

Celebrations, Festivals & Pilgrimage		✓
Advent	Begins on the Sunday nearest the end of November and marks the period of preparation for Christmas. Christians light Advents Wreaths, sing carols, decorate their homes and prepare spiritually for the celebration of Christ's birth.	
Christmas	25 th December is the date used to celebrate the birth of Christ. Special Holy Communion services are held, carols are sung, nativity plays performed and Bible readings retell the story of Christ's birth in a stable in Bethlehem.	
Epiphany	The word means 'coming' and refers to the arrival of the wise men at the stable, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Epiphany takes place on 6 th January. In the Orthodox Church the birth of Christ, His baptism, and His first miracle, as well as the arrival of the wise men, are celebrated on 6 th January.	
Lent	Lent is the period of fasting and spiritual preparation before the festival of Easter. It lasts for 40 days and remembers when Jesus fasted and prayed in the desert for 40 days and nights, and where he was tempted by the Devil. It is traditional for Christians to give up something they enjoy during Lent in order to remember the fasting and temptation. The eve of Lent is Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day). The word 'shrove' comes from the word 'shriven' and has come to mean being forgiven.	
Palm Sunday	Jesus enters Jerusalem. Many churches are decorated with palm branches and each member of the congregation is given a palm cross. Sometimes processions are held around the streets or around the church.	
Maundy Thursday	The Last Supper and the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Last Supper was probably the Passover Seder Meal celebrated a day early. The Last Supper is remembered and repeated by Christians in the Holy Communion service. Many Churches have a special Passover meal, and in Britain the King or Queen gives Maundy Money to the poor. Some Christians hold a vigil to remember Jesus' time praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Some churches strip the altar to remember how Jesus was stripped and beaten by the Romans.	
Good Friday	The crucifixion. Roman Catholics pray at the Fourteen Stations of the Cross - pictures of sculpture which record the places Jesus stopped on his journey from Pilate's Judgement Hall to Golgotha (Calvary) the place of the crucifixion. Vigils and quiet services are held in churches. No Holy Communion. Orthodox churches hold a funeral procession carrying an icon of Christ surrounded by flowers.	
Easter Sunday	Easter Sunday is the most joyful day of the Christian year. Christians celebrate the resurrection of Christ in different ways - Easter gardens (models with rock rolled away from the tomb) are made. The Paschal Candle is lit - the victory of light over darkness - Jesus is the light of the world. In Greek Orthodox churches the priest comes out of the darkened church at a minute past midnight with the lighted candle. All of the congregation outside have candles and the light is passed from person to person. There are fireworks and bonfires too!	
<p>Holy Week and Easter are the most important times in the year for many Christians as they remember the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. They remember that God sacrificed His Son so that the sins of humanity could be forgiven, and that good would have victory over evil. Christians also believe that Christ's resurrection is proof of eternal life - life after death in heaven with God.</p>		
Pentecost (Whitsun)	This festival, known by two different names - either Pentecost or Whitsun - marks the gift of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' followers after his resurrection and ascension. This used to be a favourite time for baptisms, particularly of new converts. Those being baptised were dressed in white so it became known as White Sunday or Whitsun. Many churches hold processions around the streets which are called 'Walks of Witness'.	
Sunday	This is also known as the Sabbath or the Lord's Day. The fourth of the Ten Commandments says 'Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy' (Exodus 20). This day is devoted to resting, as God created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh (Genesis 1), and worshiping God. It is the weekly remembrance of the resurrection of Christ and when the main service of Holy Communion takes place.	

Celebrations, Festivals & Pilgrimage



Pilgrimage	When we are talking about religion, a pilgrimage is usually seen as a journey to a particular holy place made for religious reasons. There are no particular rules about pilgrimage in Christianity, but throughout its 2000 year history many people have made pilgrimage to the Holy Land and various sites in Europe.
Bethlehem	The birthplace of Jesus. Bethlehem was also known as the City of David. The prophets said that the Messiah would be born in the City of David. Pilgrims go to visit the Church of the Nativity in Manger Square which is built on the site where the stable is believed to have been.
Nazareth	The place where the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she was to give birth to a Son. Mary and Joseph returned here after their time in Egypt. It was here that Jesus grew up and trained as a carpenter. Pilgrims go to visit the Church of Mary's Well and the Church of the Annunciation - both are associated with the Angel Gabriel's message.
Galilee	The area surrounding the Sea of Galilee is where the majority of Jesus ministry took place. It is here where Jesus walked on water, calmed the storm, and helped the fishermen catch thousands of fish on a day when they had caught none. It is on the banks of the Sea of Galilee that Jesus performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and where he gave the Sermon on the Mount. Pilgrims can visit the Church of the Beatitudes build where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, and the Apostle Peter's house at Capernaum, a village on the shores of Galilee.
Jerusalem	The capital city and location of the Temple. It was here that Jesus was presented for circumcision at eight days old, and where he returned for his Bar Mitzvah at age thirteen. It is also where Jesus spent the last week of his life: the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, turning out the Temple Traders, the Last Supper, the arrest in Gethsemane, the trial, the crucifixion, and resurrection. Pilgrims can visit the walls of the Temple, the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, the Via Dolorosa where the fourteen Stations of the Cross are marked, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (believed to be the place of the crucifixion). They can also visit the Garden Tomb.
Lourdes	Lourdes is a village in south-western France. In 1858 a young girl called Bernadette experienced visions of the Virgin Mary. The Apparition of the Virgin spoke to Bernadette on a number of occasions and instructed that a chapel should be built. The underground spring at Lourdes is said to have healing powers and Lourdes is now a major pilgrimage centre receiving more than five million visitors each year. The new underground church built in 1958 holds 20,000 worshippers.
Walsingham	The village of Little Walsingham is in Norfolk, England. In 1061 Lady Richeldis saw a vision of the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary asked her to build an exact replica of the house where the annunciation had taken place. It is believed that angels left the completed building, created overnight, 200 feet away from the original builders' site. Later, a priory/monastery was built, and the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham was added to the Holy House. The shrine has a Holy Well where pilgrims are sprinkled with the water, and from where they take Holy Water for the sick.
Rome	Rome was the original centre of the Christian Church in the west. It is still the centre and headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church. Pilgrims come to visit Vatican City, the home of the Pope, St Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel painted by Michelangelo. Thousands of pilgrims gather at St Peter's square every year to receive the Pope's blessing when he speaks from his balcony in the Vatican. The city of Rome is home to literally thousands of churches, and catacombs - caves underground where the early Christians met and worshipped in secret before the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity.

People go on pilgrimage for different reasons - to visit the places associated with the life and ministry of Jesus, to strengthen their faith, to help them feel closer to God, in the hope of healing miracles and cures for themselves or others. Many people hope for a religious / spiritual experience. Whilst Pilgrimage is not a requirement in Christianity, it holds more importance for some denominations in comparison to others. Many Roman Catholics participate in pilgrimages, whereas it is far less common amongst Protestant Christians e.g. Anglicans and Methodists.

