

Easter

Easter is one of the most important holidays for Christians, as it celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ following his crucifixion. For Western Christian observers, the season of Lent begins on February 17th in 2021. For many observers Lent ends on Easter Sunday, which falls on April 4th. This begins the Easter season, which runs until Pentecost on May 23rd. However, individual adherents may use different dates to mark the end of Lent, including Holy Thursday (the Thursday before Easter) or Palm Sunday (a week before Easter). It is important for employers to keep in mind that there may be variation in which dates their employees consider to be part of the Lenten or Easter seasons.

It is also important to remember that Easter and the other holidays associated with it usually fall on different dates for Western and Eastern Orthodox observers. This occurs in part because the West uses the Gregorian calendar and the Orthodox Church uses the Julian calendar. This tip sheet will use the dates observed in the West unless otherwise specified. 2021 Orthodox Christian Easter is on May 2nd.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday takes place 40 days before Easter and is often commemorated by special church services. It can fall anywhere between February and March, so managers should therefore be alert and check its date each year. In 2021, Ash Wednesday falls on February 17th. On Ash Wednesday many traditions and denominations—Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist and others—hold special services where worshippers are marked on their foreheads with ashes in the shape of a cross. Employees may have stopped by an early morning church service before going to work, so they may arrive to work with this ash on their forehead and leave it there all day. It is important for managers and coworkers to be respectful of this practice.

Lent

Lent is the period of 40 days before Easter and begins with Ash Wednesday, on February 17th in 2021. Christians who observe seek to experience in their own lives Jesus Christ's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days. Many people decide to give up something of importance to them during this period.

Holy Thursday

Holy Thursday, also known as Maundy Thursday, is the Thursday before Easter. It commemorates the Last Supper of Jesus Christ and the Apostles. Holy Thursday is most commonly observed by Catholics, who may request a part or full day off from work in order to attend a special Holy Thursday Mass. In 2021, Holy Thursday falls on April 1st.

Good Friday

Good Friday is the Friday before Easter. It commemorates the day Jesus Christ was executed by crucifixion. It is a day of mourning for many Christians, who often attend special Good Friday church services. In 2021, Good Friday falls on April 2nd. Observant employees may request a part or full day off from work.

Easter Sunday

Easter commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ following his crucifixion. While Lent is a time of sacrifice and remembrance, Easter is a holiday of celebration and joy. The date of Easter changes each

year and typically differs between Western and Eastern Orthodox Churches. In 2021, Easter Sunday falls on April 4th for Western Christian observers and on May 2nd for Eastern Orthodox observers.

Dietary Restrictions & Fasting

Lent can be marked by refraining from food, festivities, and certain daily activities (some people may for instance stop watching television or playing video games). Some Christians fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday while others give up a particular vice, such as a favorite snack food, to test self-discipline and symbolize Jesus' deprivation in the wilderness. As an alternative to "giving something up," some Christians add a Lenten discipline, such as feeding people at homeless shelters or otherwise challenging themselves to do something positive to make the world a better place. If Christian employees are observing Lent, it is important to be aware of this when scheduling events where food may be present because they may have dietary restrictions that they do not observe at other times of the year.

Scheduling

On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday churches hold special services. Christian employees may request time off work to attend these services. Some employees also observe Easter Monday and may request time off for this observance. Invite your employees to share how they personally observe Easter and what practices they have that should be respected during the 40 days of Lent.

For more useful information on world religions, subscribe to Tanenbaum's online resource, [Religion at Work: A \(Human\) Resource](#). Visit the Tanenbaum [Workplace Resources](#) page for additional Tanenbaum fact sheets and contact Tanenbaum at workplacediversity@tanenbaum.org with questions.