

# Chaplaincy Services



## Holy Days, Celebrations and Observances of February 2024

### February 2 Candlemas Christian

Many Christians consider Jesus as the "light of the world" so it is fitting that candles are blessed on this day and that a candle-lit procession precedes the mass/worship service. It is traditional to eat crepes on Candlemas in some parts of Europe, such as France. Each family member prepares and cooks a crepe while holding a coin in hand. This is believed to assure



wealth and happiness until the next Candlemas celebration. (Photo: e-borghi.com)

Candlemas is also known as Candelaria in Spanish speaking countries. Whoever finds baby figures hidden inside the Rosca de Reyes (Kings Cake) on Epiphany on January 6 is obliged to bring food to a gathering held on February 2. Many Orthodox Christians celebrate this event by bringing beeswax candles to their local

church and requesting for these candles to be blessed to be used in the church or at home. Some Christians observe the practice of leaving Christmas decorations up until Candlemas.

Candlemas primarily focuses on Jesus' early life. Many Christians believe that Jesus' mother Mary presented him to God at the Temple in Jerusalem after observing the traditional 40-day period of purification (of mothers) following his birth. According to a New Testament gospel, a Jewish man named Simeon held the baby in his arms and said that he would be a light for the Gentiles (Luke 2:32). It is for this reason that this event is called Candlemas.

According to some sources, Christians began Candlemas in Jerusalem as early as the fourth century and the lighting of candles began in the fifth century. Other sources say that Candlemas was observed by blessing candles since the 11th century. An early writing dating back to around 380 CE mentioned that a feast of the Presentation occurred in a church in Jerusalem. It was observed on February 14. The feast was observed on February 2 in regions where Christ's birth was celebrated on December 25.



**Children's National.**

Candlemas is known as the "Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple" in many eastern churches. Other traditional names in the western churches include the "Feast for the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary" as well as the "Meeting of the Lord".



Snowdrops (*galanthus nivalis*) are known as Candlemas Bells because they often bloom early in the year, even before Candlemas. Some varieties bloom all winter (in the northern hemisphere). The superstitious used to believe that these flowers should not be brought into the house prior to Candlemas. However, it is also believed in more recent times that these flowers purify a home. (Photo: thewaldorfshop.com)

According to folklore, an angel helped these Candlemas bells to bloom and pointed them as a sign of hope to Eve, who wept in repentance and in despair over the cold and death that entered the world. Many Christians see the flower as a symbol of Jesus Christ being this hope for the world. Candles that are lit during Candlemas also symbolize Jesus as the "light of the world".

Note: Please note that the seasons and seasonal changes mentioned in relation to Candlemas refer to the northern hemisphere in this article.

## February 2 Presentation of Christ Orthodox Christian

This feast, celebrated on February 2, is known in the Orthodox Church as The Presentation of Christ in the Temple. Another name for the feast is The Meeting of our Lord. Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians call the feast, The Purification of the Holy Virgin. About 450 AD in Jerusalem, people began the custom of holding

lighted candles during the Divine Liturgy of this feast day. Therefore, some churches in the West refer to this holy day as Candlemas. The Feast of the Presentation concludes the observances related to the Nativity of Christ, a period that opened on November 15 with the beginning of the Nativity fast.

The story of the Presentation is told in Luke 2:22-29. Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews and observed their religious customs. An important custom was for the couple to take their first-born son to the Temple. The baby was taken to the Temple forty days after his birth and was dedicated to God. In addition, if the parents were wealthy, they were to bring a lamb and a young pigeon or a turtle dove to be offered as a sacrifice at the Temple. The custom provided that if the parents were poor, they were to offer two pigeons or two turtle doves for the sacrifice.

Joseph and Mary were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple. (Photo: russianicons.wordpress.com)

When Jesus was forty days old, Mary and Joseph took Him to the Temple in Jerusalem. They were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple. As they arrived at the Temple, Mary and Joseph were met by a very old man named Simeon. He was a holy man and was noted as a very intelligent scholar. Simeon spent much time studying about the prophets of Israel. It was during his studies that he



learned of the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah to come and deliver Israel from their conquerors. From that time on, Simeon spent his time praying for the Messiah to come. He spent many years in prayer. Finally, while Simeon was praying he heard the



voice of God. God promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.

When Simeon saw Jesus, he took the baby in his arms and blessed the Lord and said:

"Lord, now let Your servant go in peace according to Your promise, because my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory to your people Israel."

Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God.

Also, in the Temple was Anna the Prophetess. She had been a widow for many years. Anna was about eighty-four years old and spent her time in the Temple worshiping, fasting, and praying. When she saw the Christ Child she praised God and spoke of him to all who were awaiting the Messiah.

After Jesus was presented in the Temple, the family returned to Galilee to the town of Nazareth. The Bible tells us that Jesus grew and became strong, and was filled with wisdom.

## February 2 Imbolc Wicca/Pagan

The celebration of Imbolc originates from the



Celts. Imbolc symbolizes the halfway point between the winter solstice (Yule) and the spring equinox (Ostara). (Photo: oclccog.wordpress.com)

The word "imbolc" means "in the belly of the Mother," because the seeds of spring are beginning to stir in the belly of Mother Earth. The term "oimelc" means ewe's milk. Around this time of year, many herd animals give birth to their first offspring of the year, or are heavily pregnant. As a result, they are producing milk. This creation of life's milk is a part of the symbolic hope for spring.

This holiday also celebrates Brigid, the Celtic fire and fertility goddess. Over the years, Brigid was adopted by Christianity as St. Brigid. Brigid (or Bridget) is the patron saint of Irish nuns, newborns, midwives, dairy maids and cattle. The stories of St. Brigid and the goddess Brigid are very similar. Both are associated with milk, fire, the home, and babies.

The Celts used to make a doll of the Goddess Brigid from oat or wheat straw. They would make a dress for the doll and put it in a basket with a white flower bedding. Young girls would carry the dolls door to door, and gifts are given from each household. In addition, on the day of Imbolc, people lit bonfires and held a feast to honor Brigid.

To celebrate Imbolc, some modern day pagans focus on celebrating Brigid. They do this by setting up an altar with the symbols of Brigid, like a corn husk doll, white flowers, a bowl of milk, and candles. If there is a group gathering, they might cast a circle, and recite a prayer to receive a blessing from Brigid.

Other pagans aim their rituals towards the cycles of the season. Some people do house cleaning rituals as a part of getting ready for spring. Other families find a pile of snow, gather some musical instruments, and chant to drive away the winter. An example of one such chant is:

*Old man winter, it's time to go!*

*Take with you these piles of snow!*

*Melt, snow, melt!*

*Spring will soon return!*

*A flame, a fire, all the warmth it brings,*

*melt the snow, cold be gone, welcome back the spring!*

## February 2 Saint Brigid of Kildare Christian

St. Brigid's Day - *Lá Fhéile Bríde* - celebrates Ireland's only female patron saint on February 1 and most people will be familiar with the popular tradition of making crosses in St Brigid's honor.

Did you know the feast day of this 5th century saint was one of the most important days of the year for our rural ancestors?

With its origins in the Celtic festival of Imbolc, St Brigid's Day was the festival of fertility and

marked the beginning of spring in Ireland. It signaled an end to the darkness of winter and ushered in a new season of hope and growth.

As such, people celebrated the day with a festive meal and a host of customs, all aimed at securing St Brigid's protection and promise of new life and abundance for the year ahead.

People believed St Brigid crossed through the land on the eve of her feast day and gave blessings and protection to homes and farms where crosses were hung in her honor.

There were many regional styles and variations throughout Ireland with different materials used. Families would recite prayers, bless the rushes or straw with holy water and then each make the crosses. They would hang them over the door and around the home to welcome St Brigid. Many households kept the cross each year in the under-thatch of the house and you could tell how old a house was or how long the family had lived there by the number of crosses in the roof!

Visit this video to learn how to make your own St Brigid's Cross:



Some households would leave out a small piece of cloth or a ribbon on the windowsill, called a *Brat Bríde* or *Ribín Bríde*. As St Brigid crossed through the country on the eve of her feast, she would touch the *Brat Bríde*, endowing it with special curative properties to ward off illness and pain in both humans and animals. It was kept safe throughout the year and used for healing or incorporated into clothing to offer protection to the wearer.

There are many holy wells throughout Ireland dedicated to St Brigid and people visited these wells on the eve or on the feast day itself. Often



they left a ribbon or a votive offering at the well so that their intention would be remembered. Water collected from a holy well at this time was believed to be particularly blessed. (Photo: [irishcultureandtraditions.org](http://irishcultureandtraditions.org))

### February 3 Feast of Saint Blaise Christian/Catholic

Some accounts tell of how Saint Blaise left Sebaste to escape persecution. He made his home in a mountain cave and lived there, surrounded by wild animals, until he was found, brought back to Sebaste and arrested.

On his way to prison, Saint Blaise met a mother whose son was choking to death on a fish bone. He cured the boy and to show her gratitude, the mother brought candles to light his prison cell. In another version of the story, Saint Blaise met a woman whose pig had been taken by a wolf. He commanded the wolf to return the pig and it was



this woman who brought the candles for his cell.

In prison, Saint Blaise was ordered to renounce his faith. He refused so was beaten with wool combs and beheaded. After his death, he was made a saint and has become the patron saint of wool combers, wild animals, candle makers and ailments of the throat.

Saint Blaise was a popular saint in medieval England, probably due to the connection with wool combing and the wool trade, which was an important industry at the time. A number of churches, chapels and a holy well were dedicated to him. (Photo: [aleieia.org](http://aleieia.org))



### February 3 Setsebun Shinto

Setsebun Sai, is a Japanese cultural and Shinto holiday. This holiday contains a ritual to banish bad luck, disease, and evil spirits from the past year and to invite good luck and health for the coming year. It also celebrates the coming spring.

The main event is *mame-maki*, which means "bean scattering." The *mame-maki* is supposed to drive out evil spirits and lingering misfortune that may ruin the new year. For *mame-maki*, soybeans are roasted and placed in a wooden sake box. Then, one family member dresses up as the *Oni* (demon) with a paper mask. The *Oni* represents bad luck. The *Oni* will be chased out of the house by the rest of the family throwing beans at the *Oni* while chanting "*Oni wa soto! Fuku wa uchi!*" (Demons get out! Good fortune come in!) before they slam the door shut.

Traditionally, the bean-throwing was done by a male of the household from the coming zodiac year. Nowadays, in a traditional family, the father takes on *Oni* duties while the children gleefully throw beans at him (or are scared by the *Oni* disguise). (Photo: [tsunagujapan.com](http://tsunagujapan.com))



### February 3 Four Chaplains Memorial Day Multifaith

This day commemorates the events of February 3, 1943, when the troop ship USAT Dorchester sank. Dorchester left New York on January 23, 1943, carrying 4 chaplains and about 900 others as a part of convoy of three ships.

It was torpedoed by German submarine U-223 off Newfoundland at 12:55 a.m. When Dorchester began to sink, four chaplains of different religions, George L. Fox (Methodist), Alexander D. Goode (rabbi), Clark V. Poling (Baptist) and John P. Washington (Catholic) were helping to calm down the passengers and organized an orderly

evacuation. The life vests were passed out to men, but the supply ran out before each man had one.

The four chaplains gave their own life vests to others and helped as many men as they could into the boats, then they linked their arms together, saying prayers and singing hymns, went down with the ship. Four chaplains were posthumously awarded by the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Service Cross on December 19, 1944. In 2006 chaplains were awarded by the Medal of Honor.



The Four Chaplains' Medal was introduced by Congress on July 14, 1960. These medals were presented posthumously to the next of kin of each of the four chaplains of Dorchester on January 18, 1961.

Congress established February 3 as Four Chaplains Day in 1988. This day is observed with official proclamations and, sometimes, flags flying at half-mast. (Photo: [va.gov](http://va.gov))

### February 8 Isra al Miraj Islam

Within Islam, Isra and Mi'raj, celebrated on the 27th day of the 7th month of the Muslim calendar, refers to a miraculous nighttime journey undertaken by the Prophet Muhammad, in two legs. First from Mecca to Jerusalem, and then from Jerusalem to the heavens. Believers consider it both a physical and a spiritual journey that was assisted by Allah himself – for example, by providing Muhammad with a pegasus-like steed, the *Buraq*, to ride during the first part of the journey.

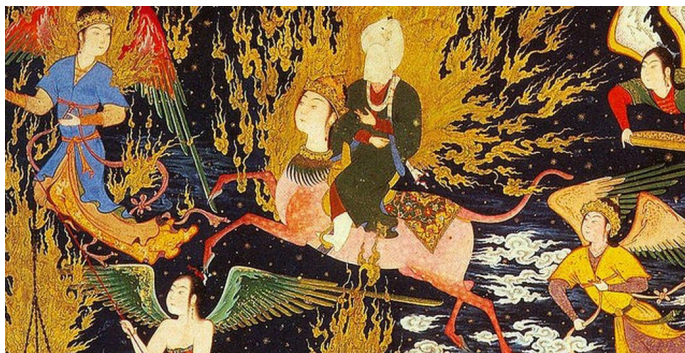
There is some dispute among scholars as to whether "the farthest mosque," the Al-Aqsa,

was a literal brick-and-mortar mosque or just a simple place of prayer, but adherents to the Muslim faith agree that Muhammad's journey was truly a miracle, because in order to travel by normal methods between Mecca and Jerusalem, it would take more than a month, not the single night of Isra and Mi'raj.

Although there are different accounts of what occurred during the Mi'raj, most Islamic narratives have the same elements. Allah ascended the Prophet Muhammad from the Dome of the Rock through the skies or heaven, with the Angel Jibreel or Gabriel. Muhammad not only saw many miraculous sights and numerous angels, he also met a different prophet at each of the seven levels of heaven. First Adam, then John the Baptist and Jesus, then Joseph, then Idris, then Aaron, then Moses, and lastly Abraham.

After Muhammad meets with Abraham, he continues on to meet Allah without the Angel Gabriel. It is here when Allah gave the *ummah* (Muslims) the gift of compulsory salah or prayer. Allah tells Muhammad that his people must pray 50 times a day, but as Muhammad descends back to Earth, he meets Moses who tells Muhammad to go back to Allah and ask for fewer prayers because 50 is too many. Muhammad goes between Moses and Allah nine times until the prayers are reduced to the five daily prayers, which Allah will reward tenfold.

Finally, the Prophet Muhammad was taken back down to Al-Asqa and returned to Makkah. As he was transported home, he saw various caravans heading towards Makkah, which he would later describe to the Quraysh as proof that he really had made his miraculous journey. The entire journey had taken place in less than a night, and there were many who would mock Muhammad for making such a claim. For Muslims, however,



the story was a source of wonder and hope, as it continues to be for many Muslims today. (Photo: scroll.in)

## February 10 – 25 Lunar/Chinese New Year

Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival or Lunar New Year, is one of the most important and widely celebrated festivals in Chinese culture. It marks the beginning of the lunar new year and is a time for family reunions, cultural festivities, and the welcoming of a new year with hope and optimism.

Chinese New Year 2024 is the Year of the Dragon according to the Chinese zodiac. Each year in the Chinese zodiac is associated with an animal sign, and the Dragon is considered a symbol of strength, courage, and good fortune. It is a time to embrace Chinese traditions, enjoy delicious food,



and wish for prosperity and happiness in the year ahead. (Photo above: elitetraveler.com)

Chinese New Year falls on different dates each year as it follows the lunar calendar. In 2024, Chinese New Year begins on February 10th and continues for 15 days, with the Lantern Festival marking the end of the celebrations.

Celebrating Chinese New Year is a wonderful way to immerse yourself in Chinese culture and traditions. Here are some ways to participate in the festivities:

**Family Reunions:** Like Thanksgiving in Western cultures, Chinese New Year is a time for family gatherings. Plan a reunion with your loved ones and share a special meal together.

**Decorate with Red:** Red is the primary color associated with good luck and happiness in Chinese culture. Decorate your home with red



lanterns, couplets, and other festive items.

**Enjoy Traditional Foods:** Savor traditional Chinese dishes such as dumplings, spring rolls, fish, and rice cakes. These foods carry symbolic meanings related to prosperity and abundance.

**Give Red Envelopes (Hongbao):** It's customary to give red envelopes containing money as a gesture of goodwill and blessings. This is particularly common when visiting friends and family.

**Watch Dragon and Lion Dances:** Attend local parades or performances featuring vibrant dragon and lion dances. These dances are believed to bring good luck and drive away evil spirits.

### History of Chinese New Year

Chinese New Year has a history that spans over 3,000 years. It originated as a way to celebrate the end of winter and the beginning of spring. The festival is deeply rooted in Chinese mythology and folklore and has evolved over the centuries to become the grand celebration it is today.

## February 11 - 13 Shrovetide Christian

During the weeks before Lent medieval Christians were well known for their exuberant merrymaking. This time was seen by some as the "last call" for any "carnal" (literally, fleshy) delights before the somber season of Lent.

However, the Church had other thoughts about



this pre-Lenten season and instructed her people to prepare spiritually for the arduous 40-day fast.

Over time the English word Shrovetide was assigned to the final days before Ash Wednesday

and best summarizes the primary focus of these days. It comes from the Middle English word *shrive*, meaning "to confess." According to an 11th-century text, "In the week immediately before Lent everyone shall go to his confessor and confess his deeds and the confessor shall so shrive him as he then may hear by his deeds what he is to do [in the way of penance]."

In other words, Shrovetide was a special time of spiritual preparation where Christians examined their lives and confessed their sins. Lent was a time to perform various penances to atone for those sins confessed during Shrovetide and turn away from them through prayer and self-denial.

To further emphasize the spiritual character of Shrovetide, in the 18th century Benedict XIV promoted the "40 Hours Devotion," a custom where the Blessed Sacrament would remain exposed on the altar for 40 continuous hours on the days immediately before Ash Wednesday. This would allow the faithful to spend personal time of adoration in front of Jesus present in the Eucharist and further reflect on their lives and look forward to the penitential season of Lent.

While there are other cultural traditions associated with Shrovetide, it was initially a period of time reserved for reflection and confession, preparing the heart for the graces God wanted to give it over the next 40 days. (Photo: The Pancake Bakery, Pieter Aertsen 16th Century)

## February 14 Ash Wednesday Christian

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lenten discipline for observant Christians. It is traditionally a time of fasting and prayer in preparation for receiving or reaffirming baptism at Easter. For some Christians, Lent is a time to think about one's life choices and mortality, as well as reflect on life directions. It serves as a wakeup call for some Christians. There are also those who choose this time of the year to donate to charities or take part in charity events as a way to get close to God.

The practice of marking foreheads with ashes is common among Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans and Episcopalians in the United States. However some Methodist and Presbyterian churches adopted this custom in recent times, especially around the 1990s. (Photo: timeanddate.com)



#### **February 14 Vasant Panchami Hindu**

The festival is also known as 'Sarasvati Puja' and marks the beginning of Spring. Indians living in the subcontinent and all over the world jubilantly observe this holiday in different ways depending on the religious sect and region. Saraswati is the Goddess of arts, science, music, and knowledge in Hinduism. (Photo: news18.com)



Vasant means 'spring,' and Panchami means 'fifth' in Hindu. The religious festival falls on the fifth day of the Hindu lunar month of Magha. It marks the beginning of the end of winter and the coming of spring. Celebrations of Vasant Panchami revolve around the Hindu Goddess Saraswati – the goddess of all knowledge and intellect – 'Sarasvati Puja.' Different facets of crafts, skills, and learning are owed to her. Her persona is described in Hindu lore as wise and calm. Pakistanis refer to the holiday as 'Basant

Panchami.'

Depictions of Sarasvati vary, however, she is mostly depicted in pictures as wearing white clothing and sitting on a huge lotus flower or a peacock. Sarasvati has four hands, symbolizing wisdom, mind, alertness, and ego, respectively. Some variations show her carrying scriptures and the lotus flower in two of her hands while playing the 'sitar' instrument with the other two hands. Instead of sitting on a lotus, she rides on a white swan. Sarasvati stands for all things good and pure, and her throne, be it a lotus or an animal, expresses the wisdom of differentiating between good and bad. The peacock represents a lack of good understanding, held back by one's ego.

Because Vasant Panchami also heralds the arrival of spring, the color yellow is associated with the celebration. In the Punjab region of the subcontinent, mustard fields are a common sight at this time of the year. People wear bright yellow clothes and cook colorful food, such as 'biryani' and 'ladoos,' to mark the beginning of spring. The holiday is recognized and observed by Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains in Northern India, and Panjabi Muslims in Pakistan.

#### **February 14 Saint Valentine's Day Christian and Secular**

In the Roman Rite, February 14 is no longer the feast of St. Valentine, even though popular culture celebrates Valentine's Day.

February 14 has become one of the strangest days in Western culture. It is widely celebrated by the name of "Valentine's Day," referring to the Catholic saint, Valentine.

Historically speaking, February 14 has been associated with St. Valentine for centuries, dating back to some of the earliest calendars of the Catholic Church.

However, it was not a single St. Valentine, but multiple saints, as the early 20th-century American Ecclesiastical Review points out.

The various martyrologies of the Church contain twenty-two lives of canonized saints by the name of Valentine. Of these, nine are recorded as bishops, twelve as martyrs, most of the latter were priests; one was an officer in the army of Maximian and died at Ravenna. They are of all



nationalities, Italians, French, Spaniards, Germans and Belgians.

Five of the St Valentines have their feasts assigned upon the 14th of February another occurs on February 12th.

Yet, none of these Valentines is the one who is connected to the modern celebration of Valentine's Day.

That St. Valentine is a 3rd-century Roman priest who was martyred for his Christian faith. There exist a number of legends that surround this particular saint, one of them claiming that he secretly wed couples.

Initially the Roman Church had no problem celebrating this and other Valentines on February 14 and kept his feast on that date until 1969.

In the Second Vatican Council document, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, it was suggested that the liturgical year should be revised, and certain saints removed from the general calendar.

Lest the feasts of the saints should take precedence over the feasts which commemorate the very mysteries of salvation, many of them should be left to be celebrated



by a particular Church or nation or family of religious; only those should be extended to the universal Church which commemorate saints who are truly of universal importance.

A study was conducted by the Church, and St. Paul VI later explained in his *motu proprio*, *Mysterii Paschalis*, why some saints were removed and different ones added.

In order to execute this decision of the Ecumenical Council, the names of some saints have been removed from the universal Calendar.

Also, it is believed that since there was doubt as to which St. Valentine was celebrated on February 14, his name was subsequently removed.

(Photo: myocn.net.)

## February 15 Parinirvana Day Buddhist

Parinirvana Day, also known as Nirvana Day, is celebrated annually on February 15 to commemorate the death of the Buddha when he attained complete nirvana or parinirvana.



The history of Parinirvana Day begins with the birth of Siddhartha Gautama. The Buddha was born in the 5th century B.C. in Lumbini, present day Nepal. According to Buddhism writings, he was born to King Suddhodana and Queen Maya. But many scholars argue that he was born in the Shakya community, which was ruled by a republic-like council, and he must be from one of the ruling families.

Being moved by the suffering of life and death and its endless repetition due to rebirth, Gautama renounced his title and inheritance. He embarked on a journey to find liberation from suffering – Nirvana. Gautama took up the sramana ascetic life and went to study under two teachers of meditation. But that also did not help him solve the problem of suffering.

Gautama decided to put himself under the harshest ascetic disciplines, including strict fasting and breath control. That also didn't address the problem of suffering. He forewent asceticism and turned to the meditative practice of dhyana. According to legend, he went to Bodh Gaya, where he sat beneath the Bodhi Tree and vowed to remain in the state of meditation until

he understood the meaning of living without suffering. In this deep meditative state, Gautama attained “awakening” and became the Buddha – the enlightened one.

Upon becoming the Buddha, Gautama began teaching his doctrine, Dharma, initiated monks into his Sangha order, and trained nuns. He allowed his disciples to spread his teaching across India, using the local language or dialects as the communication medium.

Gautama died at the age of 80 in Kushinagar, India, attaining the final nirvana – parinirvana. His death has been celebrated every year since then.

### February 19 Green/Clean Monday Orthodox Christian



Clean Monday is celebrated on the sixth Monday before Palm Sunday every year in Greece and this year, it falls on March 18. Clean Monday is a movable holiday and has no stable day of celebration because it depends on Lent. Precisely, Clean Monday is observed fifty days before Orthodox Easter, and it marks the beginning of the Great Lent period for Orthodox believers. Clean Monday is also called ‘Ash Monday,’ ‘Pure Monday,’ ‘Orthodox Shrove Monday,’ ‘Monday of Lent,’ or ‘Green Monday’ (particularly in Cyprus). Other than its religious significance, Clean Monday is also regarded as the first day of spring, and Greeks tend to celebrate it with ‘koulouma’ – which are outdoor activities and picnics. It concludes the month-long Greek Carnival and symbolizes the transition from feasting to fasting. Greek Orthodox celebrate Clean Monday by eating special Lent dishes (‘nistisima’ or ‘Sarakostiana’) based on

legumes, vegetables, grains, and seafood.

Clean Monday is a popular annual holiday observed in Greece and Cyprus. The name ‘Clean Monday’ (known locally as ‘*Kathará Deftéra*’) stems from the belief that Christians should approach the fasting season of Lent with clean hearts and pure intentions. Traditionally, Christians also see the Lenten season as a time to clean up their homes, readjust their lives, and commit themselves to a holier and more righteous lifestyle. Like every other day of Lent, Clean Monday is a day of total fasting. Christians are to abstain from eating from midnight to midday and are not allowed to eat meat at all. It stands in stark contrast to the festive mood and binging traditions of the three preceding weeks of the Greek Carnival – ‘*Apokries*.’

Since it is also considered to herald the arrival of spring, Greeks celebrate Clean Monday with fun, outdoor events, and picnics in the countryside – often called ‘*koulouma*.’ They also eat traditional foods like olives, octopuses, shellfish, and shrimp.

On Clean Monday, Greeks also bake ‘*lagana*,’ a special kind of unleavened bread – similar to ‘*matzah*’ eaten by Jewish people at the Passover. In addition to picnics, other outdoor activities on this national holiday include flying kites, dancing, music, etc. Everyone – young and old – visit the beautiful countryside and fly their colorful kites in the sunny sky. Different areas and regions throughout the country also have their special customs and local traditions associated with Clean Monday. (Photo: globaltimes.cn)

### February 25 Ayyam-i-Ha Baha’i

Sacred days “outside of time” begin for members of the Baha’i faith as the festival of Ayyam-i-Ha, or Intercalary Days, commences. Until sunset on March 1, Baha’is mark a break in their 19-month calendar: the “extra days” are used to bring awareness to God’s oneness, along with a focus on charity and unity.

Ayyam-i-Ha—literally, the Days of Ha—plays on a double meaning of “Ha”: Ha, the first letter of an Arabic pronoun commonly used to refer to God, is used as a symbol of the essence of God in Baha’i writings; the Arabic *abjad* system designates the letter Ha as having a numerical value of five,



which has always been the maximum number of days allowed for the period of Ayyam-i-Ha.

Baha'u'llah designated that Ayyam-i-Ha should be filled with "good cheer" and "joy and exultation"—for Baha'is, their kindred and for recipients of the Baha'is' charity. (Photo: bahaipedia.org.)



## OTHER CULTURAL OBSERVANCES

### Kwakiutl Midwinter Dance

The Kwakiutl are one of the Indian tribes that inhabit the coastal region stretching from northern California to southeastern Alaska. They believe that long ago, before their people even existed, the world was ruled by animals—including bears, wolves, seals, ravens, bees, owls, and killer whale—with fantastic powers. These supernatural beings gave some of their power to humans, who were the ancestors of today's Kwakiutl.

During their winter ceremonial season, the Kwakiutl acknowledge and reaffirm their connection with the supernatural world by performing dramatic dances or *tseka*. The performers dress in strips of cedar bark and wear ornately carved masks that are designed to evoke the spirits of their supernatural forebears. The dances themselves illustrate characters and incidents from Kwakiutl mythology. The midwinter ceremonies also include feasting. Favorite foods served during the ceremonies include salmon, salal berries, cranberries, huckleberries, blackberries, crabapples, and soapberries that have been whipped up into a froth. Many of the elaborately carved dishes in which ceremonial foods were once served can now be seen in museum collections.

The most important dance performed during the midwinter ceremonies of the Kwakiutl is the *Hamatsa* Dance. It is performed by members of the Cannibal Society, the most prestigious of the secret societies for which initiation rites are held



during this period. The members must undergo special training and long periods of withdrawal from normal society, in return for which they are bestowed with the power of the Cannibal Spirit.

The *Hamatsa* Dance is characterized by magical effects, ghostly calls, and wild behavior. The dancers wear stylized masks, the most outstanding being that of the black-and-red Fool dancer. With his huge nose, he threatens audience members and occasionally throws stones at them to make sure they behave.

(Photo: Chief Mungo Martin, Kwakiutl Artist. Crooked Beak Mask—[davidneelartist.com](http://davidneelartist.com))

### February 1 World Hijab Day

World Hijab Day is observed every year on February 1 to honor Muslim women who wear the hijab. It is also a day to urge women of various origins and beliefs to try on the hijab and see what it is like to wear it. Muslim women maintain their modesty by wearing the hijab. Many also use them to safeguard themselves from male harassment.

#### HISTORY OF WORLD HIJAB DAY

The hijab is a head and chest veil worn by Muslim women, usually when they are around males not part of their close family. The term 'hijab' means 'partition' or 'curtain,' despite its appearance as a headscarf. Hijabs are fun to wear because they come in a range of colors and styles. Although

women are only required to wear a hijab in the company of men who are not members of their close family, many Muslim women prefer to wear a hijab as a means of promoting cultural solidarity. Some others make the choice based on their perception of the hijab as a religious requirement.

On February 1, 2013, Nazma Khan declared the first World Hijab Day. Khan is a Muslim woman from New York City. By allowing all women to try wearing the hijab for a day, she hoped to promote religious understanding and tolerance.

When Khan was a child in New York City, she faced a lot of prejudice because she wore her headscarf to school, particularly after the 9/11 attacks. She hoped that by establishing this day, she would be able to put an end to this form of discrimination. World Hijab Day is currently celebrated in 190 countries across the world.



### **Congenital Heart Defect Week February 7 - 14**

Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week is observed each year during February 7-14 to promote awareness and education about congenital heart defects (CHDs). CHDs affect approximately one in 100 births every year in the United States and are the most common type of birth defect (1,2). Heart defects are conditions that persons live with throughout their lives; an estimated 1 million children and 1.4 million adults in the United States were living with a CHD in 2010 (3). CDC's website, Stories: Living with Heart Defects, includes personal stories by persons affected by CHDs (<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/stories/heartdefects.html>).

(Photo: charlottesvillepeds.com)



**Children's Mental Health Week** This year's National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day is observed on May 9. It is an annual event that occurs on the Thursday of the first full week of May. It is a day to raise awareness of the importance of every child's mental health. Mental health is a serious issue in modern societies. The mental health of children is even more so. According to the data from the C.D.C., one in six children between the ages of two and eight has a mental or behavioral disorder. Children are the most precious thing in the world. Children with serious mental illness and severe emotional disturbance need full-time care and treatment. Even the family of such a child needs help to cope with the situation. This is a day to help them by encouraging them into therapy. Conditions like A.D.H.D. as well as anxiety and behavioral disorders can be diagnosed and treated to help the child have a better life.

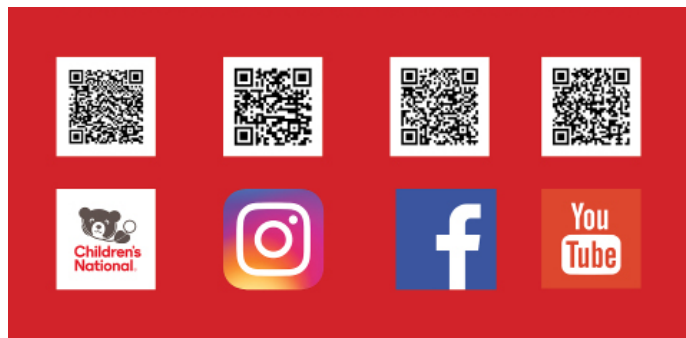




# iChaplain

Contact a chaplain or access spiritual/religious resources

Many resources for Staff and for families and patients can be found at the sites listed above as well as on our GetWell Network.



## Chaplaincy Staff

**Rev. Kathleen Ennis-Durstine**

Room 4201 | x3321

**Rev. Eliezer Oliveira**

Habla Español | x5050

**Rev. Whitney Barnes**

**x 6736**

**Rev. Lavender Kelley**

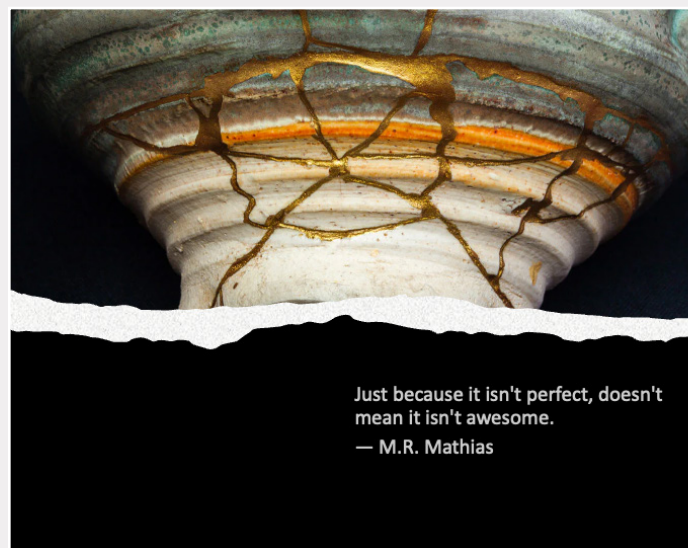
x4638

**Rev. Bryan Baker**

x2626

## We hope you will join our Grace Notes Community!

Grace Notes is a daily (weekday) email inspirational message sent only to a subscription list. If you would like to participate please email Kathleen Ennis Durstine and ask to be added. Below are two recent example of a Grace Note:



Resources: Pictures are from Envato Elements or iStock unless otherwise identified. timeanddate.com, geoarch.org, bpl.org, museum.ie, bristolmuseum.org.uk, awarenessdays.com, nationaltoday.com, aleteia.org, readthespirit.com, encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com, cdc.gov.