

Religious, Cultural & Ethnic Holidays & Days of Observance

April 2019

This handout is to call your attention to just some of the many nationally and internationally recognized and/or celebrated diverse days of observance and religious/ethnic holidays that fall within the month of April 2019. We invite you to share it with the students, staff, and faculty you work with across campus. For more information, feel free to visit the Multicultural Resource Calendar located on the Office of Student Life's Mosaic Center website:

http://www.diversityresources.com/aa_gsr/index.php?key=adCaO2Shix6u

Thank you,

The Mosaic: Center for Culture and Diversity, Interfaith Center, and Queer Student Lounge Staff

Apr 2- Islamic : Lailat al Miraj begins at sundown

Apr 3- Jewish : Islamic : Lailat al Miraj

This holiday, known as the Night of the Ascension, commemorates one of the most important events in the history of Islam - the nighttime journey of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem, where he ascended to heaven and was told by Allah of the Muslims' duty to pray five times daily (Salat). Muslims observe this day by attending special prayer services at a mosque or reciting special evening prayers at home.

Apr 6- Hindu : Chaitra Navratri begins

This festival honors the Goddess Shakti and three of her most popular avatars: Durga, the warrior Goddess, Lakshmi, the Goddess of prosperity, and Saraswati, the Goddess of knowledge. They are all worshipped during this nine-nights festival, which begins on the first day of the month of Chaitra and ends with Ramanavami. Goddess Shakti is also honored in the other nine-nights Navratri festival celebrated in September or October. Since the festival dates are determined according to the lunar calendar, the length of the festival may vary from year to year.

Apr 6- Hindu : Vikram Samvat (Lunar New Year)

This celebrates the beginning of the lunar new year 2073.

Apr 6- Hindu : Ugadi

The name "Ugadi" is derived from the Sanskrit, meaning "the beginning of a new age." This marks the first day of the month of Chaitra, which is the beginning of the new year 2075 for the Kannadigas and Telugus of the Deccan Plateau in southern India.

Apr 6- Hindu : Vikram Samvat (Lunar New Year)

This celebrates the beginning of the lunar new year 2075.

Apr 7- Coptic Orthodox Christian, Eastern Orthodox Christian : The Annunciation

This holy date celebrates the Angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary of Galilee that she would become the mother of Jesus. This is the date according to the Julian calendar followed by Coptic Orthodox Christians and several Eastern Orthodox Christian denominations.

Apr 8- Buddhist : Buddha's Birth (c. 563-483 B.C.E.)

Siddhartha Gautama, who became known as Buddha, or "enlightened one," was an Indian prince who left his family at the age of 29 to seek the truth of life. After years of wandering, meditation, and self-denial, he attained the enlightenment he sought at a place now called Buddha Gaya or Bodh Gaya. The religion he founded spread throughout central and Southeast Asia, China, Japan, and Korea, and has also attracted followers in the West. It is celebrated on this day in the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition based on the Japanese Buddhist calendar.

Apr 14- Hindu : Rama Navami (Birthday of Rama)

The story of Rama, one of the incarnations of the god Vishnu, is told in the Ramayana, which along with the Mahabharata is one of the great epic poems of Hinduism. Rama is celebrated in literature, music, and art throughout India and Southeast Asia. This holiday is observed with sanctity and fasting. Temples are decorated and parts of the Ramayana are recited at home.

Apr 14- Christian : Palm Sunday

On the Sunday before Easter, Christians remember Jesus' last entry into Jerusalem, when his way was strewn with palms by those gathered to see him. Churches, therefore, are decorated with palm. In England and Russia, where palm is unobtainable, pussy willow is used instead. Palm Sunday begins Holy Week, the most important week of the Christian year. In Spain and Mexico many communities have penitential processions often lit by candles and people sometime flagellate themselves to reenact Jesus' suffering. Some communities perform traditional passion plays. The Lenten fast is strictest on Good Friday, the day Jesus was crucified. Holy Week or Semana Santa in Spanish, is Mexico's biggest holiday period with many cities holding candlelight processions.

Apr 14- Sikh : Vaisakhi

Vaisakhi commemorates Guru Gobind Singh Ji's founding of Khalsa, the ritual of bringing all those who become Sikhs into a community of equals. Vaisakhi is observed on this date based on the Nanakshahi calendar.

Apr 14- Hindu : Vaisakhi (New Year)

In 2018, this celebrates the beginning of the solar new year 1940 of the Saka era, which dates from the ascendancy of Emperor Salivahana in A.D. 78. On this day, Hindus ritually bathe in the Ganges River to purify themselves.

Apr 17- Jain : Mahavir Jayanti

Jainism is a religious system practiced by over 5 million people worldwide, primarily in India. It arose in the 6th century B.C.E. as a protest against some aspects of Hinduism. This festival, also known as Mahavir Janma Kalyanak, celebrates the birth of Mahavira, the twenty-fourth and last of the Tirthankaras, or enlightened ones. It is the most important holiday in Jainism and is celebrated with prayer and visits to shrines.

Apr 18- Christian : Maundy Thursday

Apr 19- Christian : Good Friday

Good Friday is a Christian holiday commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his death at Calvary. Good Friday is a widely instituted legal holiday around the world, including in most Western countries and 12 U.S. states.

It is observed during Holy Week as part of the Paschal Triduum on the Friday preceding Easter Sunday, and may coincide with the Jewish observance of Passover. It is also known as Holy Friday, Great Friday, Black Friday, or Easter Friday, though the last term properly refers to the Friday in Easter week. The date of Good Friday varies from one year to the next on both the Gregorian calendar. Eastern and Western Christianity disagree over the computation of the date of Easter and therefore of Good Friday.

Apr 19- Jewish : Passover begins at sundown

Apr 20- Jewish : Passover (first day of 8-day observance))

This holiday, which is observed for eight days, celebrates the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Moses, an Israelite born into slavery, raised in the Pharaoh's household, and later banished as a young man for defending his people, returned to Egypt and confronted the Pharaoh in the name of God, demanding freedom for his people. The Pharaoh capitulated only after God sent ten plagues, the last of which killed the first son of every Egyptian family, including that of the Pharaoh. The Israelites marked their doors to identify their homes for the angel of death, who passed over and spared them. Moses then led the Israelites through the desert for 40 years until they came to the land of Canaan, later called Palestine. The celebration of Passover, a spring festival commemorating freedom and new life, begins the previous evening with a Seder, a meal during which the story of Passover is read from the Haggadah. The menu

includes a number of traditional foods such as matzoh, or unleavened bread, which recalls the unleavened bread eaten by the Israelites in the desert.

Apr 20- Christian : Holy Saturday

Apr 20- Islamic : Mid-Sha'ban begins at sundown

Apr 21- Christian : Easter

This holy day celebrates the resurrection of Jesus after he was crucified and died in Jerusalem. It is Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, often referred to as the "passion," followed by his resurrection that is central to Christian faith. Easter culminates the penitential period that starts with Ash Wednesday. Palm Sunday, which marks the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, occurs one week before Easter. Easter is a joyous holiday, since it marks for Christians the fulfillment of the Biblical prophecy of the coming of the Messiah. In addition to its religious significance, Easter is also celebrated as a spring holiday with themes of rebirth, gathering together with family and friends, and sharing special foods. Jehovah's Witnesses commemorate the memorial of Christ's death rather than Jesus' resurrection.

Apr 21- Baha'i : Festival of Ridvan (riz-wan)

On the first, ninth, and twelfth day of the Baha'i month of Ridvan (April 21, 29, and May 2), Baha'is commemorate the declaration of Baha'u'llah in 1863 of his mission as the last messenger of God to the world. Although Baha'is observe all twelve days, these three days are ones on which they refrain from work. The word "Ridvan" means paradise, and refers to the garden in Baghdad where Baha'u'llah proclaimed his mission as the prophet of God.

Apr 21- Jewish : Passover (second day of observance)

Apr 21- Islamic : Mid-Sha'ban

This holiday, known as the Night of Deliverance, is the night that Allah frees those who were destined for Jahannam, the Islamic Hell. Sunni Muslims observe a nightlong vigil with prayers, repenting to Allah and seeking forgiveness. This is also the night that decides a person's life in the coming year, including whether they will have the opportunity to perform the Hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca. In Shi'a Islam, this day is celebrated as the birth date of the Twelfth Imam, Imam Al Mahdi.

Apr 22- Christian : Easter Monday (observed as a public holiday in many countries)

The days from Good Friday through the Monday after Easter are public holidays in many countries. Governmental services and banks are closed, and most people have time off from

work. Countries for which this is the case include England, Northern Ireland, Wales, Canada, Australia, Austria, France, and Germany. When making plans, please check to see whether or not this holiday is observed.

Apr 25- Coptic Orthodox Christian, Eastern Orthodox Christian : Holy Thursday

Apr 26- Coptic Orthodox Christian, Eastern Orthodox Christian : Holy Friday

Also known as Great Friday, this is the day Coptic Orthodox Christians and Eastern Orthodox Christians commemorate Jesus' crucifixion.

Apr 27- Jewish : Passover ends at sundown

The days from Good Friday through the Monday after Easter are public holidays in many countries. Governmental services and banks are closed, and most people have time off from work. Countries for which this is the case include England, Northern Ireland, Wales, Canada, Australia, Austria, France, and Germany. When making plans, please check to see whether or not this holiday is observed.

Apr 27- Coptic Orthodox Christian, Eastern Orthodox Christian : Holy Saturday

Apr 28- Coptic Orthodox Christian, Eastern Orthodox Christian : Easter

Easter is celebrated on this day according to the Julian calendar followed by Coptic Orthodox Christians and Eastern Orthodox Christians. In the Orthodox church, the celebration of Easter begins just before midnight on Holy Saturday with the lighting of candles during Easter midnight mass.

Apr 28- Roman Catholic : Feast of Divine Mercy

The Feast of Divine Mercy is celebrated on the Octave of Easter, or the Sunday after Easter Sunday. On this Sunday, all those who go to Confession and receive Holy Communion will be forgiven all their sins and will receive divine grace. This Sunday was designated Divine Mercy Sunday on April 30, 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

Apr 29- Coptic Orthodox Christian, Eastern Orthodox Christian : Easter Monday

Apr 30- Pagan and Wiccan : Beltaine begins at sundown