

# CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS

## THE MAJOR FESTIVALS OF CHRISTIANITY

**ADVENT SEASON** [mid-Nov/Dec] The Christian year begins with a period of preparation for Christmas. It is time also for looking towards Jesus' second coming (Parousia). It is a season of expectation.



- **CHRISTMAS** [25 Dec - Jan 6] Celebration of Jesus' birth (Nativity); this festival emphasizes the **INCARNATION** ["the Word/Logos was made flesh and lived amongst us."] The festival lasts twelve days and ends with the **EPIPHANY** [Jan. 6], the manifestation of God in Jesus, which celebrates Jesus' baptism, the visit of the Magi [symbolic of Gentiles] to the infant Jesus, and Jesus' first miracle when he turned water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana.
- **LENT** [March-April] Forty-day preparation for Easter. It corresponds to the 40 days Jesus spent fasting before beginning his ministry. This penitential season ends with: **HOLY WEEK** begins with **PALM SUNDAY**, commemorating Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. **HOLY [MAUNDY] THURSDAY** commemorates the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist in Catholic, Orthodox and some Protestant churches. **GOOD FRIDAY** is the solemn memorial of Jesus' death by crucifixion.
- **EASTER SUNDAY** [April] The greatest of Christian festivals celebrates the Resurrection. [Every Sunday is also a commemoration of the Resurrection.]
- **ASCENSION THURSDAY** [May] Forty days after Easter, this festival celebrates Jesus' ascension to heaven.
- **PENTECOST SUNDAY [WHITSUN]** [May/June] Ten days after the Ascension [50 after Easter], this festival celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit to the apostles and other disciples. It marks the birth of the Church.

**NB:** The dates of Easter and, therefore, of Lent, Holy Week, Ascension and Pentecost vary each year. Easter's date is determined by the Passover Full Moon, its extreme limits being 21 March and 25 April. There is variation among Christian communities in the method of determining the date. In Western Christianity it is the first Sunday after the full moon (of Nisan) that falls on or after 21 March.