

# DAYS OF SIGNIFICANCE CALENDAR

## GUIDELINES FOR USE

*Days of Significance* aims to raise awareness of significant times in different religious and non-religious traditions during 2024. Each month there is a list of days that are relevant to the study of Religious Education (RE). It provides a brief description of the significance of the day being acknowledged each month and allows for additional days to be included, for example, days which are special to specific school contexts. It can be used within the RE classroom to support further learning around days of interest to students.

This resource can be used in the study of RE at both junior and senior cycle, across all RE programmes, in a variety of ways, to support learning about and from different religious and non-religious traditions. For example, it may be helpful for RE departments to include certain days of significance in their units of learning to further support the development of students' knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes.

RE teachers could use this calendar to support student-led learning perhaps with students working in smaller groups on assigned times of significance to create a resource to share with the class to support further learning. Project work such as this could support the development of students' research, communication and managing information and thinking skills as they lead the learning for the class in relation to a particular topic related to a day of significance. This work could be then shared within the RE department to build a bank of resources relating to the different days of significance.

On each month's page there are different prompts and space for teachers and students to plan how they could learn more about a particular day they wish to take into focus.

### Who would like to get involved?

The names of the students who will lead the learning of a chosen day (or related topic) could be listed here.

### How could we learn more?

The different ways in which students will carry out further research on the day of significance in focus can be included here.

Possible suggestions: visiting credible websites, using textbooks, interviewing relevant people or visiting places of significance.

### What could we do?

The different learning experiences that could be planned for could be included here.

Possible suggestions: creating a collage that could be used as a poster, digital presentation, inviting a guest speaker to visit and speak to the class.

# DAYS OF SIGNIFICANCE 2024

## JANUARY

**6th: The Feast of the Epiphany** - sometimes referred to as Little Christmas, the Feast of the Epiphany remembers the visit of the wise men (the Magi), to worship the infant Jesus. In Ireland the day is sometimes known as Nollaig na mBán, or Women's Christmas, a day when women enjoyed a rest after the busyness of Christmas.

**18th: Bodhi Day** - many Buddhists around the world celebrate Siddhartha Gautama reaching Enlightenment in 596 BCE on this day while sitting under a Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, India.

**18th - 25th: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** - for over 100 years the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a week marked by the Christian churches between the 18th and 25th of January. This year's theme is "You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

**21st: World Religions Day** - is the third Sunday in January each year. The purpose of World Religion Day is to promote unity and understanding among people of different faiths.

**27th: Holocaust Memorial Day** - the United Nations General Assembly named January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, as International Holocaust Memorial day. On this day, the UN urges member states to honour Holocaust victims.

### OTHER DAYS OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR US

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## FEBRUARY

**1st: St. Brigid's Day/Imbolc** - celebrates Ireland's only female patron saint. This feast day for Brigid, a 5th century saint was one of the most important days of the year in Celtic Spirituality, as it has its origins in the Celtic festival of Imbolc, which marked the beginning of spring in Ireland. It signalled an end to the darkness of winter and welcomed in a new season of hope and growth. Imbolc was the date later dedicated to St. Brigid by the Church. St. Brigid was an abbess who founded the abbey of Kildare.

**13th: Shrove Tuesday** - is a Christian feast day before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday. On Shrove Tuesday many Christians went to confession and were "shriven" (absolved from their sins). Traditionally during Lent many Christians would give up rich foods. Shrove Tuesday was the last chance to eat these foods which is where the tradition of making pancakes comes from.

**14th: Ash Wednesday** - is the beginning of Lent. On Ash Wednesday the priest blesses ashes made from the palms from Palm Sunday. Ashes are an ancient symbol of repentance and also remind Christians that life on earth will come to an end and that eternal life with God will then begin.

**14th: St. Valentine's Day** - is celebrated annually on February 14th. It began as a Christian feast day honouring a martyr named Valentine. It has become a celebration of romance and love in many parts of the world.

**15th: Nirvana Day** - or Parinirvana Day, is celebrated to commemorate the death of the Buddha when he reached complete nirvana.

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## MARCH

**8th: International Women's Day** - is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The theme for IWD for 2024 is "Inspire Inclusion".

**10th: Start of Ramadan** - Ramadan is marked by many Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting (sawm), prayer, reflection and community. This year Ramadan will end on the 8th April.

**17th: St. Patrick's Day** - is a religious and cultural holiday held on the date the Saint Patrick the patron saint of Ireland is believed to have died.

**23rd: Purim** - the Festival of Lots is a Jewish festival commemorating the survival of the Jews who, in the 5th century BCE, were marked for death by their Persian rulers as told in the biblical Book of Esther.

**24th: Palm Sunday** - is a Christian feast day that falls on the Sunday before Easter. This feast day remembers Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, an event mentioned in each of the Gospels. The week following Palm Sunday is known as Holy Week.

**25th: Holi** - is a Hindu festival which celebrates the eternal and divine love of the Hindu Gods Radha and Krishna. The day also signifies the triumph of good over evil.

**31st: Easter Sunday** - is the most important festival of the Christian churches and celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after his Crucifixion.

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## APRIL

**2nd: World Autism Awareness Day** - is an internationally recognised day held every year on the 2nd of April encouraging Member States of the United Nations to take measures to raise awareness about autism around the world. The theme for 2024 is "colour".

**9th - 10th: Eid al-Fitr** - the festival of Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, is celebrated by many Muslims all over the world. It is a celebration traditionally lasting three days. Many Muslims mark the occasion with private and community events such as communal prayer (salat), parties, giving gifts, wearing new clothes and visiting friends and family.

**22nd: Start of Passover** - also called Pesach, is a major Jewish holiday and one of the three pilgrimage festivals that celebrates the biblical story of the Israelites' escape from slavery in Egypt.

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## MAY

**1st: Bealtaine** - marks the beginning of summer. It is traditionally held on 1st May about midway between the spring equinox and summer solstice.

**9th: Feast of the Ascension** - many Christians celebrate the feast of the Ascension to mark the ascent of Jesus Christ into heaven on the 40th day after his Resurrection.

**23rd: Vesak** - is one of the most important Buddhist festivals. It is also known as Wesak or Buddha Day. It is a celebration of Buddha's birthday and, for some Buddhists, marks his Enlightenment. It is also a time to reflect on his teachings and what it means to be a Buddhist.

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## JUNE

**11th - 13th: Shavuot** - is a Jewish harvest festival. According to Orthodox Judaism the date aligns with the revealing of the Ten Commandments to Moses. It is also known as the Feast of Weeks.

**17th - 20th: Eid al-Adha** - this Islamic feast day celebrates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Ishmael, his son, to obey God. On this day meat, typically sheep or goat meat, are traditionally eaten. It is also known as the Feast of Sacrifice.

**20th: World Refugee Day** - is an internationally recognised day designated by the United Nations to honour refugees around the globe. It falls each year on June 20 and celebrates the strength and courage of people who have been forced to leave their home country.

**Pride Month** - the month of June is considered Pride Month with a variety of organisations and venues running Pride events across the country. Pride Month has its roots in America in the Stonewall Uprising, which occurred in New York City in June 1969. The uprising was a turning point in the LGBTQ+ rights movement. The following year, the first Pride marches were organised to commemorate the anniversary of the uprising.

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## JULY

**16th: Ashura** - is a Muslim holy day which marks the start of the Islamic New Year celebrated on the first day of the month Muharram.

**30th: International Day of Friendship** - is a United Nations (UN) day that promotes the role that friendship plays in promoting peace in many cultures.

## AUGUST

**12th: Tisha B'Av** - is an annual fast day in Judaism which remembers a number of disasters in Jewish history including the destruction of both Solomon's Temple in 586 BCE and the Second Temple in 70 AD.

**15th: Feast of the Assumption** - is a Christian feast day that is observed by some Christians. It celebrates the belief that when Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ died, her body was "assumed" or taken into heaven to be reunited with her soul.

**26th: Krishna Janmashtami** - is a Hindu festival celebrating the birth of the deity Krishna. Many Hindus celebrate Janmashtami by fasting, singing, praying together, preparing and sharing special food, holding night vigils, and visiting temples to Krishna or Vishnu.



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## SEPTEMBER

**10th: World Suicide Prevention Day** - is marked on the 10th September every year. The World Health Organisation has dedicated this day to raise awareness of the causes of suicide and ways to prevent it.

**15th - 16th: Mawlid al-Nabi** - also known as Mawlid this is a day celebrated by many Muslims as the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad.

**21st: International Day of Peace** - this United Nations day encourages all nations who are at war to ceasefire. Each year the UN bell is rung in New York City to signal the start of this day of nonviolence.

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## OCTOBER

**2nd - 4th: Rosh Hashanah** - is the Jewish new year which takes place at the beginning of the month of Tishrei. It is a time to celebrate the completion of another year while also thinking about one's own life.

**10th: World Mental Health Day** - raises awareness of mental health issues around the world and encourages efforts that support mental health. The day provides an opportunity for those working on mental health issues to talk about their work and what more needs to be done to make mental health care a reality for people worldwide.

**11th - 12th: Yom Kippur** - is regarded as the holiest day of the Jewish calendar and is also known as the Day of Atonement. The day is devoted to asking for forgiveness for sins committed over the previous year.

**31st: Halloween** - is a celebrated each year on October 31. The tradition began with the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain when people would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off ghosts. In the eighth century Pope Gregory III named November 1st as a day to honour all saints. All Saints Day later used some of the traditions of Samhain. The evening before was known as All Hallows Eve, and later Hallowe'en.

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## NOVEMBER

**1st: Diwali** - or Dipawali is a festival celebrated by many Hindus all over the world. The festival gets its name from the row (avali) of clay lamps (deeps) that people light outside their homes to symbolise the inner light that protects them from spiritual darkness. This festival is as important to Hindus as the Christmas holiday is to Christians and is celebrated over five days. Hindus interpret the Diwali story differently but there is a common theme no matter where people celebrate: the victory of good over evil.

**1st: All Saints' Day** - also known as All Hallows' Day, is a feast day marked by some Christian churches to celebrate all church saints whether known or unknown.

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## DECEMBER

**1st: Start of Advent** - Advent is a time of preparation when many Christians make themselves ready for the celebration of the birth of Christ at Christmas. It begins four Sundays before Christmas and every Sunday candles are lit on the Advent wreath in many Christian churches.

**10th: International Human Rights Day** - is an annual event that marks the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. International Human Rights Day is a day to reflect on the progress made in promoting human rights and to highlight the challenges that remain. The day also honours the individuals and organisations working for human rights.

**25th: Christmas** - is an annual festival which remembers the birth of Jesus Christ, celebrated on December 25th. It is central to the Christian calendar and follows the season of Advent. Christmas is both a religious feast and secular celebration, particularly in the western world.

**25th: Start of Hannukah** - is a minor festival in the Jewish calendar and is sometimes known as the Jewish festival of lights. It remembers the rededication of the temple to God after its destruction in the 2nd century by King Antiochus. It is celebrated over 8 days and symbolised through lighting the Hannukah menorah, a 9 branched candelabra.

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