

habits they might have acquired over the year, concentrating on their relationship with God and a lifestyle that is in accordance with His will. Eid-ul-Fitr is on the first day of the following month in the Islamic calendar, and celebrates the blessings Ramadan has brought. It is marked by communal prayer, the wearing of new clothes, exchanging cards and gifts, sharing food and visiting friends and family. Eid-ul-Fitr is one of the two main festivals in Islam, alongside Eid-ul-Adha, which celebrates Abraham's obedience to God through his intended sacrifice.

The Jewish High Holy Days

are a period beginning with the celebration of "Rosh HaShana", the New Year, and culminating in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (the tenth day of the seventh month in the Jewish calendar).

Bidding prayer

During the period of their High Holy Days, we pray for the Jewish members of our community. As they fast, pray, and ask for forgiveness to start the New Year afresh, we also pray for the strength to forgive, and the blessing of being forgiven.



For the newsletter

Jewish-Christian relations are especially close, and special, as Christianity is deeply rooted in Judaism. For Jews, the period between Rosh HaShana, the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is considered to be a holy period of repentance and seeking of forgiveness, both from God and from other people.

Background

The Second Vatican Council's document, *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, known as *Nostra Aetate*, explains the close bond between Jews and Christians as follows: "The Church [...] cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant", and goes on to describe Christianity as a branch that has been grafted onto the "well-cultivated olive tree" of Judaism. When John Paul II visited the Great Synagogue of Rome in 1986, he referred to the Jews as "our older brothers". In the UK, 0.5% of people identified as Jewish in the 2001 census, with a high concentration in urban centres such as London or Manchester. We share the Hebrew Scriptures (which Christians often refer to as the Old Testament) with our Jewish brothers and sisters. The Jewish New Year of Rosh HaShana is celebrated by eating apple dipped in honey. Both the customary prayers of *Taschlich* ("casting away") beside a body of water, recalling Micah 7:19 – "You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" – and the ritual of blowing the *shofar* (ram's horn) on the first two days are a reminder to repent and turn away from sin. Yom Kippur, at the end of the period of the High Holy Days, is marked by a total 25 hour fast. In the Jewish month of Elul, leading up to the High Holy Days, each one will have endeavoured to seek forgiveness from others whom they may have wronged. The traditional belief is that, on Rosh Hashana, God inscribes the righteous in the Book of Life, which is sealed on Yom Kippur. The period between the two offers an opportunity to show repentance and seek forgiveness and so be worthy to be "written in the Book of Life".

Spiritual Riches: Bidding prayers for non-Christian religions on their major festivals (2)



A resource produced by
the Catholic Bishops'
Conference of England
and Wales

These leaflets offer suggestions for bidding prayers at the major festivals of non-Christian religions, along with a short text of explanation for use in parish newsletters, and some background information. In acknowledging these festivals, and praying for those who celebrate them, Catholics can express their connectedness to all people of faith, as well as the respect which the Church holds for their spiritual wealth. For further information and resources on interreligious dialogue, as well as electronic copies of these leaflets, go to <http://www.cbcew.org.uk/page.aspx?pid=458> or have a look at the Bishops' Conference blog at <http://bit.ly/PIpU4e>.



The Buddhist festival of Vesakh

is usually celebrated on the May full moon, though this varies in different traditions.

Bidding prayer

At the end of the period in which Buddhists around the world and in our neighbourhoods celebrate Vesakh, the festival that remembers the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha, we pray for the Buddhist community in our country and world-wide.

For the newsletter

Buddhists believe that the Four Noble Truths can help everyone attain enlightenment, like Buddha did, ending the constant cycle of rebirths. These Truths are: there is suffering in the world; suffering is caused by greed and desire; suffering can be ended; and there is a path to follow, a compassionate life of morality, meditation and wisdom. There are around 150,000 Buddhists in Great Britain.

Background

Due to the use of different calendars, Buddhists around the world celebrate Vesakh at different dates. Vesakh is commonly known as the Buddha's birthday, even though it celebrates all three important stages of the Buddha's life – his birth, enlightenment and passing away, all said to have taken place at the full moon of the fifth month. There are many ways of celebrating Vesakh in different Buddhist traditions and cultures. These include visiting temples, making offerings to the monastic community, lighting lanterns, bathing statues of the baby Buddha, and abstaining from eating meat or fish (to avoid harming living beings).



Buddhists try and follow The Five Precepts. They are "training rules" which encourage the avoidance of taking life, of stealing, of sexual misconduct, of lying and of taking intoxicants, and the development, instead, of the qualities of compassion, generosity, faithfulness and self-restraint, truthfulness and mindfulness. Monks and nuns have further rules involving celibacy and renunciation.

The roughly 150,000 Buddhists in Britain form part of a total of about 400 million Buddhists world-wide. As Buddhism is often practised alongside other religions, however, this number is hard to determine.

The Muslim festival of Eid-ul-Fitr

marks the completion of the month of Ramadan, in which Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset.

Bidding prayer

We pray for our Muslim brothers and sisters, who celebrate the completion of their holy month of Ramadan all over the world today, and for all of us, that we may find the time and the discipline to use every opportunity to deepen our faith, and to remember God's will for our lives.

For the newsletter

Muslims around the world celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, the festival (Eid) that celebrates the many blessings that Muslims believe come from fasting throughout their holy month of Ramadan. According to Islam the Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad in this month, and Muslims are guided to fast throughout it from sunrise to sunset, to reflect on their lives and build stronger bonds with God, discovering His will for them.

Background

At least 3% of the population of the UK is Muslim, with some estimates going up to 3.5%. Muslims believe in the importance of living a life according to the Qur'an, which includes declaring the Muslim faith (The oneness of God and the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad), almsgiving, praying five times a day, and making the pilgrimage to Mecca if it is physically and financially possible. Fasting from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan is also a part of this – Ramadan is the month in which, Muslims believe, various significant occasions took place, including the revelation of the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad. It is marked by fasting, increased prayer, thinking of others and caring for those in need as well as listening to and reciting the Qur'an. The act of fasting is also seen as an act of solidarity with the poor, bringing with it a particular focus on any help that can be given to them. It is also a month that Muslims see as an opportunity to give up any negative