



Christianity

Christianity is a world –wide religion followed by people of many different cultures and backgrounds. Christians are people who are followers of Jesus Christ and who believe in a God who can be known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Though Christians hold much in common, there is a wide diversity of beliefs, ethical standpoints and forms of worship found within the many denominations and groups which make up the Christian Church.

The two major groups of Christians are **Protestants** and **Roman Catholics**. There are many faith communities which are **Protestant**, for example: **The Church of Scotland, Baptist, Salvation Army, Pentecostal, Episcopalian**, and so on. **The Anglican Church**, which is Protestant, includes the Scottish Episcopal Church. **The Roman Catholic Church** is world-wide and diverse but is centred on the leadership of the Pope and the Bishops, and the importance of the Sacraments, especially Mass.

The other main Christian group in the world is the **Orthodox Church**, found mainly in Greece and Russia. There are many Greek Orthodox Christians in Haringey.

The Christian year consists of a cycle of liturgical seasons in some Christian churches which set out when feasts, memorials, commemorations and times of reflection take place. Some, like Christmas Day, happen on the same date every year, while others move around within a range of dates. The main festival that moves is Easter, and since many other festivals have their dates fixed in relation to Easter, they move with it. Christians belong to various groups or denominations that vary slightly in their beliefs and practices.

The dates of the festivals vary somewhat between the western Church (Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant) and the Eastern (Orthodox) church, though the sequence and logic is the same. The extent to which the fasts and festivals are celebrated also varies between churches; in general Protestant churches observe far fewer of them than Catholic and Orthodox churches, and in particular are less likely to celebrate feasts of the Virgin Mary and the saints.

Advent: time of preparation for observing the birth of Jesus. Advent begins on the Sunday nearest November 30 and is the beginning of the Christian worship year. It is observed with the lighting of advent candles, display of advent wreaths, and special ceremonies. The season continues to the end of December 24.

All Hallow's Eve: celebration as a prelude to All Saints Day.

All Saints' Day: day for honouring saints and a Holy Day of Obligation in the Roman Catholic Church where saints have special formal status.

All Souls' Day : sometimes called the "Day of the Dead", this is always November 2nd (celebrated on November 3rd if the 2nd is a Sunday). A Roman Catholic day of remembrance for remembering friends and loved ones who have passed away.

Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary: celebration on 25th March of the visit by the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary announcing the coming birth of Jesus.

Ascension of Jesus: Celebrates the ascension of Jesus into heaven, where Christians believe he sits at the right hand of God the Father and prays for the world. Ascension Day is a reminder to Christians that Jesus took his humanity into heaven. The festival marks the end of Jesus' post-resurrection appearance and is perhaps the earliest observed celebration in Christianity.

Ash Wednesday: The day Lent begins, forty days before Good Friday. It is a day of penitence to clean the soul before the Lent fast. Roman Catholic, Anglican, and some other churches hold services at which worshippers are marked with ashes

as a symbol of death, and sorrow for sin. The use of ashes, made by burning palm crosses from the previous Palm Sunday, is very symbolic.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Roman Catholic observance honouring the belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was taken directly to heaven at her death.

Candlemas: This festival takes place 40 days after Christmas and comes from two separate events- the presentation of Jesus in the temple and the purification of the Virgin Mary. Today it is recognized primarily by Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. New beginnings are celebrated and candles are lit.

Christ the King: Roman Catholic celebration of the pre-eminence of Jesus over all earthly authorities.

Christmas Day: the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ is observed by prayers, exchanging of gifts, and family parties. In most churches, the Bible readings and the sermons during Christmas season concern the birth of Christ, the slaughter of the innocents, the flight to Egypt, and other related events.

The Christmas season begins at sundown on 24 December and lasts through sundown on 5 January. The calendar dates for Christmas and Epiphany are the same in the eastern and western Church, but many eastern Christians still used the unreformed Julian calendar, which is 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar. Their church calendar reads 25 December when the civil calendar says it is 7 January, and their church calendar reads 6 January when the civil calendar says it is 19 January.

Christmas Eve: Celebration of the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus. It is observed with worship, often at midnight, candle lighting, manger scenes, and festive meals.

Christmas Fast: Greek and Russian Orthodox Christians fast to observe the Nativity of Jesus.

Circumcision of Jesus: Christian recognition of its Jewish foundations. The infant Jesus was brought to the Temple for his circumcision.

Corpus Christi: Roman Catholic celebration in honour of the Eucharist - Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. The real presence of the body and blood of Jesus is honoured.

Dormition (falling asleep) of the Theotokos: Greek Orthodox observance of the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into heaven of the Virgin Mary.

Easter: The most holy of Christian sacred days. The day commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from his death by crucifixion. Observances include worship services beginning at sunrise, special music, feasting, and parades.

The Greek and Russian Orthodox churches celebrate this Festival on a different day from western churches and therefore may request leave of absence for their festival during term time.

Epiphany: Celebrated by most Christians on January 6 to commemorate the presentation of the infant Jesus to the Magi, or three wise men. Roman Catholics celebrate Epiphany on the Sunday which falls between January 2 and January 8.

Fast in honour of the Holy Mother of Lord Jesus: Orthodox start of a 14 day fast to prepare for the Falling Asleep (dormition) of the Theotokos.

Feast of St. Basil: Orthodox celebration of the liturgy. Bread is often shared as a symbol of prosperity and good luck.

Good Friday: remembrance of the crucifixion of Jesus and related events.

Holy Pascha: Greek and Russian Orthodox festival celebrating the resurrection of Jesus.

Holy Thursday: Observance of the final meal that Jesus observed with his disciples. It is usually observed with the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Holy Saturday: Saturday before Easter – a time of meditation on the mystery of Jesus Christ.

Holy Week: Christians observe the week before Easter with solemn ceremonies based on events in Jesus' life, especially on Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

Immaculate Conception: Roman Catholic day of celebrating the belief that Mary, mother of Jesus, was preserved of original sin all of her life. A day of obligation and required church attendance.

Lammas: First fruits celebration observed by placing bread baked from first harvest on the altar.

Lazarus Saturday: Greek and Russian Orthodox festival remembering the resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus. Observed on the day before Palm Sunday, attention is called to the resurrection of people by Jesus.

Lent: forty day period of preparation for Easter. A time of intense devotion, it is observed by fasting, frequent worship, and acts of charity.

Meatfare Sunday: Greek and Russian Orthodox observation of limiting of food in order to fix attention on the Second Coming of Christ.

Nativity of the Mother of God: Greek and Russian Orthodox celebration of the birth of Mary, mother of Jesus.

Palm Sunday: celebration of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The day begins Holy Week and is observed by worship celebrations and parades using palm branches.

Pentecost: celebration of the day when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples in the forms of tongues of fire and rushing wind. It is a traditional day for baptism and confirmation of new Christians.

Sacred Heart: Catholic occasion to pay homage to Christ's all encompassing love for humanity. Solemn worship is observed.

Saint Andrew's Day: Observance of the coming of Christianity to Scotland. The martyrdom of St. Andrew is remembered as Advent is about to begin.

Saint Francis Day: Catholic recognition of service to the people and appreciation of the natural world, as practiced by St Francis & Franciscan Monastic Order which he founded.

Saint Michael and All Angels: Christian celebration of angels, companions who help fight off the power of evil and who are present at the hour of death.

Saint Patrick's Day: Celebration of Patrick who brought Christianity to Ireland in early days of the faith and is Patron Saint of that country.

Saint Stephen's Day: day to remember the first Christian martyr; celebrated on Boxing Day.

Shrove Tuesday: Carnival day, eve of Ash Wednesday which begins Lent, a time of fasting and devotion. Traditionally involved using all the rich foods from the larder prior to the fast. Pancakes are often served and also known as Fat Tuesday in some places.

Theophany: Greek Orthodox commemoration of the Baptism of Jesus and the manifestation of God.

Transfiguration of Jesus: Commemoration of the experience on Mt. Tabor where Jesus' physical appearance became brilliant as his connection with traditional Jewish holy figures became evident to his disciples.

Trinity Sunday or Day: celebrated the first Sunday after Pentecost, Christians honour the belief in one God with a threefold nature.