

**From:** James Page [mailto:vpdiversity@jhmi.edu]

**Sent:** Thursday, February 23, 2017 8:41 AM

**To:** 'recipients@lists.johnshopkins.edu'

**Subject:** Religious and Cultural Holiday Awareness: Observing Maha Shivaratri, Orthodox Christian Great Lent, and Ash Wednesday and Lent

*To the Johns Hopkins Medicine community*

Dear Colleagues,

Increasing our knowledge of the diverse cultural and faith traditions of our patients, faculty members, staff members and students helps strengthen our relationships with each other and can positively impact the quality of patient care.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Department of Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy have created a Religious and Cultural Observances Toolkit to provide general education and information about cultural and religious observances, and how they may impact interactions with colleagues, students, and patients and their family members.

Please take the time to become familiar with the following upcoming days of observation:



- **Maha Shivaratri, Feb. 24:** This is a Hindu festival celebrated to honor the god Shiva. The day marks Shiva's marriage to the goddess Parvati. Shivaratri is the night when Shiva performed Tandava Nritya, the dance of primordial creation, preservation and destruction. It is a most holy day of worship for Hindus. It is sometimes referred to as a "great convergence."



- **Orthodox Christian Great Lent, Feb. 27–April 16:** Orthodox Christians and Western Christians share the belief that Jesus is the savior, the son of God. Orthodox Christians commemorate the period of time leading up to the death and resurrection of Jesus as a great period of Lent, or Great Lent. People will enter into a time of contemplation, which can include a conscious review of one's spiritual life.



- **Ash Wednesday and Lent—Eastern and Western traditions, March 1:** Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent, a time of contemplation and a reminder of mortality and human frailty. This is marked with actual ashes created from the blessed palms from the previous year's Easter celebration. Lent is a remembrance of the account of Jesus' 40 days of fasting in the desert. The 2017 dates for Lent in the Western Christian traditions are March 1 through April 16.

Use these fact sheets as guides for supporting our patients, staff members, faculty members and students who may observe these days. Please keep in mind that they are intended to provide a general overview, and the information may not apply to all individuals in any given culture or faith.

Sincerely,

James E. Page Jr., M.B.A.  
Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion  
Chief Diversity Officer  
Johns Hopkins Medicine

Paula Teague, D.Min, M.B.A.  
Senior Director, Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy  
Johns Hopkins Health System