Christian Holiday Descriptions

# Name: Annunciation Day

## Pronunciation

* [Uh-nuhn-see-ay-shn Day](https://www.howtopronounce.com/annunciation-day)

## Meaning

* Celebration of the belief of Christians that an angel announced to Mary, the mother of Jesus, that she was pregnant.
* Also known as “Lady Day” and “Feast of the Incarnation”

## When?

* Most Christians (in the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions) celebrate Annunciation Day on March 25th of each year.
* The religious calendar of most Eastern Orthodox Christians (such as Greek Orthodox Christians) follows the Julian rather than the Gregorian calendar. Because of the difference between the two calendars, Annunciation Day falls on or near April 7th for most Eastern Orthodox Christians.

## Greetings

* “Happy Feast of the Annunciation”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Annunciation usually falls during Lent
* Observers may pause fasting in celebration and attend religious services

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Observers may be fasting.

Students, staff, and faculty should be given the opportunity to reschedule any tests, exams or study or work activities that must be scheduled at this time.

# Name: Ascension Day

## Pronunciation

* [Uh-sen-shuhn Day](https://www.howtopronounce.com/ascension-day)

## Meaning

* Celebration of the Christian belief that Jesus ascended to heaven forty days after being resurrected.

## When?

* The date of this annual celebration varies from year to year; it is usually on a Thursday coinciding with the fortieth day after Easter Sunday.
* All Christian holidays relating to Lent and Easter are moveable rather than fixed. Due to differences in religious calendars, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians tend to celebrate holidays on days that are different than those observed by Eastern Orthodox Christians (such as Greek Orthodox Christians).

## Greetings

* “Happy Ascension Day”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Christians may attend religious services on Thursday or on the ensuing Sunday.
* Some Christians may attend an all-night vigil.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Some Christians may request time off for religious observances. Students, staff and faculty should be given the opportunity to reschedule any tests, exams, or study or work activities that must be scheduled at this time.

# Name: Ash Wednesday

## Pronunciation

* [Ae-sh Wenz-day](https://www.howtopronounce.com/ash-wednesday)

## Meaning

* Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent as observed by Christians in the Roman Catholic tradition and some Protestant traditions
* Clean Monday is the first day of Great Lent as observed by Christians in Eastern Orthodox traditions (such as Greek Orthodox Christians)
* For some Christians, ashes are placed on the forehead in the shape of a cross. Most Eastern Orthodox Christians do not use ashes.
* Many Christians view Ash Wednesday and Clean Monday as a time of prayer and observance.
* *Lent* means “Spring season.”

## When?

* Ash Wednesday takes place 46 days before Easter, marking the beginning of the important religious season of Lent. Lent is a solemn period of preparation for Easter.
* Clean Monday takes place seven weeks before Easter Sunday in the Eastern Orthodox religious calendar.
* All Christian holidays relating to Lent and Easter are moveable rather than fixed. Due to differences in religious calendars, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians tend to celebrate holidays on days that are different than those observed by Eastern Orthodox Christians (such as Greek Orthodox Christians).

## Greetings

* “Happy Ash Wednesday”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Some Christians will attend religious services.
* Some Christians will leave the ashes on their forehead throughout the day.
* Some Christians will fast intermittently or continually throughout the period of Lent.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Observers may be fasting.
* Students, staff, and faculty should be given the opportunity to reschedule any tests, exams or study or work activities that must be scheduled at this time.

# Name: Christmas

## Pronunciation

* [Kris-muh-s](https://www.howtopronounce.com/christmas)

## Meaning

* Celebration of the Christian belief in the birth of Jesus.
* From Old English for Christian religious service (“Mass”) on day of Christ’s birth.
* Culmination of the important religious season of Advent (“arrival”).

## When?

* Most Christians (in the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions) celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25th of each year.
* The religious calendar of most Eastern Orthodox Christians (e.g, Greek Orthodox Christians) follows the Julian rather than the Gregorian calendar. Because of the difference between the two calendars, Christmas falls on January 6th or 7th for most Eastern Orthodox Christians.

## Greetings

* “Merry Christmas” or “Happy Christmas.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Many Christians celebrate this holiday by giving gifts and attending religious services.
* Occasion for the singing of Christmas carols (that is, songs of joy), such as “Silent Night” and decorating Christmas trees.
* Most Christians usually observe the day before Christmas as “Christmas Eve.”

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Christmas is a national holiday in the United States.
* The MSU Academic Campus is on season break on December 25th and maintains reduced staffing through the holidays.
* Eastern Orthodox Christians may request time off on and near January 6th or 7th. Students, staff, and faculty should be given the opportunity to reschedule any tests, exams or study or work activities that must be scheduled at this time.

# Name: Easter, Pascha

## Pronunciation

* [Ee-str](https://youtu.be/hNxhqT7D9zY?si=cHUqq_VhCGG7j2_W)
* [Pas-xa](https://youtu.be/WoZW3syO_Sc?si=ChcWUocqCKAYpQLw)

## Meaning

* From Old English *Eastre*
* Known as *Pascha* in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, alluding to the Jewish festival of Passover
* Celebration of the Christian belief that Jesus was raised from the dead.
* This is the most ancient and important holiday in the Christian religious calendar.

## When?

* The date of this annual celebration varies from year to year, occurring on a Sunday between March 22nd and April 25th.
* All Christian holidays relating to Lent and Easter are moveable rather than fixed. Due to differences in religious calendars, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians tend to celebrate holidays on days that are different than those observed by Eastern Orthodox Christians (such as Greek Orthodox Christians).

## Greetings

* “Happy Easter”
* Christians may also greet one another, “He is risen,” and expect the reply, “He is risen indeed.”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Many Christians celebrate Easter with special church services and music.
* Other customs, such as Easter egg hunts and the Easter bunny, are commonly part of the celebration of Easter in North America.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* Easter is a national holiday in the United States.
* The holiday is always on a Sunday so no special accommodations are likely required.
* The period between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, known to most Christians as Holy Week, is an important week in the Christian religious calendar. Some Christians may request time off for religious observances. Students, staff, and faculty should be given the opportunity to reschedule any tests, exams or study or work activities that must be scheduled at this time.

# Name: Epiphany

## Pronunciation

* [I-pi-fuh-nee](https://youtu.be/xQsCPRJgAek?si=LvI-A8rSrLZCCXJG)

## Meaning

* Celebration of the Christian belief in the revelation of the infant Jesus to Gentiles (i.e., non-Jews).
* *Epiphany* means “manifestation.”
* Centers on the story of the Magi, also known as “The Three Kings.”
* In Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Epiphany is also associated with the baptism of Jesus.

## When?

* Most Christians (in the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions) celebrate the Festival of Epiphany on January 6th of each year.
* The religious calendar of most Eastern Orthodox Christians (such as Greek Orthodox Christians) follows the Julian rather than the Gregorian calendar. Because of the difference between the two calendars, Epiphany falls on or near January 19th for most Eastern Orthodox Christians.

## Greetings

* “Happy Three Kings Day”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Popular Epiphany customs include Epiphany singing, having one's house blessed, consuming Three Kings Cake, as well as attending religious services.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* For some Christians, no interruption to normal work or academic activities usually takes place.
* Other Christians may request time off. Students, staff, and faculty should be given the opportunity to reschedule any tests, exams or study or work activities that must be scheduled at this time.

# Name: Good Friday

## Pronunciation

* [Guud Frai-day](https://www.howtopronounce.com/good-friday)

## Meaning

* Christians commemorate the death of Jesus on this day, the Friday before Easter.
* *Good* indicates “observed as a holy day.”
* Eastern Orthodox Christianity does not use the term “Good Friday” but instead uses the term “Holy Friday” or “Great Friday.”

## When?

* Friday before Easter Sunday.
* All Christian holidays relating to Lent and Easter are moveable rather than fixed. Due to differences in religious calendars, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians tend to celebrate holidays on days that are different than those observed by Eastern Orthodox Christians (such as Greek Orthodox Christians).

## Greetings

* N/A

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Christians may observe fasting and attend religious services

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

The period between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, known to most Christians as Holy Week, is an important week in the Christian religious calendar. Some Christians may request time off for religious observances. Students, staff, and faculty should be given the opportunity to reschedule any tests, exams or study or work activities that must be scheduled at this time.

# Name: Palm Sunday

## Pronunciation

* [Paam Suhn-day](https://www.howtopronounce.com/palm-sunday)

## Meaning

* Celebration of the Christian belief in the story of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

## When?

* Sunday before Easter Sunday.
* All Christian holidays relating to Lent and Easter are moveable rather than fixed. Due to differences in religious calendars, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians tend to celebrate holidays on days that are different than those observed by Eastern Orthodox Christians (such as Greek Orthodox Christians).

## Greetings

* “Happy Palm Sunday”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Christians may attend religious services
* Christian religious services often involve processions with participants waving palm fronds.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* The holiday is always on a Sunday so no special accommodations are likely required.
* The period between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, known to most Christians as Holy Week, is an important week in the Christian religious calendar. Some Christians may request time off for religious observances. Students, staff, and faculty should be given the opportunity to reschedule any tests, exams or study or work activities that must be scheduled at this time.

# Name: Pentecost

## Pronunciation

* [Pen-tuh-kaast](https://youtu.be/AF8iwZ4LeaI?si=57jnTX-z81IE8Vv0)

## Meaning

* Christians celebrate the belief in the descent of the Holy Spirit on the followers of Jesus fifty days after Easter.
* Pentecost means “fifty.”

## When?

* The date of this annual celebration varies from year to year, occurring on a Sunday.
* All Christian holidays relating to Lent and Easter are moveable rather than fixed. Due to differences in religious calendars, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians tend to celebrate holidays on days that are different than those observed by Eastern Orthodox Christians (such as Greek Orthodox Christians).

## Greetings

* “Happy Pentecost”

## Common Observances/Celebrations:

* Pentecost is regularly used as a time for Christian baptism.

## What to know as an instructor or supervisor:

* The holiday is always on a Sunday so no special accommodations are likely required.