

# February 2021

Diversity Holidays

**February is Black History Month in the United States and Canada.** Since 1976, the month has been designated to remember the contributions of people of the African diaspora.

**1 National Freedom Day,** which celebrates the signing of the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery in 1865.

**1-2 Imbolc,** a Gaelic traditional festival marking the beginning of spring.

St. Brigid of Kildare, feast day for St. Brigid celebrated by some Christian denominations.

**2 Candlemas** – A Christian holiday that celebrates three occasions according to Christian belief: the presentation of the child Jesus; Jesus' first entry into the temple; and Virgin Mary's purification.

**3 St. Blaise Day (The Blessing of the Throats),** the feast day of St. Blaise of Sebaste celebrated by the Roman Catholic Church and some Eastern Catholic churches.

**Setsubun-Sai (Beginning of Spring),** the day before the beginning of spring in Japan, celebrated yearly as part of the Spring Festival.

**Four Chaplains Day** commemorates the 55th anniversary of the sinking of the United States army transport Dorchester and the heroism of the four chaplains aboard.

**11 Asian-American Women's Equal Pay Day.**

The aim is to raise awareness about the pay gap between Asian-American women and White men. Asian-American women are paid 90 cents for every dollar paid to white men.

**12 Lunar New Year,** one of the most sacred of all traditional Chinese holidays, a time of family reunion and celebration. The Lunar New Year is also



celebrated at this time in Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Mongolia.

**12-14: Losar, the Tibetan Buddhist New Year,** a time of renewal through sacred and secular practices.

**14 St. Valentine's Day,** a Western Christian feast day honoring one or two early saints named Valentinus. Typically associated with romantic love and celebrated by people expressing their love via gifts.

**15 Parinirvana Day (or Nirvana Day),** the commemoration of Buddha's death

at the age of 80, when he reached the zenith of Nirvana. February 8 is an alternative date of observance.

**Presidents Day,** a federally recognized celebration in the United States of George Washington's birthday, as well as every president proceeding Washington.

**16 Vasant Panchami,** the Hindu festival that

highlights the coming of spring. On this day Hindus worship Saraswati Devi, the goddess of wisdom, knowledge, music, art, and culture.

**Mardi Gras,** the last day for Catholics to indulge before Ash Wednesday starts the sober weeks of fasting that accompany Lent. The term "Mardi Gras" is particularly associated with the carnival celebrations in New Orleans, Louisiana.

**Shrove Tuesday,** the day before Ash Wednesday. Though named for its former religious significance, it is chiefly marked by feasting and celebration, which traditionally preceded the observance of the Lenten fast. It is observed by various Christian denominations.

**17 Ash Wednesday,** the first day of Lent on the Christian calendar. Its name is derived from the symbolic use of ashes to signify penitence. It takes place immediately after the excesses of the two days of Carnival that take place in Northern Europe and parts of Latin America and the Caribbean.

**25-28 Intercalary Days or Ayyám-i-Há,** celebrated by people of the Bahá'í faith. At this time, days are added to the Bahá'í calendar to maintain their solar calendar. Intercalary days are observed with gift giving, special acts of charity, and



preparation for the fasting that precedes the New Year.

**25-26 Purim,** a Jewish celebration that marks the time when the Jewish community living in Persia was saved from genocide. On Purim, Jewish people offer charity and share food with friends.

**26 Lantern Festival,** the first significant feast after the Chinese New Year, named for watching Chinese lanterns illuminate the sky during the night of the event.

**27 Maghi-Purnima,** a Hindu festival especially for worshippers of Lord Vishnu. Millions of devotees take a holy bath

on this day. Devotees also carry out charity work on this day.

**27-March 28 Magha Puja Day (also known as Maka Bucha),** a Buddhist holiday that marks an event early in the Buddha's teaching life when a group of 1,250 enlightened saints, ordained by the Buddha, gathered to pay their respect to him. It is celebrated on various dates in different countries.

**28 (sunset) to March 19 (sunset) Nineteen-Day Fast,** a time in the Bahá'í Faith to reinvigorate the soul and bring one closer to God. This fast takes place immediately before the beginning of the Bahá'í New Year.