

This is a festival observed by Shi'a Muslims, for whom it is an extremely important day. It commemorates an event shortly before the death of the Prophet and his announcement concerning Ali, which they understand to be his clear appointment to be successor to the prophet as the spiritual and temporal leader of Islam. Source: <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/resources/religious-festival>

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