

ALSO ON THIS DAY: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

INTRODUCTION

In this supplemental resource for *Children's Daily Prayer*, you will find additional information about the religious holidays in the "Also on this Day" notations at the bottom of many of the Prayer for the Day pages in the book.

Classroom prayer always takes place in the context of life around us. Jesus was firmly rooted in his Hebrew tradition, but also respected a Roman centurion who built the Capernaum synagogue (Luke 7: 1–10), had a spirited conversation with a Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), and engaged in banter with a Gentile woman of Syro-phoenician origin (Mark 7:24–30). He was open to people from many different backgrounds, and welcomed variety in his wide circle. In that spirit, we want to be sensitive to our neighbors, friends, relatives, and coworkers, who may be celebrating events within other faith traditions.

Following Jesus' model, we too stand grounded in our Catholic faith, respectful of our brothers and sisters in other traditions. We pray in company with people around the world and within our own country. As Pope Paul VI proclaimed, in *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, the world's peoples are being drawn closer together. It states: "Other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing 'ways,' comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men" (2).

Find the full document, *Nostra Aetate*, on the Vatican Web site: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

For general resources on world religions, go to <http://www.cloudnet.com/~edrbsass/edthe.htm#index> (Theology/Religion/Catholic Education Resources). Browse through the "site index."

PRONUNCIATION KEY

bait = bayt	thin = thin
cat = kat	vision = VIZH*n
sang = sang	ship = ship
father = FAH- <u>th</u> er	sir = ser
care = kair	gloat = gloht
paw = paw	cot = kot
jar = jahr	noise = noyz
easy = EE-zee	poison = POY-z*n
her = her	plow = plow
let = let	although = ahl- <u>THO</u> H
queen = kween	church = cherch
delude = deh- <u>LOO</u> D	fun = fun
when = hwen	fur = fer
ice = īs	flute = <u>floo</u> t
if = if	foot = foot
finesse = fh-NES	

BUDDHISM

Ullambana (oo-lahm-BAH-nuh) festivals focus on honoring ancestors and grow out of the story of a disciple of Buddha who discovered through meditation that his dead mother had been reborn as a hungry ghost. Buddha taught him how to relieve her suffering with food offerings. The festivals feature offerings of food, candles, incense, and entertainment on behalf of the ancestors.

Bodhi Day (BOH-dee) celebrates the day that the Buddha attained enlightenment while meditating under a Bodhi tree. In Japan, it is observed on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month. Zen monasteries usually schedule a week-long "sesshin" or retreat that culminates on this date.

Nirvana Day (nuhr-VAHN-uh) commemorates the death of the historical Buddha and his entry into Nirvana, or bliss. It's a time for contemplating the Buddha's teachings. Some monasteries and temples hold meditation retreats. Others open their doors to laypeople, who bring gifts of money and household goods to support monks and nuns. It is celebrated on February 15.

Magha Puja Day (MAHG-huh POO-juh) commemorates a time when 1,250 enlightened monks spontaneously came together to pay respect to the Buddha. The monks, all ordained by the Buddha, came without any planning. On this occasion, the Buddha delivered a sermon in which he asked the monks to do good, abstain from bad action, and purify the mind. This is celebrated on March 15.

Vesak (vih-SAK), Buddha's birthday, is celebrated on various dates in the Theravada tradition. In the Mahayana tradition in Japan, China, Korea, and Vietnam, it is observed on April 8. For this "Flower Festival," people bring fresh flowers to temples in remembrance of the Buddha's birth in a grove of blossoming trees. Some combine the observance of Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death into one holiday, called Vesakha. This day is observed on the full moon day of the sixth lunar month. Whatever the date, it is celebrated with lanterns, communal meals, music, dance, floats, and dragons.

HINDUISM

Krishna Janmashtami (KRISH-na jahn-MASH-tah-mee) is the birthday of Lord Krishna, who is revered by all Hindus as a god on earth in human form, a savior of humans who appears when there is a need to fight evil powers. He gave humanity the Bhagavad Gita (BAH-guh-vahd GEE-tuh), one of the sacred texts of Hinduism that records its teachings. Lord Krishna is one of the earthly forms of Lord Vishnu, who is one of the three gods of the Hindu Trinity (Brahma, creator of the universe; Vishnu, preserver of the universe; and Shiva, destroyer of the universe). Lord Krishna is often depicted as a youthful figure playing a flute, with his pet cow nearby. On this day, Hindus fast, tell stories, and sing songs about the Lord Krishna. Some plays recount his love for the human Radha and his life experiences. One festival center is Mumbai, site of numerous celebrations.

Navaratri (nah-vah-RAH-tree) honors God's energy as universal mother, creating and protecting. The festival is divided into three sets of three days each, to worship the divine mother's different aspects, as Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. On Vijayadashami (VEE-ja-ya-DASH-a-mee), at the end of the festival, people visit each other's homes, hug each other, and exchange sweets.

Diwali (dih-WAHL-ee), the four-day Festival of Lights, is a celebration of life, of good triumphing over evil. During this joyous time of the year, Hindus around the world celebrate, shop, feast, gamble, explode firecrackers, and display beautiful little diyas or lights in clay pots. The lights and incense fill all of India.

Holi (HOH-lee) is a high-spirited spring festival when people squirt colored water and throw colored powders on each other as they shout "Holi-ho!" It's a time to relax, enjoy bonfires, and to appreciate the beginning of spring and the fertile land. The holiday originated with mythic stories, especially one in which Lord Krishna throws colored powder over Radha, his beloved, who was fair in complexion while he was dark.

Find more resources about Hindu observances at:

<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduindex.asp>;

<http://www.hindunet.org/>;

<http://uwacadweb.uwyo.edu/religionet/er/hinduism/index.htm>;

<http://www.religionfacts.com/hinduism/index.htm>

ISLAM

A note about the Islamic calendar: The Islamic calendar (also known as the *Hijri* calendar) is based on a lunar calendar of 12 months. Because a lunar year is about ten days shorter than the solar calendar, Islamic dates corresponding to the Gregorian calendar shift back by ten days each year. The first year of the Islamic calendar was declared to be the year Prophet Muhammad migrated from Makkah to Madinah. We are currently in the year 1432 of the Islamic Calendar. In this calendar, the dates change at sunset and not at the midnight hour.

Ramadan (RAHM-uh-dahn), the name of the ninth month in the Islamic calendar. It is for Muslims an entire month devoted to fasting from all food and drink during the hours from dawn to sunset. Long prayers are offered every night during this month. This is the month during which the first revelation came to Prophet Muhammad. Its main purpose is to achieve spiritual and moral strength through devotion and discipline.

Lailat-ul-Qadr (LAY-luh-ahl-KAHD-*r), the Night of Power, is the specific night in the month of Ramadan when Prophet Muhammad received the very first revelation of the Qur'an. The exact date is not known, and Muslims are encouraged to commemorate it during the last ten days of Ramadan and especially during the twenty-seventh night of this month. During this time, Muslims around the world study the Qur'an in the mosque, pray, and meditate.

Eid-ul-Fitr (ĪD-al-fit-*r), meaning the "festival of fast-breaking," marks the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting from dawn until sunset. It is a joyous feast of generosity and gratitude, and the major holiday of Islam.

Day of Hajj (hahj) is also known as the day of *Arafa*; it is the second day of the three day pilgrimage to Makkah called "The Hajj." The pilgrimage commemorates Prophet Abraham's life and his journey to Makkah.

Eid-ul-Adha (ĪD-al-AHD-hah) (the Festival of Sacrifice) is the second of the two major Islamic celebrations. It occurs on the third day of the pilgrimage in Makkah, called "The Hajj," and commemorates Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ismail. Some families kill a sheep, camel, or goat, saying the name of Allah, and remembering how Abraham almost sacrificed his son. (Read the story in Genesis 22:1–2, 9–13, 15–18, where the son is named Isaac.) The family eats some of the meat, and shares the rest, especially with the poor.

Muharram (muh-HAHR-uhm) or **Al Hijra** (al-HIJ-ruh) is the first month of the Islamic calendar, and so the first of Muharram marks the beginning of the Islamic year.

Mawlid al-Nabim (MAH-lid-al-NAH-bim) is the anniversary of Prophet Muhammad's birth in 570. Some Muslims attend special functions during this day.

Ashura (uh-SHOOR-uh) occurs during on the tenth day of Muharram (the first month in the Islamic Calendar) and is considered an Important day for voluntary fasting and worship. It also marks the anniversary of the death of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, in 680. Shia Muslims especially observe this day, remembering the death of Imam Hussain.

Find more resources about the observances of Islam at:

<http://www.when-is.com/muslim-holidays.asp>;
<http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/holidays.htm>;
<http://islam.about.com/od/holidays/u/holidays.htm>;
<http://www.submission.org/teachers/>

JUDAISM

Rosh Hashanah (ROHSH hah-shah-NAH) (New Year) begins a new calendar year with the sounding of the shofar (shoh-FAHR) (ram's horn). During this time Jews reflect on their actions, reconciling with each other and God if they've caused hurt or gone away from God's teachings. Traditional foods are round and sweet—apples dipped in honey and round challah bread—reflecting the cycle of a new year on the Jewish calendar and the hope that the year will be sweet.

Yom Kippur (yohm kee-POOR) (Day of Atonement) is the most solemn day of the year. Jewish people try to separate themselves from the ordinary world, often by fasting, so that they can look at their lives, recognize the wrongs of the past year, regain balance, and heal. During the liturgy in the synagogue, people wear a "tallit," or prayer shawl, representing divine enfolding love and a reminder of the commandments God has given them. The day ends with a blast on the shofar (shoh-FAHR), symbolizing God's response to repentance.

Sukkot (soo-KOHT) (Booths), five days later, two weeks after the Jewish New Year, comes a week-long fall festival named after the temporary shelters once set up in the fields during harvest. Now, the family builds their sukkah (soo-KAH) ("booth" or "tent") with branches, leaving the roof open to the elements: wind, rain, stars. They try to spend time in the sukkah and eat meals there. These booths surrounded by creation also represent the places where the Israelites lived in the desert after their escape from Egypt. The psalms prayed at this time praise God for agricultural bounty in the "season of our joy."

Shemini Atzeret (SH'MEE-nee ah-TZUHR-et) ("Eighth Day of Assembly"—after Sukkot) and **Simchat Torah** (sim-CHAT toh-RAH) ("Rejoicing in the Torah")
A note about pronouncing the "ch" sound: When you see the "ch" in the anglicized form of a Hebrew word, it doesn't stand for the English ch sound found in "chat." Rather, it represents a sound we don't have in English—an "h" sound made in the back of the throat.

It is similar to the German "ch" sound in the word *buch* ("book") or *Achtung* ("attention").

These two celebrations are sometimes observed as one holiday after Sukkot. Simchat Torah is the day Jews conclude their annual reading of the Torah and immediately start reading at the beginning again. On Simchat Torah the end of Deuteronomy is read, followed by the opening chapters of Genesis. After the Torah has been read, all Torahs are taken from the ark, and those present may dance with one amidst much singing and celebration.

The Torah contains the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (known to Christians as the Old Testament)—the story of the people of Israel, from Creation through slavery in Egypt, escape from Egypt, wandering in the wilderness, and receiving the Ten Commandments from God at Mount Sinai, up to the gathering of the people at the border of the promised land. It also contains the laws by which the people of Israel live. Simchat Torah expresses great love and reverence for the Torah which is central to Jewish identity and contains the laws that guide Jewish life.

Chanukah (CHAH-noo-kah) (the Festival of Lights)
Note: Here is that tricky "h" sound again, represented by "ch" and made at the back of the throat.

This holiday commemorates the victory in 165 BCE of the Jewish people over the Hellenistic Syrians who oppressed the Jewish people and desecrated their temple. When the temple was rededicated, there was only enough oil for the menorah (mih-noh-RAH) candles to last one day, but it miraculously burned eight days, the time needed to make more oil. Today people light the menorah candles in memory of this event, and may eat foods fried in oil, such as latkes (LAHT-kuhs) (potato pancakes). Children receive gifts and play the dreidel (DRAY-d'l) game.

TuB'Shevat (too b'ish-VAHT) (the fifteenth of the Hebrew month of Shevat) has become a day for appreciating trees. (In the Bible, trees represent God's abundance.) On this day, people plant trees and eat special meals with fruits and nuts from Israel.

Purim (POO-rim), a month before Passover, has a carnival tone. It commemorates the story of Queen Esther, (found in the third part of the Hebrew Bible in the book of Esther), who revealed the plot of the king's evil advisor, Haman, to destroy the Jewish people. She had hidden her Jewish identity, but Mordecai her mentor asked her to risk her life by revealing it. Students might enjoy reading this beloved story, which gives hope to a minority living in an often hostile culture. During Purim celebrations, when the scroll of Esther is read, the audience hoots, stomps, boos and makes noise at Haman's name. Some dress in costume; people enter into the drama enthusiastically, knowing that in the end, God brings about redemption.

Pesach (PEH-sach) (Passover).

Note: “ch” represents the “h” made at the back of the throat.

The story may be found in Exodus 12–14 in which the Jewish people celebrate their freedom from bondage in Egypt. Because God instructed them to mark their doorposts with the blood of a lamb, their firstborn were spared from death by a plague that killed the Egyptians’ firstborn. Then God helped them escape from the Egyptians through the Reed Sea, and guided them in their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. The Passover ritual meal, the Seder (SAY-der), helps Jews remember the story and God’s love for them. Each food has symbolic importance. For example, because the Israelites left Egypt hurriedly, without time for bread to rise, Jews eat unleavened bread at this time. Bitter herbs represent the bitterness of slavery.

Yom Hashoah (YOHM hah-SHOH-uh) (Holocaust Remembrance Day) was created by the Israeli Parliament in 1951 to remember the approximately six million Jews who died during the Nazi holocaust in Europe. In Israel, everyone stands still for two minutes of silence when a siren sounds. Christians can share in this mourning and reverence for people killed in this terrible human tragedy.

Yom Haatzmaut (yohm hah-ahtz-mah-OOT) (Israel’s Independence Day). This day celebrates Israel’s independence in May of 1948. Yom Hashoah and Yom Haatzmaut are recent additions to the Jewish calendar. Jewish tradition says that mourning and celebration each have a place in people’s lives. Therefore, eight days after mourning for those who died in the Holocaust, Jews celebrate the establishment of the State of Israel.

Shavuot (shah-VOO-OHT) (Weeks), 50 days after Passover, celebrates God’s giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai and God’s covenant with the Israelites. Many Jews stay up all night studying the Torah. Other customs include eating dairy foods and reading the book of Ruth. This day coincides with the Christian celebration of Pentecost.

Find more resources on Jewish observances at www.myjewishlearning.com and www.hebcal.com.

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