



# The Holy Days of March

*Celebrations, Observances and Information about Religious, Spiritual, and Cultural Occasions*

## Office of InterFaith

### Pastoral and Spiritual Care

#### Senior Chaplain

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extension 3321/ room 4201

#### Staff Chaplain

Janie Brooks  
extension 5050/ room 4115

Staff/ Spanish Language Chaplain

Margarita Roque

extension 2626/ room 4115

#### Catholic Chaplain

Fr. Olusola Adewole

extension 2626/room 4115

**Catholic Mass: Thursday at 12:00 noon (East Chapel, room 3033, third floor East Tower) and Saturday at 4:00 pm (Main Chapel, room 3201, 3rd Floor Main Hospital)**

**Prayer and Meditation Tuesday 12:45 pm East Chapel, room 3033, third floor East Tower—please listen for the announcement\*\***

**Friday: Jummah Prayer R-114, floor 3.5 Main Hospital at 1:15**

**Sunday Worship 4:00 pm Room 3201, Main Chapel third floor, Main Hospital - please listen for the announcement\*\***

**\*\*Because of staffing limitations leaders for these worship opportunities may not be available. We OVERHEAD announce them 1/2 hour prior to the service.**

Note the Information Boards and Brochure Racks for other information

In March you have the opportunity to celebrate: Red Cross Month, Child Life Month, Deaf



History Month, Expanding girls' Horizons in Science and Engineering Month, International Mirth Month, Music in Our Schools Month, National Ethics Awareness Month, National Social Work Month, National Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month, Workplace Eye Health and Safety Month. Also you can Celebrate Your Name ( 4-10), Share a Story—Shape a Future (5-9), Girl Scout Week (110-17), International Brain Awareness Week (12-19-18), Week of Solidarity with People's Struggling Against Racism and Discrimination (21-27), Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Week (25-31). More than a few special days also occur: World Compliment Day (1), Employee Appreciation Day (2), Daughters' and Sons' Day (4), Peace Corps Birthday (6), National Proof-Reading Day (8), Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (10) K-9 Veterans' Day (13), Absolutely Incredible Kids' Day (15), National Quilting Day (17), World Down Syndrome Day (21), Doctors' Day (30).

## Holy Days with no fixed date

**Navajo Mountain Chant** This is a shamanistic healing ceremony. It centers around a recitation of a cycle of myths about a Navajo culture hero, Dsil'yidje Qaçal. His journey takes him to the land of the gods and goddesses, where he learns powerful magic. The narrative is compelling and compares well with the Homeric Odyssey, which it resembles both thematically and stylistically. The ceremony incorporates dance, song, prayer, sand-painting, drama, sculpture, conjuring, and even a bit of farce.

The purposes of the ceremony are various. Its ostensible reason for existence is to cure disease; but it is made the occasion for invoking the unseen powers in behalf of the people at large for various purposes, particularly for good crops and abundant rains. It would appear that it is also designed to perpetuate their religious symbolism. This, like other great rites of the Navajo, is of nine days' duration. Any details can be found at these two sites: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/nav/tmc/index.htm> and <http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/nav/tmc/index.htm>



Mountain Way Chant by David K. John

**The Athabascan Stickdance** This is held for one week every March by the Athabascan people of interior Alaska. The purpose of the dance is to help mourn those male members of the tribe who have died and give comfort and support to their families and friends. Widows and other family members sponsor the ceremony; each evening of the first four people gather to participate in a potlatch, sing and dance, and share memories. The dance itself takes place on the fifth night.. A large Spruce pole is placed in the center of the community hall. It is decorated with gifts and then all join in a slow dance around the pole, chanting ritual songs, and meditating on those who have died. The pole is removed the next morning, carried past each home in the village, then taken to the Yukon river where it is broken up and thrown into the water—it will eventually be carried to the sea in the spring thaw.

## Grace Note

The Grace Note offering is a daily inspirational e-mail which is sent to those who request.

If you would like to receive  
Grace Notes  
Please email the  
Senior Chaplain  
At

[kennisdu@childrensnational.org](mailto:kennisdu@childrensnational.org)

Below is an example of a recent  
Grace Note

Every object, every being,  
is a jar full of delight.



RUMI, Essential Rumi

## **Holy Days with Fixed Date**

**March 1 St. David's Day Christian** St David's Day is celebrated in Wales on 1 March, in honor of Dewi Sant or St David, the patron saint of Wales. Little is known about him for certain. What little information we have is based on an account of his life written by Rhigyfarch towards the end of the 11th century. According to this Latin manuscript, Dewi died in the year 589. His mother was called Non, and his father, Sant, was the son of Ceredig, King of Ceredigion. After being educated in Cardiganshire, he went on pilgrimage through south Wales and the west of England, where it is said that he founded religious centers such as Glastonbury and Croyland. He even went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where he was made archbishop.



He eventually settled at Glyn Rhosyn (St David's), in south-west Wales, where he established a very strict ascetic religious community. Many miracles have been attributed to him, the most incredible of which was performed when he was preaching at the Synod of Llanddewibrefi - he caused the ground to rise underneath him so that he could be seen and heard by all. How much truth is in this account of his life by Rhigyfarch is hard to tell. It must be considered that Rhigyfarch was the son of the Bishop of St David's, and that the Life was written as propaganda to establish Dewi's superiority and defend the bishopric from being taken over by Canterbury and the Normans.

From the 12th century onwards, Dewi's fame spread throughout South Wales and as far as Ireland and Brittany. St David's Cathedral became a popular centre of pilgrimage, particularly after Dewi was officially recognized as a Catholic saint in 1120. From this period on, he was frequently referred to in the work of medieval Welsh poets such as Iolo Goch and Lewys Glyn Cothi. In 1398, it was ordained that his feast-day was to be kept by every church in the Province of Canterbury. Though the feast of Dewi as a religious festival came to an end with the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, the day of his birth became a national festival during the 18th century.

Now March 1 is celebrated by schools and cultural societies throughout Wales. It is the custom on that day to wear either a leek or a daffodil - two of our national emblems - and for young girls to wear the national costume.



**March 2 Nineteen Day Fast begins Bahá'í** The Bahá'í Faith sees great value in the practice of fasting as a discipline for the soul. Bahá'u'lláh designated a nineteen-day period each year when adult Bahá'ís fast from sunrise to sunset each day. This period coincides with the Bahá'í month of Ala (meaning Loftiness), from March 2 to 20, inclusive. This is the month immediately preceding the Bahá'í new year, which occurs the day of the vernal equinox; and the period of fasting is therefore viewed as a time of spiritual preparation and regeneration for a new year's activities. Women who are nursing or pregnant, the aged, the sick, the traveler, those engaged in heavy labor, as well as children under the age of fifteen, are exempt from observance of the Fast.

It is essentially a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make the necessary readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires.

### A Hina-Matsuri Display



**March 3 Hina-Matsuri—Festival of Dolls Shinto** Hina Matsuri (Doll Festival or Girls' Festival), is a time when people pray for the happiness and healthy growth of girls. Families with young daughters mark this day by setting up a display of dolls inside the house. They offer rice crackers and other food to the dolls.

The dolls wear costumes of the imperial court during the Heian period (794-1192) and are placed on a tiered platform covered with red felt. The size of the dolls and number of steps vary, but usually the displays are of five or seven layers; single-tiered decorations with one male and one female doll are also common.

The top tier is reserved for the emperor and the empress. A miniature gilded folding screen is placed behind them, just like the real Imperial throne of the ancient court. On the second tier are three ladies-in-waiting, and on the third are five male court musicians. Ministers sit on either side of trays of food on the fourth step, and the fifth row features guards flanked by an orange tree to the left and a cherry tree to the right.

The practice of displaying these dolls on the third day of the third month on the traditional Japanese calendar began during the Edo period (1603-1868). It started as a way of warding off evil spirits, with the dolls acting as a charm. Even today, people in some parts of the country release paper dolls into rivers after the festival, praying that the dolls take people's place in carrying away sickness and bad fortune.

Most families take their beautiful collection of dolls out of the closet around mid-February and put it away again as soon as Hina Matsuri is over. This is because of an old superstition that families that are slow in putting back the dolls have trouble marrying off their daughters.



**March 5 St. Piran's Day Christian** Legend tells us how Piran, originating from Ireland and known there as 'Ciran' (the Cornish language naturally mutates the first letter to a softer 'P'), was cast to sea tied to a millstone on the order of the Irish King who was suspicious of Piran's miraculous powers. Although the sea was treacherous Piran survived, the stormy seas calming as he floated on the millstone until he reached the shores of Cornwall. Many Cornish names now echo Piran's, for example 'Perranporth', 'Perranzabuloe' and 'Perranarworthal'. It was at Perranporth beach, however, where Piran was said to have landed, and where he began to build an oratory to promote Christianity. The oratory



is now preserved in the towans (sand dunes) at Perran Sands. His first disciples were said to be a badger, a fox and a bear! Piran is perhaps most famous for his accidental discovery of tin, when a blackstone on his fireplace got so hot that a white liquid leaked out; the first tin smelting. It was this discovery that earned Piran the title Patron Saint of 'Tinner's', tin mining historically being a fundamentally important industry in Cornwall. It was this discovery that also formed the basis of the Cornish flag, the white hot tin on the black of the ore. St Piran's day celebrations have continued to grow in popularity, with the annual St Piran Play on Perran Sands a highlight, hundreds of people making a pilgrimage to the site of the oratory itself, now buried in sand for preservation.

**St. Piran's Oratory—  
buried under the sands of Cornwall**

**March 7 Fast of Esther/Taanit Esther Jewish** On the 13th of Adar, the Fast of Esther is observed in memory of the Fast observed by Mordechai and Esther and all Israel. On that very day, the enemies of the Jews had planned to subjugate and destroy them. The opposite, however, occurred and the Jews ruled over their enemies. The practice of fasting was observed by the people of Israel whenever they were faced by war. The aim of the fast was to affirm that a man does not prevail by physical or military strength, but only by lifting his eyes heavenward in prayer so that Divine Mercy might give him the strength (continued)

to prevail in battle. This then was the purpose of the fast observed by Israel at the time of Haman, when they gathered to defend themselves against those who sought to destroy them. And in memory of that Fast, a yearly Fast was fixed for generations on the same day. The Fast is called by the name of Esther because it was she who first requested the observance of a fast, of Mordechai: 'Go and gather all the Jews who are found in Shushan and fast over me, and do not eat and do not drink three days, night and day; and I and my maidens will also fast thus.' [not one of the major Jewish fasts]

**March 8 Purim Jewish** The story behind Purim can be found in the Biblical Book Of Esther. Esther is a Jewish orphan girl who was raised by her cousin Mordecai. She grows into a beautiful woman that is crowned queen by the King Ahasuerus. The king loved Esther most among all of his wives, but was unaware that she was Jewish. Esther and Mordecai further gained favor under the king's eyes when Mordecai successfully revealed a plot to assassinate the king. Because of this, Haman, the king's advisor, harbored a great hate for Mordecai, which finally came to a head when Mordecai, on one occasion, refused to bow down to Haman. Haman later on learned that Mordecai was a Jew, which is why he resolved to kill not only Mordecai, but also Esther and all of the Jewish people under the Persian rule.

Being the king's advisor, Haman persuades the king to approve of his plan. Esther learns of this, so she fasts for three days with all of the Jews in the land in her preparation to approach the king to ask him to spare her and her people. In a spectacular turn of events, Ahasuerus recalls the time Mordecai saved him from death through the court records and instead, welcomes Esther, honors Mordecai and saves the Jews. Haman and his ten sons are then hanged on the gallows that were intended for Mordecai.

Jewish mitzvot dictate that Jews observe these four activities during Purim: K'riat megillah - listening to the readings of the Book Of Esther in the evening and again in the following morning; Mishloach manot- giving food gifts to friends; Matanot la'evyonim - giving charity to the poor; Se'udah – partaking in a festive meal.

Since Purim is meant to be a merry occasion, Jews are actually encouraged to be boisterous when attending readings of the Book Of Esther in the synagogue. Boogie, hissing, stamping of feet and rattling of noisemakers called gragers is customary and welcome. Traditional Jewish food items prepared include the hamentaschen or "Haman's pockets", which are triangular cookies filled with prunes or poppy seeds said to represent Haman's three-cornered hat. Purim is also a day when the Jewish people perform various merry-making activities like plays, pageants and masquerades. Wearing masks and various costumes are popular and some communities even allow cross-dressing, seeing it as in spirit with the jovial theme of the holiday. [see: [http://www.chabad.org/holidays/purim/default\\_cdo/jewish/Purim.htm](http://www.chabad.org/holidays/purim/default_cdo/jewish/Purim.htm)]

**March 9 Magha Puja Day Buddhist** This Buddhist festival is also known as Fourfold Assembly or Sangha Day. Magha Puja Day is one of the most important Buddhist festivals. It is a celebration in honor of the Sangha, or the Buddhist community. It is a chance for people to reaffirm their commitment to Buddhist practices and traditions.



Magha Puja Day commemorates the spontaneous gathering of 1,250 enlightened monks (arahants) to hear the Buddha preach at Veluvana Vihara. At this gathering, the Buddha gave his first sermon, or recitation of the Patimokkha (the rules and regulations of the monastic order). Sangha is the term used for the Buddhist spiritual community. On Sangha Day Buddhists celebrate both the ideal of creating a spiritual community, and also the actual spiritual community which they are trying to create.

The Sangha is precious in Buddhism; those in the community are looked up to as ones with whom to share aspirations, otherwise the spiritual life would be very challenging. Magha Puja Day is a traditional time for exchange of gifts; it has become a prominent festival among Western Buddhists even though it is less well known in the East. Celebrations vary, but can include chanting, meditation, the lighting of oil lamps, and the reaffirmation of people's commitment to Buddhist practice.

### Easy Hamentashen Cookies



#### Ingredients

3 eggs; 1 cup granulated sugar  
3/4 cup vegetable oil  
2 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
1/2 cup orange juice  
5 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 tablespoon baking powder  
1 cup fruit preserves, any flavor

#### Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease cookie sheets. In a large bowl, beat the eggs and sugar until lightly and fluffy. Stir in the oil, vanilla and orange juice. Combine the flour and baking powder; stir into the batter to form a stiff dough. If dough is not stiff enough to roll out, stir in more flour. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough out to 1/4 inch in thickness. Cut into circles using a cookie cutter or the rim or a drinking glass. Place cookies 2 inches apart onto the prepared cookie sheets. Spoon about 2 teaspoons of preserves into the center of each one. Pinch the edges to form three corners. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes in the preheated oven, or until lightly browned. Allow cookies to cool for 1 minute on the cookie sheet before removing to wire racks to cool completely.

### Very Basic Concepts in Hinduism

Hinduism embraces a great diversity of beliefs, a fact that can be initially confusing to westerners accustomed to creeds, confessions, and carefully-worded belief statements. One can believe a wide variety of things about God, the universe and the path to liberation and still be considered a Hindu.

This attitude towards religious belief has made Hinduism one of the more open-minded religions when it comes to evaluating other faiths. Probably the most well-known Hindu saying about religion is: "Truth is one; sages call it by different names."

However, there are some beliefs common to nearly all forms of Hinduism that can be identified, and these basic beliefs are generally regarded as boundaries outside of which lies either heresy or non-Hindu religion. These fundamental Hindu beliefs include: the authority of the Vedas (the oldest Indian sacred texts) and the Brahmins (priests); the existence of an enduring soul that transmigrates from one body to another at death (reincarnation); and the law of karma that determines one's destiny both in this life and the next.

Note that a specific belief about God or gods is not considered one of the essentials, which is a major difference between Hinduism and strictly monotheistic religions like Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. Most Hindus are devoted followers of one of the principal gods Shiva, Vishnu or Shakti, and often others besides, yet all these are regarded as manifestations of a single Reality.

The ultimate goal of all Hindus is release (moksha) from the cycle of rebirth (samsara). For those of a devotional bent, this means being in God's presence, while those of a philosophical persuasion look forward to uniting with God as a drop of rain merges with the sea.

**March 8 Holi Hindu** Celebrated all over India since ancient times, Holi's precise form and purpose display great variety. Originally, Holi was an agricultural festival celebrating the arrival of spring. This aspect still plays a significant part in the festival in the form of the colored powders: Holi is a time when man and nature alike throw off the gloom of winter and rejoice in the colors and liveliness of spring.

Holi also commemorates various events in Hindu mythology. The legend commemorated by the festival of Holi involves an evil king named Hiranyakashipu. He forbade his son Prahlad from worshipping Vishnu, but Radhu continued to do offer prayers to the god. Getting angry with his son, Hiranyakashipu challenged Prahlad to sit on a pyre with his wicked aunt Holika who was believed to be immune to fire. Prahlad accepted the challenge and prayed to Vishnu to keep him safe. When the fire started, everyone watched in amazement as Holika was burnt to death, while Prahlad survived without a scar to show for it. The burning of Holika is celebrated as Holi. According to some accounts, Holika begged Prahlad for forgiveness before her demise, and he decreed that she would be remembered every year at Holi.

An alternative account of the basis of the holiday is associated with a legend involving Lord Shiva, one of the major Hindu gods. Shiva is known for his meditative nature and his many hours spent in solitude and deep meditation. Madana, the God of love, decided to test his resolve and appeared to Shiva in the form of a beautiful nymph. But Shiva recognized Madana and became very angry. In a fit of rage he shot fire out of his third eye and reduced her to ashes. This is sometimes given as the basis of Holi's bonfire.

The festival of Holi is also associated with the enduring love between Lord Krishna (an incarnation of Vishnu) and Radha, and Krishna in general. According to legend, the young Krishna complained to his mother Yashoda about why Radha was so fair and he so dark. Yashoda advised him to apply color on Radha's face and see how her complexion would change. Because of this association with Krishna, Holi is extended over a longer period in Vrindavan and Mathura, two cities with which Krishna is closely affiliated.

Holi is spread out over two days. On the evening of the first day of Holi, a public bonfire is held, commemorating the burning of Holika. The central ritual of Holi is the throwing and applying of colored water and powders on friends and family, which gives the holiday its common name "Festival of Colors." This ritual is said to be based on the above story of Krishna and Radha as well as on Krishna's playful splashing of the maids with water, but most of all it celebrates the coming of spring with all its beautiful colors and vibrant life.

**March 9 Holi Mohalla Sikh** Holi Mohalla, or Holi Mohalla, is the festival of Punjab. Celebrated over three days, the festival retains the character of fun and enjoyment that Holi has embodied. In addition to this, it is also a community festival that brings people together in an atmosphere of sharing and caring. It is also an occasion to remember the valor of the Sikhs in battling the enemies of the land. The festival day begins with early morning prayers at the Gurdwaras. The Guru Granth Sahib is ceremoniously taken out and bathed ritually with milk and water. Thereafter, it is placed on a platform and venerated.

Kirtans are sung, the prasad is consecrated and everyone shares a part of it. After the service, community lunch is served at the common hall. Evening is a time for numerous cultural activities. The Nihang Sikhs, who are part of the Sikh army that Guru Gobind Singh founded, exhibit their martial skills and daring through mock battles, sword-fighting displays, archery and horse-riding exercises. The Nihangs also splash color on the spectators, and everyone follows suit. Stories and songs about the life, valor and wisdom of the ten Sikh gurus, right from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, are told and recited.

Music, dance and poetry programs and competitions are held at many venues. Holi Mohalla, while being an occasion to rejoice, is also a time to restore faith in the Khalsa Panth and rededicate oneself to the service of the community. Everyone, irrespective of their social standing, involves themselves in kar seva - manual labor, such as helping in the langars or public kitchens, cleaning the Gurdwaras and washing dishes.



**March 17 St. Patrick's Day Christian** St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on March 17, the saint's religious feast day and the anniversary of his death in the fifth century. The Irish have observed this day as a religious holiday for over 1,000 years. On St. Patrick's Day, which falls during the Christian season of Lent, Irish families would traditionally attend church in the morning and celebrate in the afternoon. Lenten prohibitions against the consumption of meat were waived and people would dance, drink and feast--on the traditional meal of Irish bacon and cabbage.

Saint Patrick, who lived during the fifth century, is the patron saint and national apostle of Ireland. Born in Roman Britain, he was kidnapped and brought to Ireland as a slave at the age of 16. He later escaped, but returned to Ireland and was credited with bringing Christianity to its people. In the centuries following Patrick's death (believed to have been on March 17, 461), the mythology surrounding his life became ever more ingrained in the Irish culture: Perhaps the most well known legend is that he explained the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) using the three leaves of a native Irish clover, the shamrock.

Since around the ninth or 10th century, people in Ireland have been observing the Roman Catholic feast day of St. Patrick on March 17. Interestingly, however, the first parade held to honor St. Patrick's Day took place not in Ireland but in the United States. On March 17, 1762, Irish soldiers serving in the English military marched through New York City. Along with their music, the parade helped the soldiers reconnect with their Irish roots, as well as with fellow Irishmen serving in the English army.

In modern-day Ireland, St. Patrick's Day was traditionally been a religious occasion. In fact, up until the 1970s, Irish laws mandated that pubs be closed on March 17. Beginning in 1995, however, the Irish government began a national campaign to use interest in St. Patrick's Day to drive tourism and showcase Ireland and Irish culture to the rest of the world. Today, approximately 1 million people annually take part in Ireland 's St. Patrick's Festival in Dublin, a multi-day celebration featuring parades, concerts, outdoor theater productions and fireworks shows.



**March 18 Mothering Sunday Christian Europe** Mothering Sunday is the fourth Sunday of Lent. Although it's often called Mothers' Day it has no connection with the American festival of that name. Traditionally, it was a day when children, mainly daughters, who had gone to work as domestic servants were given a day off to visit their mother and family. Centuries ago it was considered important for people to return to their home or 'mother' church once a year. So each year in the middle of Lent, everyone would visit their 'mother' church - the main church or cathedral of the area. Inevitably the return to the 'mother' church became an occasion for family reunions when children who were working away returned home. (It was quite common in those days for children to leave home for work once they were ten years old.) And most historians think that it was the return to the 'Mother' church which led to the tradition of children, particularly those working as domestic servants, or as apprentices, being given the day off to visit their mother and family. As they walked along the country lanes, children would pick wild flowers or violets to take to church or give to their mother as a small gift.

The food item specially associated with Mothering Sunday is the Simnel cake. A Simnel cake is a fruit cake with two layers of almond paste, one on top and one in the middle.

**March 19 St. Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary Christian** Saint Joseph's Day, March 19, the Feast of St. Joseph is in Western Christianity the principal feast day of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It has the rank of a solemnity in the Roman Catholic Church; traditional Catholics celebrate it as a double of the first class. It is a feast in the provinces of the Anglican Communion, and a feast or festival in the Lutheran Church. Saint Joseph's Day is the Patronal Feast day for Poland, persons named Joseph, Josephine, etc., for religious orders, schools and parishes bearing his name, and for carpenters. It is also Father's Day in some Catholic countries, mainly Spain, Portugal, and Italy. (continued)

## Colcannon for St. Pat's Day

### Ingredients

1 pound cabbage  
1 pound potatoes  
2 leeks  
1 cup milk  
salt and pepper to taste  
1 pinch ground mace  
1/2 cup butter

### Directions

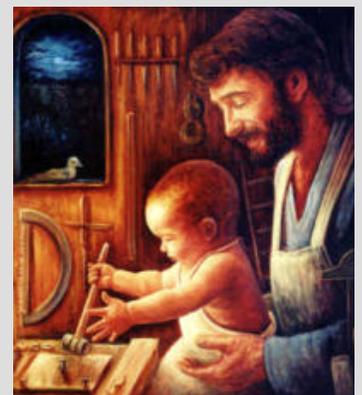
In a large saucepan, boil cabbage until tender; remove and chop or blend well. Set aside and keep warm. Boil potatoes until tender. Remove from heat and drain.

Chop leeks, green parts as well as white, and simmer them in just enough milk to cover, until they are soft.

Season and mash potatoes well. Stir in cooked leeks and milk. Blend in the kale or cabbage and heat until the whole is a pale green fluff. Make a well in the center and pour in the melted butter. Mix well.



A Modern Rendering of St. Joseph and Jesus



March 19 was dedicated to Saint Joseph in several Western calendars by the tenth century, and this custom was established in Rome by 1479. The Eastern Orthodox Church celebrates Saint Joseph on the Sunday after Christmas.

**March 20 Spring Equinox / Easter Pagan** The festival is one of celebration of the renewed life of the Earth which accompanies the coming of Spring. It is a solar festival, marking the time when the length of the day and the night are equal, which has been celebrated throughout history; with each culture associating the festival with a particular deity: Aphrodite by the Cypriots, Persephone by the Greeks, Hathor by the Egyptians and, of course, Ostara of the Scandinavians.

The festivities are generally associated with an increase in the powers of the God, and Goddess, through which the changes witnessed at this time of year are being manifest: the gods themselves often appearing in the guise of the Green Man, in his various forms, and Mother Earth. Celebration often took the form of particular rituals in which a woman and a man would be chosen to act out the roles of the Spring God and Goddess - either in a symbolic courtship, or in the metaphorical planting of seeds (or not so metaphorical in Aphrodite's case...). Egg races, egg hunts, egg eating and egg painting are also traditional activities at this time of year.

The spring equinox is one of the four great solar festivals of the year. Day and night are equal, poised and balanced, but about to tip over on the side of light. The spring equinox is sacred to dawn, youth, the morning star and the east. The Saxon goddess, Eostre (from whose name we get the direction East and the holiday Easter) is a dawn goddess, like Aurora and Eos. Just as the dawn is the time of new light, so the vernal equinox is the time of new life.

**March 21 Naw-Ruz Bahá'í** Naw-Rúz in the Bahá'í Faith is one of nine holy days for adherents of the Bahá'í Faith worldwide and the first day of the Bahá'í calendar occurring on the vernal equinox, around March 21. Norouz, historically and in contemporary times, is the celebration of the traditional Iranian new year holiday and is celebrated throughout the countries of the Middle East and Central Asia such as in Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. Since ancient times it has been a national holiday in Iran and was celebrated by more than one religious group. The Báb, the founder of Bábism, and then Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, adopted the day as a holy day and associated it with the Most Great Name of God.

**March 21 Jamshedi Noruz (Fasli) Zoroastrian New Year** In the temperate zones of the northern hemisphere, the spring equinox signals the beginning of warmer weather and the season for plowing and the sowing of crops. 'New day' in Persian is noruz, and the festival of that name marks the beginning of the year, which is still celebrated at the equinox in modern-day Iran. Persian mythology credits the mythical King Yima—Jamshid, the most famous of the prehistoric Iranian kings—with the creation of the calendar; as a result, Zoroastrians of Iran have given the name Jamshedi Noruz, "the New Day of Jamshid", to the New Year observance.

As is typical of mythic hero-kings, Jamshid is also credited with the invention of most of the arts and sciences on which civilization is based—not to mention the construction of the ancient city of Persepolis, the ruins of which are replete with astronomical and spiritual symbolism. In Zoroastrianism, light is the great symbol of God and goodness, whether witnessed in the light of the sun or in the sacred fire at the heart of the temple. The lengthening of days which occurs after the spring equinox is thus perceived as a symbol (continued)



Emily Dickinson

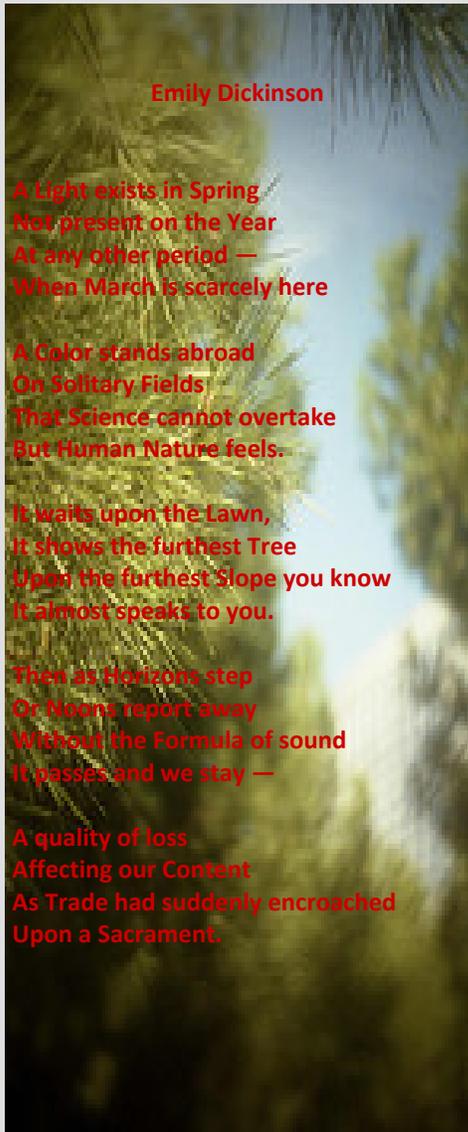
A Light exists in Spring  
Not present on the Year  
At any other period —  
When March is scarcely here

A Color stands abroad  
On Solitary Fields  
That Science cannot overtake  
But Human Nature feels.

It waits upon the Lawn,  
It shows the furthest Tree  
Upon the furthest Slope you know  
It almost speaks to you.

Then as Horizons step  
Or Noons report away  
Without the Formula of sound  
It passes and we stay —

A quality of loss  
Affecting our Content  
As Trade had suddenly encroached  
Upon a Sacrament.



of the victory of light over the darkness of winter, a victory that is represented symbolically at Persepolis by the defeat of the bull of Taurus—the astrological constellation that rules during the rainy period—by the lion of Leo. Around the date of Noruz, all Iranian householders, whether Zoroastrian or not, set up a table bearing the haft-seen, or “seven Ss”, a display of food items that is the modern equivalent of the ancient practice of setting out food to honor the spirits of the deceased. There is no standard configuration for the display, but it commonly includes: Sabzeh: green sprouts from wheat, peas, or barley; Samanoo: pudding made from sprouted grain; Serkeh: vinegar; Seeb: apples; Seer: garlic; Sumakh: powdered sumac seasoning; Senjed: small date-like fruits. In Zoroastrian belief there are seven emanations of God known as the Amesha Spentas, “bounteous immortals”, and although there is no direct correspondence between the items on the table and any particular Amesha Spenta, the fact that there are seven can be seen as an allusion to them. The Noruz table also commonly contains sonbol, a hyacinth or narcissus in bloom, sekeh, coins symbolizing prosperity, and the sofreh or decorative cloth on which everything is displayed. In addition to other symbolic items Zoroastrian families will include a picture of Zarathustra and a copy of the Avesta, the Zoroastrian holy book.

During the days following Noruz, believers will hold a jashan, a religious service during which the sacred fire is lit and the congregation renews its commitment to their religion.

**March 21 Shubun-sai Equinox Day Shinto** Shubun-sai, or Equinox Day, a national holiday with close links to Buddhism. Although the equinox itself is a time to celebrate spring, nature and new life, this is a day for visiting the graves of loved ones and remembering ancestors. Many people will take time to tend the graves they visit; washing the stone, tidying the area and leaving fresh flowers.



**March 23 Ugadi or Yugadi Hindu** The day, begins with ritual showers (oil bath) followed by prayers. The eating of a specific mixture of six tastes called Ugadi Pachhadi in Telugu and Bevu-Bella in Kannada, symbolizes the fact that life is a mixture of different experiences (sadness, happiness, anger, fear, disgust, surprise), which should be accepted together and with equanimity through the New Year. The special mixture consists of: Neem Buds/Flowers for its bitterness, signifying Sadness; Jaggery and ripe banana pieces for sweetness, signifying Happiness; Green Chilli/Pepper for its hot taste, signifying Anger; Salt for saltiness, signifying Fear; Tamarind Juice for its sourness, signifying Disgust; Unripened Mango for its tang, signifying Surprise. Later, people traditionally gather to listen to the recitation of the religious Panchangam (almanac) of the new year, and the general forecast of the year to come. This is called the 'Panchanga Sravanam', an informal social function where an elderly and respected person refers to the new almanac and makes a general benediction to all present. The advent of television has changed this routine, especially in the cities. Nowadays, people turn on the TV to watch broadcasts of the "Panchanga Sravanam" recitation. Ugadi celebrations are marked by literary discussions, poetry recitations and recognition of authors of literary works through awards and cultural programs. Recitals of classical Carnatic music and dance are held in the evenings.

**March 25 Annunciation Christian** Also referred to as the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary or Annunciation of the Lord, is the Christian celebration of the announcement by the angel Gabriel to Virgin Mary, that she would conceive and become the mother of Jesus the Son of God. Gabriel told Mary to name her son Jesus, meaning "Savior". Many Christians observe this event with the Feast of the Annunciation on 25 March, nine full months before Christmas. According to Luke 1:26, the Annunciation to Mary occurred "in the sixth month" of Elisabeth's pregnancy with the child later called John the Baptist.

Approximating the northern vernal equinox, the date of the Annunciation also marked the New Year in many places, including England, where it is called Lady Day. Both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches hold that the Annunciation took place at Nazareth, but differ as to the precise location. The Church of the Annunciation marks the site preferred by the former, while the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation marks that preferred by the latter. The Annunciation has been a key topic in Christian art in general, as well as in Roman Catholic Marian art, particularly during the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

**March 26 Khordad Sal Zoroastrian** Khordad Sal is the birth anniversary of Zoroaster. Zoroastrians all over the world, specifically in India celebrate the day in a great glamour. Parties and ghambars are held. Special prayers and jashans are also held throughout the entire day. Clean, rangoli-strewn homes, children with vermilion spots on their foreheads, new clothes, fragrant flowers and delicious meals, all form part of the rituals. A grand feast is prepared to mark the occasion. The festival is also an opportunity for the Parsis to review their lives and actions, and make resolutions for the future.