**Faith Festivals January 2020**

**1st January :**  **The Circumcision or Naming Of Jesus** - Tradition: **Christian**

It is also called Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus celebrated by holding a vigil on the night of 31st December. Being born a Jew, it was natural that Jesus, like all Jewish male should be circumcised and named on his 8th day, to be received within the Jewish community.

**2nd January :  Birthday Of Guru Gobind Singh** (1666 CE)- Tradition: **Sikh**

Guru Gobind Singh, 1666-1708, was the last of the ten human Gurus, the one who transformed the Sikh faith. In 1699 he chose the festival day of Vaisakhi (Baisakhi).  as the occasion to transform the Sikhs into the Khalsa (The pure), a community of the faithful who wore visible symbols of their faith and trained as warriors. Today the Khalsa comprises all practising Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh introduced many of the customs that Sikhs practise today. Sikhs who have been through the Amrit ceremony of initiation become Amritdhari, initiated Sikhs take new names and wear the 5 Ks - five physical symbols that Sikhs must wear.

Guru Gobind named the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book, as his successor instead of a human being. The Guru Granth Sahib would thus be the Sikhs' guide forever. Sikhs give it the same status and respect as a human Guru. This anniversary is celebrated with an An akhand path, an unbroken reading of the whole of the Guru Granth Sahib, spreads over a 48 hour period. For more <http://www.theworldofgurunanak.com/guru-gobind-singh-ji.html>

**5th January :  Twelfth Night** – Tradition: **Christian**

The Twelfth Night marks the conclusion of the twelve days of Christmas and the eve of Epiphany. According to tradition, three kings arrived in Bethlehem twelve days after Jesus' birth to bestow gifts. This night is celebrated much like Christmas Eve, with merrymaking, eating traditional foods like King Cake, and parties. For more <http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/holidays/twelfth_night.htm>

**6th January: Epiphany**- Tradition: **Christian**

Epiphany commemorates the Magi's (Three Wise Men) visit to Bethlehem, and the “shining forth” or revelation of Jesus as God in human form. Some traditions celebrate Epiphany by giving gifts to represent the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh that Jesus received from the wise men. In many countries, the feast is celebrated by the baking and eating of a special cake or sweet bread in which is hidden a little figure, often in the shape of a lamb or of Christ. The observance had its origins in the eastern Christian churches, and included the birth of Jesus Christ; the visit of the three Magi (Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar) who arrived in Bethlehem; and all of Jesus' childhood events, up to his baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist. The feast was initially based on (and viewed as a fulfilment of) the Jewish Feast of Lights. More at <http://www.religionfacts.com/christianity/holidays/epiphany.htm>

**7th January:** is **Christmas Day** or **day of the Nativity of Christ** –Tradition: **Orthodox Christian**

The Feast of the Nativity is the Orthodox Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus. It is also the break of a 40-day fast of the Advent started this year on November 15th, in which participants purify both body and soul in preparation for Christ's birth. For more <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/uk/orthodox-christmas-day> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-16453975>

12**th January : Baptism of the Lord Jesus** – Tradition: **Christian**

The Baptism of the Lord is the name of a distinct feast day observed in the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican or Episcopalian Church, as well as the Eastern Orthodox Church. This occasion memorializes the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. The Baptism of Christ was originally celebrated on Epiphany, which commemorated three events: the arrival of the Magi (the wise men), Jesus’ baptism and the wedding in Cana, where Jesus turned the water into wine. Over time, the Baptism of the Lord feast was separated from the other events of Epiphany. More at <http://www.sharefaith.com/guide/Christian-Holidays/baptism-of-the-lord-the-feast.html>

**15th January :**  **Makar Sankranti/Lohri/Pongal**- Tradition: **Hindu**

This is a day for almsgiving and patching up quarrels. It is celebrated with rice sugar, pancakes and halva, eaten around a fire, especially when following the birth of a son. Cornmeal chapatis and mustard leaf constitute the traditional meal.  Celebrating, the sun's journey into the northern hemisphere  and the beginning of spring, Makar Sankranti is one of the most auspicious day for the Hindus, and is celebrated in almost all parts of India in myriad cultural forms, with great devotion, fervour & gaiety. People in their thousands take a dip in places like Ganga Sagar & Prayag and pray to Lord Sun. It is celebrated with pomp in southern parts of the country as Pongal, and in Punjab is celebrated as Lohri & Maghi. Gujarati's not only look reverentially up to the sun, but also offer thousands of their colorful oblations in the form of beautiful kites all over the skyline. For more, see <http://www.vmission.org.in/hinduism/festivals/sankranti/>

**16th January: Shinran Memorial Day**- Tradition: **Buddhist**

Shinran was the founder of Jodo Shin-shu, one of the schools of Pure Land Buddhism.

**18th -25th January** : **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** - Tradition: **Christian**

United services are held, and dialogue on unity is encouraged; some worshippers visit others’ churches or invite preachers from denominations different from their own.

This week was first set aside in 1908.

**19th January : World Religion Day** - Tradition: **Baha'i**

World Religion Day was initiated in 1950 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of the United States. The Assembly’s purpose was to call attention to the harmony of spiritual principles and the oneness of the world’s religions and to emphasize that religion is the motivating force for world unity. It is observed the third Sunday in January by Baha’is in the United States and increasingly by people around the globe, with interfaith discussions, conferences and other events that foster understanding and communication among the followers of all religions.

**25th January : Honen Memorial Day** –Tradition: **Buddhist**

Honen was the founder of Jodo Shu, one of the schools of Pure Land Buddhism. Honen Bo Genku (1133-1212 CE), more familiarly known as Honen, was part of the movement—along with Dogen, Nichiren and Shinran, his disciple—that resulted in the uniquely Japanese forms of Buddhism. Buddhism first came to Japan in the sixth century CE from South Korea. By that time the religion had evolved in two directions, the more conservative Therevada Buddhism, which was prevalent in India and Southeast Asia, and Mahayana Buddhism, which had spread to North India, China and Tibet, and from there to Korea and Japan. From the beginning, the most common form of Buddhism in Japan was the Mahayana school. Various sects developed, including Shingon, an esoteric form of Buddhism similar to the Tantric Buddhism of Tibet, and Tendai, a conservative monastic form. Source and more information <http://www.mythicmaps.net/Festival_calendar/January/Honen_mem.htm>

**27th January : Holocaust Memorial Day** –Tradition: **National**

A day for remembrance of people who suffered at the hands of the Nazis during the Second World War; Its aim is to keep fresh in the mind the memory of those who suffered and died at that time, and to help ensure that no such atrocity happens again