

Faith festivals May and June 2020

7th May Wesak Tradition: Buddhist

The commemoration of Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and parinirvana, celebrated on the day of the full moon of the sixth lunar month in Southeast Asian cultures; in Tibetan culture, Wesak commemorates only the enlightenment and parinirvana. The dates of this celebration vary significantly among Buddhist cultures and communities.

12th May Lag Ba'Omer Tradition: Jewish

It is a festive day on the Jewish calendar, celebrating the anniversary of the passing of the great sage and mystic Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, author of the Zohar. It also commemorates another event. In the weeks between Passover and Shavuot, a plague raged amongst the disciples of the great sage Rabbi Akiva. On Lag BaOmer the dying ceased.

15th May : Lailat-UI-Qadr/The Night of Power/Honour/Dignity Tradition: Muslim (Shi'a)

This night commemorates the night in 610 CE when the prophet Muhammad received his first visit from the angel Jibril (Gabriel) and his revelation of the Qur'an. Muslims believe that the date of this night is kept secret by God, but that they may 'Seek the Night of Dignity in the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan'. Many Muslims spend the last ten days and nights of Ramadan secluded in the mosque, praying and studying the Qur'an, to ensure they receive the special benefits promised for such prayers and devotions on Lailat-ul-Qadr. For the purpose of communal activities, or for those individuals who can only spend one night in devotions at the mosque, Sunnis favour the 27th day (beginning the evening of the 26th) whilst the Shi'a favour the 23rd day of Ramadan. Of this night, the Qur'an states, "Lailat-ul - Qadr is better than a thousand months."

21st May Thursday, Ascension Day (40th day after Easter) Christian (Western Churches) Tradition: Christian

This day commemorates the last earthly appearance of the Risen Christ, who, according to Christian belief, ascended into heaven in the presence of many witnesses.

23rd May Declaration of the Bab Baha'i Tradition: Baha'i

Commemorates the day in 1844 on which he announced his identity as the "Bab" ("Gate"), the herald of the new age.

24th May Eid-UI-Fitr/Feast of Fast Breaking (1st Shawwal) (date dependant on lunar cycle) Tradition: Muslim

This is a time - once the fast of Ramadan has been completed - for making gifts to the poor (the charity of the fast, Zakat-ul-Fitr, must be paid before the communal Eid prayer takes place). It is especially a time for new clothes, good food, and presents for children. Families get together and contact friends, especially those who live far away. The community assembles for Eid prayer and a sermon at its mosques. The traditional greeting is 'Eid Mubarak' – 'a happy and blessed Eid'.

28th-29th May Tuesday Ascension of Baha'u'llah) Tradition: Baha'i

This day marks the anniversary of the death of the founder of the Baha'i faith. Work is suspended on this day.

29th May Shavuot / The Feast of Weeks Tradition: Jewish

Shavuot, also known as the Feast of Weeks, is a two day festival which falls seven weeks after Pesach. It celebrates the revelation of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai, and also marks the time when the first harvest was taken to the Temple. Synagogues are decorated with flowers and dairy foods are traditionally eaten. For Orthodox Jews work is not permitted throughout the festival.

31st May, Pentecost / Whit Sunday Christian (Western Churches) Tradition: Christian

Pentecost, named after the Jewish festival when the disciples of Jesus first proclaimed the Gospel after the gift of the Holy Spirit, is seen as the 'birthday' of the Church]

7th June Sunday, Trinity Sunday (Western Churches)

Tradition: **Christian**

Trinity Sunday is celebrated on the Sunday after Pentecost when Christians reflect on the mystery of God, who is seen as One but is understood in and through God, the Father, God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit. Trinity Sunday was instituted by Pope Gregory IX in 828CE and is known for being the only major Christian festival that celebrates a Church doctrine rather than an event in its history.

11th June Thursday, Day of Thanksgiving for the Institution of Holy Communion

Tradition: **Christian (Anglican)**

The Anglican Church celebrates this on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday (which falls on 7th June this year). The day recalls the act of Jesus in instituting the celebration of Holy Communion.

11th June Thursday, Corpus Christi

Tradition: **Christian -Catholic**

Corpus Christi is mainly celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church, but it is also observed in a few Anglican churches in the United Kingdom. Many Christians, particularly those who belong to the Catholic denomination, receive Communion (Holy Eucharist) on this day. It is also known as the Feast of the Most Holy Body of Christ, as well as the Day of Wreaths. Corpus Christi has been celebrated in honour of the Eucharist since 1246. The name "Corpus Christi" is a Latin phrase that refers to the body of Christ. This event commemorates the Last Supper on the day before Jesus' crucifixion, as described in the Bible. Some people, particularly children, receive their first Communion during Corpus Christi. This practice, also known as the Eucharist, involves people accepting consecrated bread and wine (or grape juice), which according to Christian faith are Jesus Christ's body and blood. Symbols that portray the event may include: an image of a host (consecrated bread) and chalice to depict the Holy Eucharist; an altar; and a ciborium, which is a chalice-like container used to store consecrated hosts of the sacrament of Eucharist, or the Holy Communion.

16th June Tuesday, Martyrdom of Guru Arjan

Tradition: Sikh

This day commemorates the Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev (in the Nanakshahi calendar). Guru Arjan Dev Ji is the fifth Guru. Born on April 15, 1563 at Goindwal Sahib Ji, he was the youngest son of Guru Ram Das Ji. He became Guru on August 31st, 1581. He was the first Guru to have been born a son of the Guru. The fifth Guru started the construction of the Golden Temple. To emphasise the equality of Sikhism, a Muslim saint, named Mian Mir laid the foundation stone of the shrine. The temple featured four entrances to represent access to all communities. Guru Arjan Dev Ji compiled the Adi Granth Ji, the Sikh scripture containing the writings of all the Gurus up until that time. As another sign of equality in Sikh philosophy, the Guru added the writings of several Muslim and Hindu saints, whose ideas corresponded to Sikh beliefs. With the passage of time, the Guru attracted a substantial following; therefore the Sikh community undertook a social-political character. In 1606, Emperor Jahangir, the Muslim ruler of India, summoned the Guru Ji to his court on the charge of blessing a rebellious relative of the Emperor's. Upon the Guru's refusal to embrace Islam to escape death, the fifth prophet of the Sikh religion was subject to inhumane torture. Guru Arjan Dev Ji was arrested, tortured and made to sit on hot iron plates at Lahore. He was martyred on May 30th, 1606 at Lahore by Emperor Jahangir. Thus, the martyrdom tradition of Sikhism began with the martyrdom of the Guru Ji himself. From this point forward, Sikhism began to form itself into a community of saint-soldiers. Guru Arjan Dev Ji encouraged the Sikhs to contribute Daswandh (one tenth of the earnings) for community purposes. Guru Arjan Dev Ji was a great thinker, illustrious poet, a practical philosopher and a celebrated saint. He was the first martyr in the Sikh history. He practiced humility and forgiveness. He preached truth, contentment and contemplation. He organised the Sikhs into a community. After the brutal martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, his son Hargobind Sahib Ji was appointed the Sixth Guru of the Sikhs in line

23rd June Thursday, Ratha Yatra**Tradition: Hindu**

'Chariot Journey'. This is observed most notably at Puri in the Indian state of Orissa, where processions of thousands of devotees pull huge waggons (rathas) supporting images of Krishna. He is known under the name of 'Jagannath', (Lord of the Universe), from which the English term 'juggernaut' comes. Krishna is attended on his journey by his brother and sister. The festival and others like it are celebrated in Britain with processions through various parts of London on appropriate Sundays.