



# CULTURAL



## Sensitivity *manual*



**ALEXIAN**  
BROTHERS

HEALTH SYSTEM

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# SECTION I

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# History of *the Alexian Brothers*

# HISTORY

## *the Alexian Brothers*

### Who are the Alexian Brothers?

The Alexian Brothers are a religious congregation of Catholic men whose origin is rooted in pre-medieval times, when a small group of laymen banded together in Germany to care for the poor, the sick, and the helpless. The first written account of the Brotherhood is dated 1259 in a document referring to the Beghards and Beguines. These were communities of celibate men and women, Christian lay-people, who gathered together to live a more intense Christian life, as well as to minister to their neighbors in whatever ways fit the needs of the time. Originally, they gathered together along the Rhine area of Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, and France.

Many of these communes of men became more organized in the middle of the 13th century and were accepted under the Franciscan Rule, and yet others maintained their own identity. Although there were distinct groups of Beghards, which developed with a founder or a rule, each group had a distinct character yet fell into a general type of community, according to whether their focus was on contemplative or active life, attached to a specific trade, or begged for livelihood. The Rhineland Beghards (referred to as the “Brot-Beghards”) were the latter—begging for their alms from town to town—and from these communities the Alexian Brothers evolved with foundation origin in Cologne and Aachen, Germany. The earliest record of the Alexian

Brothers’ existence is a 1334 city hall document in Aachen, Germany, giving notice of a gift of alms to the Beghards for taking care of the helpless and homeless of the city. Thus, from the earliest days, the community was centered around Christ and His Gospel values. Prayer, patterns of community living, and service to others were strong threads in the fabric of their lives.

In 1347, the Black Death (Bubonic Plague) struck Europe. It was during this time that the Beghards came together in a stronger way. They buried the dead, cared for the sick and dying, reached out to those left alone and abandoned, and often sacrificed their own lives in doing so. The plague was devastating, decimating the population of Europe by almost 30%. Continuous waves of pestilence and decline inundated Europe until the end of the 17th century. By then, the desire to help, to have pity, and to bring sacrifices in the service to one’s neighbor had faded; people seemed to think only of themselves and their possessions. Still, there were many examples of heroic love of neighbor. The Beghards (the Alexian “founding Brothers”) were very special heroes, not allowing themselves to be affected by despair. They provided genuine love of neighbor and inspired courage by their fearless and daring response in burying the dead and caring for the sick and dying. This activity, common to them during these sad years from 1347-1351,

made it plausible that thereafter a common bond, even though not firm, would unite the single groups of these men in Germany, Netherlands, and Belgium. While in reality their roots were set prior to the outbreak of the plague, it is in their ministry to the victims of the dreaded plague that the Alexian Brothers seem to be identified in origin. From this ministry grew compassion and sensitivity to the sick, poor, unwanted, and especially the dying—to the healing ministry—attributes that continue to this day.

Interestingly, the Alexian Brothers never named themselves; rather, they were named by the people throughout the centuries. In a document dated 1259, there is reference to the “Beghards;” the Rhineland Beghards were referred to as “Brot-Beghards;” and from them evolved the Alexian Brothers. In addition, during their ministry to plague victims, “Cellites” was a title that became common for them, which can be interpreted in two ways: “cella” means a small church or memorial chapel, or a cell or grave. This revealed further their concern for the sick, poor, and very much for the Christian burial of the plague victims. They were also named “Passage Brothers” during the plague, as they helped people in the greatest of all passages—from life to death—or to another type of life. “Poor Brothers” and “Bread Brothers” were other names given because they begged for bread to feed those in need. (The “Poor Brothers” were mentioned by Pope Gregory XI around 1374, wherein he stated that the Brothers were to be respected.) And “Seelbruder,” meaning “Soul Brothers,” was another name given to them for their concern for

the soul of the person, or the spiritual needs of people. After the plague subsided, one of the first works the Brothers were recruited for was to become official pallbearers, to keep vigil with the dead, to pray for them in words and chants, and to fulfill the Christian practices of the times for burial—and so the additional name, “Brothers of Chant.”

In 1427, the Brothers developed a standard to live according to the vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience. They desired their dedication to be total in imitation of the sacrifice of Christ. The name, Alexian Brothers, evolved from the devotion of the people in Germany to Saint Alexius, a popular saint of the poor. Many ballads were sung about him by roaming troubadours, and there were many shrines and devotions to him. Saint Alexius was a rich and famous Roman youth, who left his father’s house and went to Syria to care for the poor and the sick. His life was simple and his charity and care for others were neither broadcast nor laid open for acclaim. He received the nickname, “Man of God,” from those who knew him. The legend relates how Saint Alexius returned and lived under the stairs of his parents’ house; they thought he was homeless. It was only after he died, when his parents read a letter he had written, that they realized he was their son. The Brothers identified with Saint Alexius’ characteristics and life, because they wished to be spiritual men who were concerned with the things of God and also wanted their charity to be the same as that of Saint Alexius. When the Brothers received permission to build a chapel at the first Brothers’ House in

Aachen, Germany, they named it “Chapel of St. Alexius.” The local people began to call these men “the Brothers at the Chapel of St. Alexius,” which soon came to be “Brothers of St. Alexius,” and, later, “Alexian Brothers.”

The Brothers received official status as a religious congregation when Pope Sixtus IV declared the brotherhood to be the Order of Cellites in 1472; this was a protective measure, because of the Inquisition. They adopted the Rule of St. Augustine as a basis for their daily lives and chose St. Alexius as their patron.

The Brothers evolved from the many spiritually and humanitarian-motivated laymen of those early centuries, who responded to their own need for spiritual growth and the needs of others, and this evolution continues to this day.

The individual Brother and the Congregation of Alexian Brothers as a whole strive to renew their life and maintain their mission in accordance with Vatican II and the charism of their founders, continually striving to apply themselves to the times and places in which they live. Christ is their strength, for His is a Healing Love, which they strive to model. Their life is put into action, as their motto stresses: “The love of Christ compels us.”

The Alexian Brothers evolved throughout the centuries, continuing to reach out to the dying and abandoned, and rendering many and varied services in healthcare to the present day. They are represented ministering in the United States, Germany, Belgium, France, England, Ireland, Philippines, and India.

The Catholic Church, through Vatican II, directs every religious community to study their original Charism and Mission to thereby channel them, if need be, to the present day, and to proclaim them in a Statement. Through years of renewal, the Alexian Brothers have accomplished this and proclaim their Congregational Statement of Purpose:

**Charism Statement:** The Alexian Charism is the prophetic and daring response of a faith community to the gospel of Jesus. It is rooted in prayer and simple life style. In discipleship with Jesus, our response is reaching out to the poor, sick and dying, especially the marginated and powerless.

Our Charism calls us to conversion and total self-giving in continuing the healing and reconciling mission of Jesus in collaboration with others.

**Mission Statement:** Sharing with others in the healing mission of Christ and sustained by community, prayer, the evangelical counsels, and in the spirit of the Gospels of our founders, we Alexian Brothers promote health and care for the poor, the sick, the aged, the dying, and the marginated throughout the world.

### **Congregational Seal**

The Congregational Seal of the Alexian Brothers reveals significant aspects of their history and charism. The seal is divided into three fields. In each is a symbolic representation of the end or work of the Institute. The upper half shows a pelican nourishing its young with her heart’s blood—a symbol of the self-consuming sacrifice of Christian Charity. The two shovels in the lower half are a remembrance

of the Alexian Brothers in burying the dead during the times of calamity. The flying raven represents the feeding of the destitute, a virtue the Congregation has practiced for centuries. From the back of the shield projects the cross, indicating that the cross is salvation. A band with the inscription of the words of S. Paul: “Caritas Christi Urget Nos” (“The love of Christ compels us” Cor. 5:14 ), proclaims the motto of the Alexian Brothers.

This seal of the congregation was modernized by the American Province and serves as the Province logo. “The love of Christ compels us” is the guiding principle, which has given strength to the Alexian Brothers throughout the centuries. Strength from God and from their own unique Brotherhood have helped the Alexian Brothers survive, striving to maintain and model the healing Christ in the world through their consecrated lives and their ministry of healthcare.

### **The Alexian Brothers in America (Immaculate Conception Province)**

In 1865, the Alexian Brothers of Aachen, Germany, discerned to establish a branch house in America, a growing nation filled with possibilities for a religious community that could meet the needs of many immigrants. The commission for this venture was given to Brother Bonaventure Thelen, who was empowered for this undertaking.

Brother Bonaventure arrived in New York City on January 2, 1866. The ardor of Brother Bonaventure’s character was thoroughly tested. A strange land and unfamiliar language were not the only obstacles that he had to surmount.

As his orders requested, he visited possible sites, seeking a suitable location for the proposed foundation.

In the cities he visited—Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Quincy, St. Louis, and Chicago—he met only disappointment. To continue traveling seemed imprudent, for his funds were dwindling; thus, it was in Chicago that Brother Bonaventure found lodging with the Redemptorists. He succeeded in erecting a frame infirmary in Chicago and carried his first patient to the small house on June 12, 1866. This courageous effort successfully began the healing ministry of the Alexian Brothers in America.

Having established the community in Chicago, Brother Bonaventure’s zeal guided him to seek the foundation of a branch house in St. Louis, Missouri. Brother Bonaventure wrote to Archbishop Kenrick in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1869 to seek permission for a foundation. He had been encouraged by how Archbishop Kenrick had previously welcomed him to St. Louis in 1866, when he had unsuccessfully attempted to find a suitable site for a hospital. When Brothers Bonaventure, Paul, and Alexius arrived in St. Louis two weeks later, the Archdiocesan Vicar General, Monsignor Henry Muehlsiepen, hosted the Brothers in his home until they found a suitable house for themselves. Monsignor Muehlsiepen was Vicar General of all the German, Polish, and Bohemian Catholics of the Archdiocese and may have known the Brothers during his youth in Cologne and Essen. He also may have extended the original invitation to the Brothers to come to America.

Monsignor Muehelsiepen subsequently blessed the Brothers' first St. Louis hospital and chapel on December 8, 1869 (1869-1977).

Also in 1869, the United States Alexian Brothers Community became the American Province of the Congregation, and Brother Albert Engelin was selected as Provincial. Brother Bonaventure was recalled to Aachen, Germany, where he continued to serve in leadership positions until his death on July 9, 1898.

The Alexian Brothers continued to extend their ministry in the United States, opening a hospital in Oshkosh, Wisconsin (1879-1965); and hospitals in Elizabeth, New Jersey (1892-1990), San Jose, California (1965-1998), and Elk Grove Village, Illinois (1966-present).

They established a rest home in Signal Mountain, Tennessee, in 1938, which later became the site of a modern continuing care retirement community (CCRC), the Alexian Village of Tennessee, which opened in 1983. This CRCC currently has 277 apartments, a 114-bed skilled nursing facility, and a 33-person assisted living facility. In 1980, the Alexian Brothers assumed sponsorship of an existing CCRC in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and renamed it Alexian Village of Milwaukee. This CRCC currently has 310 apartments, 108 skilled nursing beds, and 82 assisted living apartments.

While this expansion was proceeding, the Brothers extended their service to Sao Paulo, Brazil, where an interprovincial missionary community was established (1952-1954); Boys' Town, Nebraska (1955-1975); Walterboro, North Carolina

(1969-1973); Lima, Peru (1968-1970); the Englewood Community in Chicago, Illinois (1985-1988); and Davao City, Philippines (1981-present).

A 180-bed nursing home—Alexian Brothers Lansdowne Village—St. Louis, Missouri, was opened in November 1988. Alexian Brothers Sherbrooke Village, a 120-bed nursing home with 44 apartments for assisted living/residential care, also in St. Louis, was purchased in December 1991. The Alexian Brothers also sponsor a 109-unit apartment complex for the elderly—Alexian Court—in St. Louis, Missouri, and a 75-unit apartment complex for the elderly—Alexian Brothers Manor—in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Throughout the growth and development of the Alexian Brothers in the United States, various other services were called for, and the Brothers responded. In 1989, Alexian Brothers Bonaventure House, a 35-unit supportive housing facility for persons with AIDS in Chicago, Illinois, was founded. Two more supportive housing facilities for persons with AIDS were opened: Alexian Brothers The Harbor in Waukegan, Illinois, in 1998, and Alexian Brothers Salus Place in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1999.

The Alexian Brothers acquired two hospitals in Hoffman Estates, Illinois, on February 1, 1999: the 344-bed Hoffman Estates Medical Center, renamed St. Alexius Medical Center, and the 100-bed Woodland Hospital, renamed the Alexian Brothers Behavioral Health Hospital.

Alexian Brothers Valley Residence, a 42-bed assisted living residence for Alzheimer patients with a 20-person

adult day care unit, was established in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1998. Two programs for the all-inclusive care of the elderly were also started: the Chattanooga, Tennessee, PACE project was initiated in 1998; and a program in St. Louis, Missouri, began in 1999.

### **The Alexian Brothers in Chicago, Illinois**

When Brother Bonaventure Thelen arrived in Chicago in early 1866, he was received very coolly. James Duggan, the Bishop of Chicago, was not at first enthusiastic about the responsibility of encouraging Brother Bonaventure in his hospital-building mission. But friendly German priests and interested laypersons helped persuade the Bishop to support Brother Bonaventure's plan. After his third visit to the Bishop, Brother Bonaventure obtained the desired consent and the formal documentation on March 31, 1866 for the admission of the Alexian Brothers Congregation. The Bishop gave Brother Bonaventure a deed of foundation, permission to collect funds in the diocese, and lent him the property on which to build a small frame house on the lakefront. Thereby, he was welcomed into the diocese and permission was granted to establish a hospital in the city of Chicago. The first American candidate to the Alexian Brothers was received on June 15, 1866, and shortly after, two Brothers arrived from Germany. The community life of the new foundation had begun.

Brother Bonaventure set about to collect funds, but the rewards of his daily efforts were often meager—it seemed as if the people placed no confidence in him.

Dispirited, he wondered if Chicago was actually the right place for the project. Brother Bonaventure's persistent spirit won out, and his courage was renewed, however, when several priests recommended the project from the pulpits of their churches.

Brother Bonaventure soon collected enough money for a small frame house, the first Alexian Brothers Hospital in Chicago, at 527 N. Dearborn (now 1401 Dearborn Parkway), at the corner of Schiller Street. As stated previously, it opened on July 12, 1866, and was the city's second Catholic hospital. Built of wood, it was approximately 40' x 20', two stories, and included a chapel, eight-bed ward, other bedrooms, and a combined pharmacy and reception room. A kitchen and cow barn were added later.

Like his European forebears, Brother Bonaventure found his first patient in a ditch on Chicago's Franklin Street. An early history records that in memory of St. John of God, Brother Bonaventure carried him home on his shoulders, laid him into his own bed, and prepared for himself a lair on his couch.

Although men had attended to the wounded on the battlefields of the Civil War, the idea of male nursing professionals in a hospital was novel to the residents of Chicago. But when Brother Bonaventure and his few comrades welcomed men and boys felled by the cholera epidemic of 1866 the following summer, the citizens of Chicago recognized their skill as nurses—and their valor. The devotion of the Brothers during the cholera epidemic and the well-ordered way in which they conducted their hospital gradually obliterated all distrust and prejudice.

These few Alexian Brothers took the casualties into their little hospital, no matter how rich or poor they were, no matter how sick, and no matter what religion they professed.

From that charitable beginning came a long and fruitful relationship between the Alexian Brothers and the people of Chicago. As the number of patients steadily increased, the people of Chicago responded with funds and support to the Brothers' request for a larger hospital.

Brother Bonaventure was able to purchase property for the Brothers' second hospital on May 29, 1867. It was between Market and Franklin Streets, about four blocks west and a few hundred feet north of the original site. The building would face east on the 500 block of North Franklin Street, now the 1400-1500 block of North Park Avenue. The cornerstone was laid on September 11, 1867.

The Very Reverend Peter Fischer, Vicar General of the diocese for German members of the Church, dedicated the 70-bed hospital on November 22, 1868. The hospital incorporated as Alexian Brothers of Chicago, Inc., in 1869. Eventually, the Province of the Immaculate Conception came to be included in this corporation. In 1869, the United States of Alexian Brothers Community became the American Province of the Congregation and Brother Albert Engelin was selected as Provincial. Shortly after, Brother Bonaventure was transferred back to Germany as previously noted.

More Brothers arrived from Germany to become members of the new community, and in 1870, an increase of native vocations from America was also noticeable.

These men were tested in character, for the great Chicago fire started on Sunday, October 8, 1871, and reduced the greater part of the city to ruins—including the hospital of the Alexian Brothers, the fire having reached the site on Monday about 4 p.m. The citizens of Chicago supported the Brothers' appeals for new funds, and a new hospital was soon rebuilt on the site. They were the first to erect provisional buildings in the burned-out district, and in this way continued caring for the sick.

The new 150- to 175-bed, third Alexian Brothers hospital was erected in 1873 and was dedicated with Bishop Thomas Foley presiding, four bands playing, and 3,000 Chicagoans celebrating with the Brothers. The new building faced west at 539-559 N. Market Street (now North Orleans Street). By the end of the first year of operation, the new hospital had admitted 338 patients, and 178 were charity cases. In 1878, a wing was added, and a fourth floor was added in 1880. In 1888, another wing was added. Additional land was purchased to enlarge gardens and lawns in 1892.

On February 6, 1894, the medical staff met (with seven doctors present). J. B. Murphy, M.D., vice-chairman, presided and Brother Aloysius Schyns attended. The constitutions were modified and the following decisions were made: two Brothers should assist during operations and should wear white gowns; no pus cases were to be kept or dressed on the first floor; the Pasteur filter was to be used in furnishing drinking water to the patients; two doctors were to look into the matter of diplomas for interns; and a group of four was assigned to develop a

plan for providing nursing lectures for the Brothers. On February 8, 1894, a committee of doctors initiated a series of lectures for the Brothers on the principles and practices of surgical and medical nursing. The foundation of the Alexian Brothers School of Nurses can probably be dated from this event. In the years that followed, the Brothers kept stride with advancements in nursing and hospital management.

The Brothers were forced to sell their property on September 20, 1895, to the Northwestern Elevated Railway, predecessor to the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), when it purchased the hospital and land for \$200,000. The new elevated tracks were to pass through the front lawn, paralleling Market Street. The Brothers were allowed to continue operating the hospital, rent-free, for up to two and a half years more.

When that hospital had to be vacated, the Alexian Brothers built their legendary hospital on Belden Avenue, which became known throughout the city for the depth of the Brothers' charity and the excellence of their care for people of every social class. The cornerstone for the fourth Alexian Brothers Hospital at 1200 W. Belden Avenue was laid on October 4, 1896, by Archbishop Patrick A. Feehan. The 300-bed hospital, built under the direction of Brother Aloysius Schyns, was dedicated by Archbishop Feehan on December 8, 1897. In 1898, the hospital opened. The Alexian Brothers School of Nurses, Inc., (for men only) was incorporated in the State of Illinois on October 15, 1898 (1898-1969). The Belden Avenue hospital, aided the community until it closed in 1968.

Throughout the years the Brothers' inpatient care was for men only and care was rendered by Brothers and male staff. In 1962, all facilities were adapted to accommodate admission and service for women as well.

In 1976, negotiations began with the Little Sisters of the Poor for the sale of the former Alexian Brothers Hospital building and land, and in 1977, the property was deeded to the Little Sisters. They retained the Alexian Brothers School of Nurses building and added a new nursing home and apartment complex. The buildings facing Fullerton Avenue were sold to others.

### **The Alexian Brothers in Elk Grove Village and Hoffman Estates, Illinois**

St. Alexius Hospital in Elk Grove Village, Illinois, replaced the beloved Belden Avenue hospital. On June 12, 1966, Auxiliary Bishop Cletus O'Donnell dedicated the 224-bed, \$8-million St. Alexius Hospital. The date was exactly 100 years after Brother Bonaventure brought his first patient to the first hospital at Dearborn and Schiller Streets.

Late in 1970, the never-opened Four Seasons Nursing Home across the road from the hospital was purchased for \$1.5 million. It was called St. Alexius Annex. Mental health was the first program transferred there the following spring. On June 27, 1971, St. Alexius Hospital was renamed Alexian Brothers Medical Center. St. Alexius Annex was named C.E. Niehoff Pavilion of Alexian Brothers Medical Center.

On January 17, 1972, the Rehabilitation Unit opened in the Niehoff Pavilion. Groundbreaking took place on August 6, 1972, for the medical office building and two-story link to the main building. John Cardinal Cody and Governor Richard Ogilvie participated. On May 5, 1975, the Alcoholic Treatment Center opened in Niehoff Pavilion.

On January 3, 1989, the Alexian Brothers Regional Cancer Center opened, and it was dedicated by Auxiliary Bishop John Gorman on February 25.

The Alexian Brothers expanded their Chicago-area presence by acquiring the 344-bed Hoffman Estates Medical Center (St. Alexius Medical Center) and 100-bed Woodland Hospital (Alexian Brothers Behavioral Health Hospital) in Chicago's northwest suburbs in 1999. On July 12, 1999, the dedication/blessing of these two facilities took place with His Eminence Francis Cardinal George, OMI, Archbishop of Chicago, presiding. The July 12 dedication/blessing date was chosen in remembrance of the founding day when Brother Bonaventure carried his first patient to the small infirmary in Chicago in 1866.

### **Alexian Brothers Health System**

Alexian Brothers Health System (ABHS) is the national parent organization for a diversified, multi-corporate healthcare delivery system. The national office is responsible for managing the business affairs and coordinating operations of all the subsidiary corporations, performing administrative and financial functions under the direction of the president. ABHS acts as the national member of various subsidiaries of the system.

It sets system-wide policies and directs the system's operating entities to ensure that their strategies and financial plans are consistent with the system's overall strategic direction, yet allows each facility to maintain its own culture. The progress of these plans are monitored by ABHS, which holds local management accountable for achieving goals designed to ensure the viability of the individual subsidiaries and the system as a whole. Direction is provided through the Strategic Planning and Operations, Mission Services, Human Resources, Finance and Information Systems, Elderly Services, and Legal Affairs divisions.

### **Alexian Brothers Mission**

Strengthened by community, prayer, commitment to the poor, and the legacy of our founders, and in partnership with others, we Alexian Brothers witness the Healing Christ by a holistic approach to promoting health, and by caring for the sick, dying, aged, and unwanted of all socioeconomic levels, outside as well as within our health-care system.

### **Alexian Brothers Values**

In the Middle Ages, stories about Jesus Christ and His deeds inspired the forerunners of the Alexian Brothers. Today, the basic values taught by those stories provide the foundation for the operating philosophy of Alexian Brothers Health System. The values are:

- *Compassion—We manifest God's presence in the world by a concerned approach and competent care of those we serve.*

- *Dignity of the Person*—We believe that all individuals are created in God's image. Therefore, we treat them with respect.
- *Care of the Poor*—We serve the sick, aged, dying, and unwanted of all socioeconomic levels, especially the poor.
- *Holism*—We promote healing of the whole person—body, mind, and spirit through physical, psychosocial, and spiritual care of those whose lives we touch.
- *Partnership*—We collaborate with those who share our ministry in carrying out our mission.

The system's governance, management, and entire healthcare team espouse these values, applying them daily to sustain the Alexian Brothers' healthcare ministry.

### **Alexian Brothers Operating Philosophy**

The Congregation of Alexian Brothers participates in the healing ministry of Christ within the Catholic Church. Empowered by gospel values, the Brothers sponsor health-related institutions and services dedicated to this healing ministry. With trustees and administrators chosen because they share the Brothers' commitment toward those most in need, the Brothers witness God's concern for humanity by vigilant care for each community they serve. The following are the Articles of Faith:

*We believe that life is a sacred gift from God. Each person is created in the Divine image with a right of conscience and from conception until death is called to eternal union with God.*

*We believe that we share a responsibility according to our resources to promote health, to enhance the quality of life, and to secure justice in our pluralistic society.*

*We believe that the promotion of health implies a holistic response to the needs of all those whose lives we touch.*

*We believe that each person who shares in the management and delivery of healthcare has the responsibility to foster a supportive climate of cooperation and service in which the dignity of the person is respected and communicated.*

*We believe that the needs of the whole person—physical, spiritual, and psychosocial—are to be evaluated and responded to according to professional and institutional standards of excellence.*

*We believe that to develop the human potential is fundamental to ensuring health and is consistent with Christian values. It is an obligation in justice to have and to develop competent and caring medical staff and personnel.*

*We believe that as member of the Church, we are committed to the values and principles expressed and/or implied in the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Services as approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (November 1995).*

*We believe that cooperation is essential among the Alexian Brothers, civic and Church authorities, and those in partnership with our mission.*

*We believe that it is necessary for all who collaborate with us in Catholic healthcare to be professionally competent and to have an understanding of our mission and philosophy. Therefore, education to this end is essential.*

## **Alexian Brothers of America**

Alexian Brothers of America (ABA) is a civil corporation through which the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers conducts its healthcare ministry.

As institute members of Alexian Brothers Health System, ABA has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the system fulfills the Alexian Brothers' mission, values and philosophy.

“The Love of Christ compels us” is the guiding principle that has given strength to the Alexian Brothers throughout the centuries. Strength from God and from their own unique Brotherhood has helped the Alexian Brothers survive, striving to maintain and model the Healing Christ in the world through their consecrated lives and their ministry of healthcare.

## **Epilogue**

Times have changed. Places have changed. However, the mission of the Brothers remains anchored in the Gospel ideal of healing service, which was transplanted to this New World by Brother Bonaventure in 1866. The Brothers in America continue to walk in the footsteps of their valorous forebears of the fourteenth century.

## SECTION II

Adventist

Catholicism

Christianity

Hinduism

Islam

Jainism

Judaism

Orthodox Christianity

Protestantism

Sikhism

# Religious *groups*

## ADVENTIST

By the most basic definition, Adventists are members of a variety of Christian groups that believe in the imminent Second Coming or Second Advent of Jesus Christ. The concept of an imminent Second Coming of Christ is found in the Bible and was emphasized in the preaching of William Miller (1782-1849), the man primarily responsible for denominations known as Adventist. After what is described as close Bible study, Miller determined that Christ would return in glory to the earth in 1844 and begin a thousand-year reign during which individuals would have the opportunity to demonstrate their faithfulness. According to Adventists, this millennium would take place before the Last Judgment. When the Second Coming failed to occur on March 21, 1844, Miller recalculated the date to be October 22, 1844. Even though this prophecy also failed, “Millerites”—as they were known—determined that the date did indeed mark the beginning of Christ’s preparation for his return in glory to earth.

The belief in an imminent Second Coming is a universal attribute of Adventist faith. They believe that Christ’s Second Coming will be “literal, personal, visible, and worldwide.” To this end, there are several governing principles by which members of most Adventist congregations live.

Adventists celebrate two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Adventists do not baptize infants; rather, they baptize individuals when they demonstrate a full understanding of the faith they profess. Adventists practice Baptism by full immersion in water, a practice modeled after Jesus’ Baptism.

In preparation for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, Adventist engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation. It is a time to heal relationships and seek reconciliation; repentance and confession are encouraged. There is also a ceremony of foot washing within the celebration. This serves a two-fold purpose: service to others as well as cleansing. The Adventist communion service is open to all faithful Christians.

Adventists also believe that with the Second Coming of Christ, there will be a final judgment. When Christ returns to the earth, those faithful Christians who have died and are deemed worthy of salvation will be raised from the dead and granted new life. Those living Christians who are faithful to the teachings of Christ and are deemed worthy will also be granted salvation. Those living and deceased who have been deemed unbelievers or unworthy will be punished. Those who are denied salvation and eternal life will simply die, since Adventists do not believe in the existence of Hell, although they certainly believe in Satan and in evil.

For Adventists, the human body is considered a temple of God that must be kept pure. To this end, Adventists follow a set of strict dietary laws found in the Bible, particularly in Leviticus. Adventists are admonished to avoid eating meat and certain kinds of shellfish. As a general rule, Adventists are vegetarians. They are also to avoid using narcotics and stimulants, such as caffeine found in coffee and tea. When entertaining an Adventist, one should take care not to serve meat, shellfish, or other foods that would violate their dietary restrictions. It is safest to offer a vegetarian meal. Also, one should not present gifts

of alcohol, tobacco, tea, or coffee to Adventists. A guest in an Adventist home one should not request restricted food items such as coffee and tea, nor should one use tobacco products.

Adventists also practice tithing, giving one-tenth of their incomes to the church in support of the mission, healthcare, education, and publishing ventures of the Adventist church.

### **Seventh Day Adventists**

The “Millerites” formally organized the denomination known as Seventh Day Adventists in 1863. The largest of the Adventist groups, the Seventh Day Adventists have a growing population. They are one of the fastest growing Christian churches in the world.

Currently, they have more than nine million members throughout the world.

Seventh Day Adventists take their name from their belief that after creating the world for six days, God rested on the seventh day. Consequently, they celebrate the Sabbath on the seventh day, Saturday. Although other Adventist groups such as the Advent Christian Church, the Christadelphians, and the Church of God General Conference, hold worship services on Sunday, the Seventh Day Adventists maintain the conviction that the Sabbath must be observed from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. They observe the Sabbath on Saturday based on a literal interpretation of the Bible passage, Genesis ii, 3: “So God blessed the seventh day [Saturday] and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.” The Seventh Day

Adventists developed this distinct aspect of their faith as a Christian group keeping a Saturday Sabbath; it is an important and defining part of their identity.

The Seventh Day Adventists operate one of the largest centralized protestant educational systems in the world, which includes 5,478 schools, colleges, and universities. They are known for their outreach facilities, including hospitals, schools, orphanages, and sanitariums. The Seventh Day Adventists have a comprehensive healthcare network as well, including 615 hospitals, clinics, medical launches and medevac planes, orphanages, and homes for the aged. Officially they have 161 hospitals and sanitariums; 313 clinics and dispensaries; 113 nursing homes and orphanages; 28 medical planes and launches.

The Seventh Day Adventists operate in a highly structured and democratic system. Members of the Adventist church elect their own representatives and church officials through a democratic process. They have a governance structure which includes: local churches with individual members; local conferences, which include a number of local churches in a particular geographic area; union conferences, which include conferences from a larger region or territory; and the General Conference, which is the “highest earthly authority of the church.”

### **The Advent Christian Church**

The Advent Christian General Conference was the second group to establish itself as separate from Miller’s Adventist community. Formally established as a General Council

in 1860, the Advent Christian Church maintains membership in the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), and the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA). The Advent Christian Church is an evangelical denomination, currently composed of approximately 35,000 members. They have about 325 congregations located throughout the United States and Canada.

In addition to their ministry in North America, the Advent Christian Church also carries out missionary work in 11 countries: Croatia, Ghana, Honduras, India, Japan, Liberia, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, and Philippines. There are approximately 28,000 members of the Advent Christian Church in these “missionary” countries.

### **Christadelphians**

The Christadelphians are a religious group similar to Adventists in that they believe in many of the same concepts. The name Christadelphians means “brothers and sisters in Christ.” Christadelphians adopted this name more than 120 years ago to describe and solidify their identity as a Christian fellowship. Established through the teaching of Dr. John Thomas, the Christadelphians adhere to the following basic beliefs:

1. *The Bible is God's word and the only message from him. It is without error, except those that are the result of copying and translation.*
2. *There is only one God, the Father; the Holy Spirit is God's power.*
3. *Jesus is the Son of God and was made human through Mary.*
4. *Jesus opened the way to salvation from death by living a sinless life.*
5. *Jesus is in heaven and will return to earth.*
6. *When Jesus returns to earth he will grant immortality to his faithful believers.*
7. *Man is mortal, having no existence when dead. His reward is eternal life on earth after Christ's return.*
8. *Baptism is essential to gain eternal life.*

### **Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement**

The Seventh Day Adventist Reform movement came about as the result of a schism within the Seventh Day Adventist denomination. The split occurred as a result of dissension over the issue of warfare, as well as keeping the Sabbath. Up until the First World War, the Seventh Day Adventists were conscientious objectors to warfare. For example, they did not participate in the American Civil War because they felt that it would violate two of God's commandments: the fourth, which requires cessation of work on the Sabbath, and the sixth, which prohibits the taking of a life. A crisis came during World War I when Seventh Day Adventists in Europe faced a dilemma whether to fight for their countries or obey these commandments. Since their religious tenets always recognized civil government as “ordained by God,” many decided that engaging in warfare was not a conflict for them. 98% of the membership decided to participate in the war; 2% decided to uphold the original position

of non-participation. Those who voted to participate in the war felt duty-bound by conscience to defend their country with weapons and on Saturdays.

As a result of this split, the 2% of dissenters were “disfellowshipped” from the Seventh Day Adventists, and after the war, attempts at reconciliation failed. Originally numbering around 4,000, as their numbers grew, the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement officially organized into a church in 1925. Currently their General Conference is headquartered in the United States. They are present in 83 countries.

## **CATHOLICISM**

The Roman Catholic Church is the largest of the Christian churches in the world today. Although the Roman Catholic Church is present throughout the world, historically, the Catholic Church was rooted in Rome, thus the descriptor Roman Catholic. There are several Eastern Rite Catholic churches whose roots are in Mediterranean and Eastern European traditions, but which are in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. The basic religious beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church are derived from the Old Testament, the New Testament, and various early ecumenical councils.

There are seven sacraments in the Roman Catholic Church: Baptism, Penance, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick.

Baptism marks one’s entry into Christian life and the Christian community. Penance, also known as Reconciliation

or Confession, is the sacrament whereby Catholics confess their sins and are granted forgiveness or absolution by God through the Priest. The sacrament of Holy Eucharist commemorates the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. Catholics believe that the bread and wine used in this celebration is transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus, which Catholics receive in Holy Communion. The Eucharistic Mass is celebrated as a reenactment of the Last Supper, the Passover supper that Jesus celebrated with his apostles before he was arrested and crucified. Catholics, and all Christians, are to observe Sunday as a day of rest and prayer. Catholics participate in Mass every Sunday as an act of worship. Confirmation is the sacrament by which a baptized person is endowed by the Holy Spirit with special strength to be an authentic witness to Jesus Christ in word and action. Through the sacrament of Matrimony (marriage) spouses help each other to strive for holiness in their married life and by rearing and educating their children in the faith. Holy Orders is the sacrament whereby men are ordained into the priesthood to continue the mission given by Jesus Christ to the Apostles. Catholic priests are not allowed to marry. The sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick emphasizes forgiveness and healing, and the anointing of the dying person with holy oil is meant to be a sign of both God’s and the community’s support during a time of ill health.

Catholics also observe seven holy days of obligation throughout the year. These days are significant events in the life of the Church and Catholics are to attend Mass

on these days. The holy days of obligation are: the Solemnity of Mary (January 1); Easter Sunday; The Ascension (of Jesus into heaven—40 days after Easter); The Assumption (of Mary into heaven, body and soul—August 15); All Saints Day (November 1); The Immaculate Conception (of Mary who was created without Sin so that she could bear Jesus, the Son of God—December 8); and Christmas (December 25).

Devotion to Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, and prayerful practices, such as novenas, the rosary, and the veneration of saints are just a few of the traditions and aspects of Catholicism that distinguish it from other denominations of Christianity.

## **CHRISTIANITY**

Christianity is a monotheistic religion that is founded on the life of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that God became man and entered the world to offer salvation and eternal life to those who believed that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, the “Son of God.” Christians follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, who came into the world nearly two thousand years ago.

Jesus Christ taught his message of love and salvation to all who would listen. While His message was accepted by many—who were known as his apostles and disciples—His message was rejected by many others. Many individuals of the time did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah and had Him arrested and crucified by their Roman rulers.

Christians believe that after His death on a cross, which is one of the most

important symbols of Christianity, Jesus was resurrected from the dead and rejoined God in Heaven.

While Christianity is a monotheistic religion, most Christians believe that there are three persons in one God: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. Christians believe that after Jesus Christ left the earth, God sent the Holy Spirit to guide them through this life. After the death of Christ, Christianity spread throughout the world. Church systems developed, and over the centuries many denominations of Christianity developed, each with their own ministers and priests, and each with their own interpretation of the Bible.

Christians adhere to the Old Testament, which is based on Judaic scripture, and the New Testament, which is based on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and includes the Ten Commandments. Sunday is the “Lord’s Day,” or a day of prayer and rest for Christians. Many Christians keep the “Lord’s Day” holy by attending church services in the Protestant tradition and Mass in the Catholic tradition.

## **HINDUISM**

Hinduism, which was established approximately 1500 BC in India, is the oldest major religion in the world. Today, more than half a billion people practice Hinduism. It is a polytheistic religion: in other words, there is no single god to be worshiped; rather, Hindus worship many gods and goddesses. Hinduism is based on the idea of “Brahman”—infinite peace and perfection. Hindus strive to

reach this perfection and oneness with Brahman by living according to ideals, such as truth, purity, and compassion toward all living creatures.

The three primary gods of Hinduism that represent the ideal of “Brahman” are Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer. All three gods represent the life cycle as well. Vishnu was incarnated (in other words, he took the form of a human being) 10 times in order to save the world from danger and oppression. Vishnu is most widely worshiped in the forms of Rama, the Prince of the Golden Age, and Krishna, the Cowherd and Demon-Slayer.

Worship for Hindus is not structured in the same way as other major religions. There is no expectation, for example, that Hindus will gather at a particular time or place during the week to worship. For the most part, they worship privately in their homes or at temples, when they are moved to do so. Moreover, Hindu spiritual leaders are not responsible for leading congregations or parishes in the way that Christian or Jewish religious leaders are.

The Hindu religion was not founded by any one person. However, several other religions were founded by former Hindus who chose to reject particular elements of Hinduism. Other religions founded by Hindus are Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism.

There are hundreds of Hindu holidays and festivals celebrated every year. Some of the celebrations honor several gods or goddesses at the same time. The following are major Hindu holidays.

### ***Durga Puja and Dusshera***

Two Hindu holidays are celebrated around the same time in the fall: Durga Puja—celebrated primarily by Bengalis in the eastern regions of India, and Dusshera—celebrated by most other Hindus. Durga Puja (Durga is the wife of Shiva and goddess of war, power, and destruction, and Puja means “worship”) celebrates Durga’s victory over the demon king and a return of peace to the world.

Dusshera is a celebration of Rama’s victory over the demon Ravana. This celebration takes place over 10 nights, during which Hindus reenact the victory in a play. Based on the Ramayana (a poem of 24,000 two-line verses), the play tells the story of Vishnu taking the human form of Rama in order to defeat Ravana and rescue his wife Sita, who had been stolen by the demon. In this story, Rama is assisted by Hanuman, the monkey warrior. Because of Hanuman’s assistance, monkeys are considered sacred in India.

### ***Diwali***

Diwali, the festival of lights, is celebrated on the night of the new moon in late October or early November. Some say this celebration commemorates Rama’s triumphant return to his kingdom, when his people celebrated his homecoming with lights.

People fill their houses and towns with lights. Oftentimes, children and young women set lights floating on the river; if the lamp stays lit for as long as the eye can follow it down the river, the child or woman will have good luck in the coming

year. Many Hindus also clean and sweep their homes for a fresh start in the new year. It is thought that Lakshmi, the goddess of good luck, prosperity, and fortune, will see the cleaned home and look favorably on the family. This is also a time for shopkeepers to pay their debts and begin a new year. It is also a time to put an end to disagreements and to forgive one's enemies.

### **Holi**

Holi is a Hindu holiday celebrated in March or April. People throw colored powders and colored waters on each other in celebration. Holi celebrates the coming of spring, and the harvest of crops in northern India. Holi is also said to celebrate two aspects of Vishnu. In the human form of Krishna, he was a prankster and was once splashed with paint by local milkmaids in retaliation for his tricks. Thus, Krishna is often pictured as a blue-colored cowherd. Holi is also said to be a celebration of Vishnu the Preserver, saving the son of a demon from fire. Vishnu reached down to save the boy and destroyed the demoness; thus good triumphed over evil.

### **Janama Ashtmi**

In July, Hindus celebrate the birth of Krishna. The legend says that King Kansa would die at the hand of his nephew. The king had already killed 7 of his nephews and had imprisoned Krishna's parents prior to his birth. Just before he was to be born, Vishnu went in and put the guards to sleep. His father smuggled him out of the prison and across the river, switching him with a little girl named Nanda. Nanda was killed in his stead, and Krishna lived.

Pilgrims come to the place where Nanda and Krishna were born. They celebrate the occasion by lighting small oil lamps and setting them afloat on one of India's sacred rivers, Jumna.

### **Shivratri**

Shivratri, also known as the night of Shiva, takes place in February. This is a 24-hour fast, during which Hindus do not eat, drink, or sleep. Traditionally, Hindus travel to the temple of Shiva the Destroyer and offer "puja," or worship, every three hours. They take flowers, oil, or food in the temple and present them as an offering. Part of this offering ritual also involves walking barefoot around the shrine.

### **ISLAM**

Islam was founded by Muhammad, who is the messenger of God, and who was born in 570 AD in Mecca, in today's Saudi Arabia. When Muhammad was 40 years old, the Archangel Gabriel spoke to him and revealed the word of Allah. The message of the angel was recorded by Muhammad in the Islamic holy book called the Qur'an.

Muhammad became a prophet of Allah and spread the message that the angel Gabriel gave to him throughout the region. In 622 AD, Muhammad migrated to Medina to escape his enemies who were plotting to kill him. He remained there until his death in 632 AD.

Islam means "peace through submission to God." Allah is the Arabic word for God, and the followers of Islam are called Muslims. Muslims, like Christians and Jews, are monotheistic; that is, they believe

there is only one God. Muslims also believe they must submit to God in every aspect of their lives. There are five essential rules for Muslims:

1. *To say, “there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.”*
2. *To pray five times every day, and to face Mecca—the Muslim holy city—while praying.*
3. *To give generously to the poor.*
4. *To fast during the daytime in the month of Ramadan.*
5. *To make a pilgrimage to Mecca once during one’s lifetime, if possible.*

There is a connection between Islam and Christianity and Judaism. According to Islam, Muhammad is believed to be a descendant of Abraham through his son Ishmael, and the last and the greatest in a series of prophets, those being Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

The Qur’an is akin to the Torah in Judaism and the Bible in Christianity, in that it gives Muslims instructions on how to live according to Allah’s will or plan. Some of the teachings focus on respecting and honoring parents, offering charity to the poor, being honorable and just, and submitting to Allah. Friday is a holy day for Muslims; many Muslims close their businesses or take the day off from work. They usually go to mosques to pray on this holy day.

### **Ramadan**

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Because the Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar, Ramadan does not occur at the same time every year. Ramadan is the

month during which it is believed that Muhammad received his revelation from the Archangel Gabriel. It is also the month during which Muhammad’s army defeated the soldiers of Mecca in the important battle of Badr. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast every day from sunrise to sunset. This month of intense fasting is a sign of their submission to Allah.

The month of Ramadan ends with the festival “Id al-Fitr;” this festival often lasts for three days. Muslim families and friends gather to pray and then to exchange gifts. This celebration is a time of feasting and house visiting; it reinforces their community as well as their submission to Allah. The appropriate greeting for this festive time is “Id mubarak,” or “happy Id.”

Muslims live throughout the world, and they celebrate this feast with traditional regional foods. There are not “Muslim” foods so much as there are regional Middle Eastern and North African cuisine preferences that Muslims use in their celebrations. The kinds of foods used to celebrate the end of Ramadan, therefore, depend on the areas in which Muslims live.

### **Hajj**

One of the rules of Islam is that Muslims must make a pilgrimage, called the Hajj, to Mecca at some point in their lives. If at all possible, it is expected to be made during Dhul-hajj, the last month of the Islamic year. Mecca is a holy and important city for Muslims, and the Hajj is the most important event in a Muslim’s life. Some Muslims save money for years in order to honor this Islamic rule. Part of the pilgrimage involves wearing special clothes, performing rituals

for approximately five days, and visiting holy places in Medina. Many pilgrims also drink from a holy well before returning from the pilgrimage. Upon return from the Hajj, Muslims are honored by their family and friends for having fulfilled this important duty of Islam.

## **JAINISM**

Jainism, also referred to as Jain Dharma, is one of the oldest religions in India. Next to Buddhism, Jainism is the second largest reform movement to branch off from Hinduism. Jains are the followers of Jinas. “Jina” means “conqueror” and refers to one who has conquered the misery of one’s “passions,” for example, greed, falsehood, attachment to possessions, over-indulgence, and aggression. Jainism was started by Lord Mahavira, (born approximately 599 BC), who underwent a great spiritual journey. Lord Mahavira is believed to have been the last of 24 Tirthankaras, or people who attained enlightenment and knowledge while they were still living and who became great teachers.

Lord Mahavira spoke against many issues, such as sacrificing animals, slavery, the caste system, and discrimination against women. There are two principal sects in Jainism, the Svetambara (white clad) and the Digambara (sky clad). This schism occurred around 82 AD and was over relinquishing possessions, among other issues. Nudism was the logical conclusion of this principle for the more ascetic Digambaras, who lived in the warmer southern climates. The Svetambara, who

lived in the cooler northern climates, did not agree that it was necessary to give up their clothing in order to achieve perfect detachment from the world.

Jainism embraces the concept of karma; however, unlike other religions that also subscribe to the concept, Jains believe karma is knowable rather than speculative. Jains also believe in reincarnation, and their respect for all forms of life is connected, in part, to this belief. The holy text of Jainism is the Tattvartha Sutra,

### **Conduct**

Jains live by a simple, highly disciplined, and powerful moral code. They believe the way to relieve one’s karmic debt is through the practice of five principles: Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (to not steal), Aparigraha (non-possessiveness), and Brahmacharya (to not commit adultery). Jains strive to exercise self-control in all things in order to live by these principles.

### **Non-violence**

One of the primary tenets of Jainism is non-violence, and this belief permeates every level of human interaction with the world. Jain respect for life is summed up in the phrase “Parasparopagraho Jivanam,” which means, “all life is mutually supportive.” Jainism focuses on an equality of souls and that, regardless of physical forms (including microscopic organisms, animals, plants, and humans), all beings are worthy of respect and compassion. Human beings, having six senses, are expected to act responsibly toward all life by being compassionate, rational, and forgiving.

## **Vegetarianism**

Vegetarianism is an essential part of the Jainism and is one way for Jains to live a peaceful, compassionate, and non-violent life. Jains are strict vegetarians and consume only one-sensed beings, primarily from the plant kingdom. While this vegetarian diet does involve some harm to plants, it is justified by Jains in that the practice is essential for their survival and involves a minimum of violence toward living beings.

## **Rituals**

Jainism is sometimes considered a philosophy of life rather than a religion. Nonetheless, Jains have sacred rituals that are performed in the temple or Derasar. Three of these rituals are Puja, which is an intense, prayerful experience and often involves the scriptures of the teachers; Samayik, which is a 48-minute ritual during which one seeks forgiveness for transgressions; and the Namokar Mantra, a short prayer that can be recited at any time.

## **Paryushana**

The most important period in the Jain calendar is the Holy Week of Paryushana. The Digambaras observe this for 10 days while the Svetambaras observe it for 8 days. The origin of this period is connected with a time when monks settled in for the duration of the rainy season. It is a time for Jains to have an annual renewal of faith by reflecting on their spiritual journey. It is a time for reflection on actions and meditation on the past year. Paryushana occurs during August or September, depending on the lunar calendar. This holy period is concluded with a three-hour

prayer called the Pratikraman, also called Samvatsari or Samayika in the Digambara tradition. This is an intense prayer experience when Jains withdraw into themselves, pray to the Five Supremes and 24 Jinas, reflect on past transgressions, detach themselves from their bodies in an effort to control them, and make resolutions for the coming year. There is a degree of fasting associated with Pratikraman, the time of reflection, repentance, and meditation, and Jains take a symbolic vow of “Chauvihar,” (i.e., not to eat or drink from sunset to sunrise).

Dasha-Lakshana Vrata is a 10-day celebration which often starts with Paryushana and focuses on the 10 components of the dharma: forbearance, gentleness, uprightness, purity, truth, restraint, austerity, renunciation, lack of possession, and chastity.

## **JUDAISM**

Judaism is the oldest religion in the Western world, and today there are more than 17 million Jews in the world. Judaism is the first monotheistic religion; i.e., they believe in one G-d<sup>1</sup>. According to Jewish beliefs, the Lord entered into a special covenant with the Israelites and promised that their descendants would

<sup>1</sup> According to Jewish tradition, it is not appropriate to write out the Lord's name in documents that are not permanent. In fact, documents with the word G-d written out completely must be buried rather than burned, shredded, or discarded in any other way. In order to respect this practice, and since copies of this document may or may not be permanently kept by members of the St. Alexius Medical Center community, the Lord's name is being spelled with a hyphen throughout this text, as is the acceptable practice for Jews.

be a great nation if they obeyed his laws. A primary focus of Judaism is one's conduct in this world, and as a result, teachings in the Jewish religion contain many laws and rules for ethical and virtuous living. Some Jews strictly follow the laws of Judaism while others adapt the laws to modern life.

The Torah is Judaism's holy book, and it contains the laws of G-d, including the Ten Commandments. There are many laws governing Jewish life; such laws address ethics, family, criminal justice, social responsibilities, and dietary practices. Kosher is one of the most well-known practices of Judaism. The term kosher, meaning fit or proper, applies to foods that are appropriate for observant Jews to consume. These kosher laws are found in the Torah and concern animal products. Kosher foods include barnyard fowl, the meat and milk of cattle, sheep, and goats, and those fish that have fins and scales. Kosher laws are very complex, and there are detailed reasons for the exclusion of certain foods such as shellfish, eels, and pork. Kosher laws also dictate the appropriate process for the slaughter and preparation of meat, as well as the strict separation of utensils used in the preparation and consumption of meat and milk products.

With its attention to right conduct, Judaism is a present-oriented religion. This is not to suggest that Judaism does not hold beliefs that are future-oriented. In fact, one basic Jewish belief is in the coming of the Messiah. The word messiah comes from the Hebrew "mashiach," meaning anointed. Jews believe that G-d will send the messiah to bring peace and restore the kingdom of Israel. There have

been many prophets in Jewish history, but the messiah has yet to be revealed. In addition to prophets and the messiah, the word of G-d is read in synagogues by a rabbi. The rabbi (originally the word meant scholar and teacher) is the ordained spiritual leader of a congregation who conducts services and is qualified to decide questions of Jewish law and ritual.

There are many religious observances in Judaism. According to the Ten Commandments, Jewish people are only to work six days of the week. The seventh day, called the Sabbath, is a holy day that is to be set aside for rest and prayer. On the Sabbath the observant replenish the spirit, spend time with family, and acknowledge the creator as the all-sustaining force that gives substance to the world. The Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday.

### ***Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur***

One of the most important times in the Jewish year takes place in the fall, a 10-day holy period that starts with Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and ends with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

Rosh Hashanah marks both the day G-d created the world and the day of judgment, when the Lord judges each person's life during the last year. According to Jewish tradition, G-d opens three books and inscribes each person's name in one of them, either the one with names of the wicked, or the "Book of Life" which contains the names of the righteous, or the book with the names of those he has not yet judged. The Jews believe that they have 10 days to repent and atone and to

ask G-d's forgiveness for any offenses they committed over the last year.

This holy period begins when the shofar, or ram's horn, is sounded at the synagogue. It symbolizes the trumpet that will be blown on the final judgment day. The shofar is sounded again at sundown on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, marking the end of the holy period. Many Jews fast on Yom Kippur as a symbol of their repentance.

The appropriate greeting for Rosh Hashanah is the Yiddish expression "gootyuntoff," or 'goot yantif,' or 'goot yohr," which means, "have a good year." The Hebrew greeting is "shanah tova," also meaning good year. There are many Jewish foods eaten during Rosh Hashanah, and it is common to serve a honey confection called teiglach.

### ***Sukkoth***

Sukkoth, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles, is a fall festival and is a time when Jewish families celebrate the gathering of crops. They often build a small hut, called a sukkah, to remind themselves of the shelters, called tabernacles, that the Israelites built when they left Egypt and followed Moses into the desert. The sukkah is often decorated with flowers and some families eat their meals in the hut during this celebration.

### ***Shavout***

Also known as the Feast of Weeks, Shavout is a major festival in Judaism. Shavout takes place 50 days after Passover. Shavout is a Hebrew word meaning "weeks" and stands for the seven weeks during which the Jewish people prepared themselves to receive the Torah.

This celebration marks the moment in history when G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai 3,308 years ago. The giving of the Torah was a profound spiritual event in the history of Judaism; it was the moment when G-d made a covenant with the Jews. Today, Shavout is a time for Jewish people to strengthen their special relationship with G-d and to renew their dedication to observing and studying the Torah.

### ***Hanukkah***

Hanukkah, also spelled Chanukah, takes place in December and is an eight-day festival that celebrates another important moment in the history of Judaism. More than two thousand years ago, the Jewish holy places were taken over by Syrian Greeks. A small army of Jews re-took their holy places. Although they only had enough oil to keep the temple's lamp burning for one day, it miraculously lasted for eight days.

Hanukkah is a celebration of both the victory of the Jews as well as the miracle of the oil. During Hanukkah, eight candles are placed in a menorah, a special candleholder, and each night an additional candle is lit until on the last night, all eight are lit. As the candles are lit, a family member also reads from the Torah. Children are given small presents during this holiday; they are also given chocolate gelt, or money, to encourage them to study the Torah. The appropriate greeting for this holiday is "Happy Hanukkah." Potato latkes, also known as potato pancakes, are a popular food to serve during the Hanukkah season.

### **Purim**

Purim is a very festive holiday for the Jewish people. It commemorates a time in ancient Jewish history when the Persian King's chief deputy, a man named Haman, planned to kill the Jews. Queen Esther, who was Jewish, foiled the plot and saved the Jewish people. On Purim, Jewish people celebrate this event by acting out the story of Queen Esther in a play. Hamantaschen, which are small pastry cookies with prune or poppy seed filling, are eaten on Purim. The pastries are called hamantaschen because they look like Haman's hat.

### **Passover**

Passover is an extremely important Jewish holiday; it commemorates the Jews' escape from slavery and passage to freedom. During Passover, the Jewish people remember the time when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and to the Promised Land. Passover is celebrated in the spring, usually late March or early April, and lasts for eight days.

On the first two nights of Passover, Jews celebrate with a special dinner called a Seder. During this dinner, the story of Moses is read, Passover songs are recited, and symbolic foods are eaten. For example, because the Jews left Egypt so quickly, they did not have enough time to allow their bread to rise. As a result, they brought unleavened bread with them on their journey into the desert. One of the most well-known Passover foods is matzoh, an unleavened bread. Eating matzoh symbolizes the Jews' passage to freedom. The Seder table is also set with an extra glass of wine; this is for Elijah,

the prophet, who will return to tell of the Messiah's coming. Placing this extra glass at the table also symbolizes the Jewish people's hope for peace in the world.

### **ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY**

The Orthodox Church is another branch of Christianity and is the major Christian church in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Also known as the Eastern Church, Greek Orthodox, or Orthodox Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church maintains its Christian authority through apostolic succession. The word orthodox, meaning "right belief and right glory," is used in the Greek-speaking Christian world to refer to communities that practice the "true faith" as handed down in continuity from the apostles and the early Christian church.

Orthodox Churches are administratively independent, that is, they are autocephalous, or self-governing. They are typically local churches that are united in their faith, the sacraments, and Church Canon, but each has the freedom or right to elect its own head and bishop. In terms of a Church hierarchy, traditionally the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople is acknowledged as the "first among equal" Orthodox bishops. While he has no direct doctrinal or administrative authority, he enjoys the privilege of chairmanship and initiative among the other Orthodox bishops.

Today there are a number of autocephalous churches: the Church of Constantinople (Istanbul), the Church of Alexandria (Egypt), the Church of Antioch (headquartered in Damascus, Syria), and the Churches of Jerusalem, Russia, Serbia,

Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, and America.

The Orthodox Church played a significant role in the development of early Christianity. With the transfer of the imperial capital from Rome to Constantinople by Constantine I, the first eight centuries of Christian history, including the critically important ecumenical councils, took place in this region. Missionaries from Constantinople subsequently traveled throughout Eastern Europe, converting many people, including the Slavs, Bulgarians, and Russians.

Two fundamental points of departure for the Orthodox Church and Western Christian churches are the filioque clause of the Nicene Creed, which the Western church added unilaterally to the text, and the recognition of the bishop of Rome, or pope, as the head of the universal church. The Orthodox Christians are only willing to accept the pope as first among patriarchs. On the other hand, many of the autocephalous churches of Orthodox Christianity support the modern ecumenical movement and have joined the World Council of Churches.

The Orthodox Church accepts the early traditions of the Christian Church and participates in the same sacraments as the Roman Catholic Church. However, in the Orthodox Church, infants receive Confirmation and the Eucharist. The liturgy is always sung or chanted, and the Eucharist is always offered to the congregation in the forms of both body and blood (bread and wine). Orthodox Christians also venerate Mary as the Holy Mother of God, and images of

important saints are represented as icons, a distinctive aesthetic aspect of Eastern Christian churches.

There are several well-known Orthodox Christian churches.

### ***Christian Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt***

The Christian Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt has had a great impact on Egyptian culture, in addition to many cultures in the Middle East. The Coptic Church is based on the teachings of the evangelist Saint Mark, who brought Christianity to Egypt during the reign of Nero in the first century. The Pope of Alexandria heads the clergy of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt.

Egypt has long played an important role in Christianity. Egypt was the haven where the holy family sought refuge during its flight from Judea. The Catechetical School in Alexandria is the oldest in the world. Founded in 190 AD, it has played an important role in Christian scholarship. Monasticism was also born in Egypt and is a fundamental part of the Coptic Church's identity. Christian monasticism stems from this Coptic tradition. Copts observe the seven canonical sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation (Christmation), Eucharist, Confession (Penance), Holy Orders, Matrimony, and Unction of the Sick. Infants are baptized by full immersion in water, and the sacrament of Confirmation immediately follows. According to the Coptic tradition, Matrimony is the only sacrament that cannot be performed during the fasting seasons.

The Copts observe a remarkable series of fasting seasons, unmatched by any other church. Of the 365 days in a year, Copts fast for more than 210. In the Coptic tradition, fasting means no animal products (including meat, poultry, fish, milk, eggs, butter, etc.) and no food or drink may be taken from sunrise to sunset. Lent, known as “The Great Fast,” begins with a pre-Lent fast of one week before the actual 40-day fast of Lent is undertaken. Other fasting seasons for Copts are Advent, the Fast of the Apostles, the Fast of the Virgin Saint Mary, and the Fast of Nineveh.

### **Serbian Orthodox Church**

Another Orthodox Church is the Serbian Orthodox Church. Like the many autocephalous Orthodox churches, the Serbian Orthodox Church is united in doctrine and apostolic faith.

#### ***Krsna Slava***

Serbian Krsna Slava is a unique celebration of Serbian Orthodox Christians. Krsna Slava is the patron saint of one’s home. This is an exclusively Serbian custom and is one of the most solemn days of the year for Serbs of the Orthodox faith. Krsna Slava is endorsed by the Serbian Orthodox Church and is a way to celebrate the spirituality of Serbs, as well as the patron saint. It is also recognized as the anniversary of the baptism of the Serbs into Christianity, and on this day, families renew their baptismal vows, their ties to each other, and to the Orthodox faith. It has become a day of spiritual revival for many Serbs.

The celebration of Krsna Slava involves an icon of the family Patron Saint, a lighted candle, Slavsko zhito, Slava’s bread (Salvski kolach), and red wine. The lighted candle reminds Serbs that Christ is the Light of the world. Slavsko zhito (wheat) represents the death and resurrection of Christ. Slava’s bread, upon which the priest cuts a cross, represents Jesus Christ as the Bread of Life. The red wine represents Christ’s precious blood that washed away their sins. This celebration of Krsna Slava is practiced to commemorate the deceased of the family, to renew ties to the Orthodox faith, and to honor the Saint who has protected and interceded for the family throughout the years.

#### ***Badnjak***

Another unique Serbian Orthodox tradition is Badnjak, or Yule tree log. This specially selected young oak tree represents the death of winter. Its youth and foliage represent the newness and warmth of life. Badnjak also reflects the spiritual imagery of the “tree of life.” Male members of the household bring the tree into the home, where the lower part of the trunk is split into three logs. Each of these sections is referred to as badnjak. Women and children decorate the upper part of the tree with fruits, nuts, and candy. Decorations also include red, blue, and white ribbons—Serbia’s national colors. The “tree of happiness” is greeted in Serbian—“Badnjache Veseljache.” There is a consecration of the tree, when the host sprinkles it with wheat, then wine, then oil; each is done in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A petition is made

for a bountiful year, fortune and peace, health, and God's blessings. Following these invocations, the children lay straw at the bottom of the tree, and on the table. This symbolizes the manger in which Jesus Christ was born.

### **Russian Orthodox Church**

The Russian Orthodox Church is another autocephalous church within the Orthodox Church. Orthodox Christianity entered Russia in the 9th century and was officially adopted by the rulers of Kievan Rus'. The independence of the Russian Church from Constantinople came in the 15th century. The strong native traditions of the Russian people have contributed to the unique identity of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Russian Orthodox Church experienced a crisis in the 17th century, when the reforms of patriarch Nikon created a schism with "Old Believers." Another crisis occurred in 1721, when Tsar Peter I determined that the church would be a department of the Russian state, essentially abolishing the patriarchate. There was a renewal of interest in the Russian Orthodox Church in the 19th century that was sparked by a group of Slavophiles who saw the church as evidence of Russia's spiritual superiority over the West.

In 1917, with the fall of the Russian Monarchy, the Russian Orthodox Church was temporarily freed from government control. However, this freedom was short-lived as the Soviet regime initiated rigorous persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church: clergy were killed,

churches were closed, and religious education was forbidden. Although, Stalin granted limited church activity in the 1940s, all religious practice was discouraged and strictly controlled until the end of the Soviet regime in 1991.

### **Greek Orthodox**

The term Greek Orthodox has been used interchangeably with Eastern Orthodox, Orthodox, "One, Holy, and Apostolic Church." The Orthodox Church is called the Greek Church because Greek was the language of the ancient Christian Church; the New Testament and writings of early Christians were written in Greek. Overall, Greek Orthodox to Orthodox Christians in Greece, Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians, and Christians who originated in the early Greek-speaking Christian Church have all used Greek thought to form their expressions of the Orthodox faith.

In addition, many Orthodox Christians are of national origins other than Greek. These Orthodox Christians often use their ethnic or national titles to identify themselves, such as Albanian, Bulgarian, Carpatho-Russian, Greek, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, and Ukrainian. The inclusive term for these groups is Eastern Orthodox.

### **PROTESTANTISM**

Protestantism is a religious movement in Western Christianity that came about in the 14th century. Although reformations occurred throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, most Protestants date the

beginning of their movement with the German monk, Martin Luther, who in 1517 posted a set of challenges to Roman Catholic teachings. This challenge led to a series of debates that eventually developed into Protestantism. This Protestant Reformation is thought to have launched Protestantism, not all Protestants follow the teachings of Luther.

One of the many points of contention for early Protestants was the authority of the Pope, which Protestantism rejects. Most Protestants look to the Bible as the authority for their faith. The Protestant Bible, like the Catholic Bible, includes Hebrew scriptures that form the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus Christ, which were captured through his apostles and disciples in the New Testament. A reliance on the Bible as an authoritative source has led to many different interpretations of the Scriptures. There are several versions of the Protestant Bible, for example, including Luther's and the King James Version. Protestant Interpretations of the Bible range from belief in its literal truth, as in Fundamentalist congregations, to belief in its most liberal interpretations.

There are also many different denominations of Protestantism. Most allow for the ordination of married ministers and some denominations also ordain women as ministers.

A few of the most well-known Protestant denominations today are Baptists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, Evangelicals, and Fundamentalists. Fundamentalists believe in a literal interpretation of the

Bible. Congregationalists focus on the autonomy of each congregation. In 1957, the U. S. Congregationalists merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to form a single denomination, the United Church of Christ. The Evangelical denominations were products of religious revivals among German-speaking groups in Maryland and Pennsylvania at the turn of the 19th century. Eventually they became the Evangelical United Brethren Church and later merged with the Methodist church.

Methodism is the name given to a collection of Protestant churches that were born out of an 18th Century movement initiated by the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield. There have been various splits throughout the history of Methodism over a variety of reasons, such as episcopal authority, slavery, the sanctification of the Bible, and race. In 1968, the Methodist church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren to form the United Methodist Church.

The doctrine and theology of Presbyterianism which emerged in the 16th Century, is historically rooted in the Westminster Assembly in England. It embraces a particular hierarchy of church government that involves the election of ministers and elders by the local church.

Baptists are another Protestant denomination, and they are most often distinguished from other Protestant groups by: their insistence on the baptism of adult believers only; their adherence to freedom of speech and freedom from interference by civil or ecclesiastical authorities; and

their reliance on scripture as a primary authority for their doctrine, faith, and moral codes. Because of their democratic, scripture-oriented service, Baptists were extremely successful on the American frontier. The South, Midwest, and Far West still are heavily populated by Baptists today. Some Baptists are Fundamentalist in their approach to the Bible and morality, while others, because of their tradition of rejecting dogma and ecclesiastical authority, are liberal in their theology and social attitudes.

Lutheranism, a denomination of Protestantism, is based upon the teachings of Martin Luther. Lutherans focus on the Bible as the source of their teachings. This is a more formal church than some other Protestant denominations and Lutheranism is known as a doctrinal and dogmatic church. In Europe, most Lutheran churches are episcopal—that is, ruled by bishops. In the U.S. most Lutheran churches prefer the congregational form of government.

Interdenominational churches have become increasingly numerous in recent years. The largest in the U. S. today is the Willow Creek Community Church, in South Barrington, Illinois, with a weekly attendance of 16,000. Another well-known interdenominational congregation is the Moody Church (Moody Bible Institute), in Chicago, Illinois.

Members of independent, interdenominational churches often have had some experience with another church but have come to prefer unaffiliated assemblies, many of which are quite large and are sometimes referred to as “mega-churches.”

Interdenominational churches stress the central teachings of the New Testament, especially from Jesus through the Gospels. Members prefer to be referred to as “Christian” or “Evangelical” rather than by a title associated with more specific theological group or denomination. They often speak of the need for a personal relationship with God through faith in Christ and tend to pray informally throughout the day, reading their bible for personal inspiration and guidance. Members often invite others to church services designed specifically for visitors, or “seekers.” The growth of interdenominational groups is often credited to this enthusiasm for their spiritual message.

Most Protestants celebrate two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, also called the Eucharist. Protestant denominations disagree, however, on the age an individual should be at Baptism, and whether or not they require full immersion in water for the sacrament. Protestant sects also disagree as to whether Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, or whether this sacrament is an act of remembrance and obedience.

Most Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant, celebrate two important religious holidays—Christmas and Easter.

### ***Christmas***

Celebrated on December 25, Christmas is the birthday of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that God became man and came to the world through his son, Jesus Christ. The Christmas holiday celebrates the coming of the Messiah. The Christmas

story tells how the Virgin Mary and her husband Joseph traveled to Bethlehem to be counted for a census. When they arrived, there was no place for them to stay; they could only find lodging in a stable with the animals. Christ was born in a manger in the stable. The story of the humble birth of the Messiah is told at Christmastime, and some Christian communities act out this scene in a Christmas play or in a tableau. As part of the Christmas celebration, many Christian families go to church, either on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Christians also celebrate Christmas by exchanging gifts, and with children receiving gifts from St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, who is also known as Santa Claus. The appropriate greeting for this holiday is “Merry Christmas.”

### **Easter**

Easter season is the holiest time of the Christian year. It commemorates the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Easter Sunday is believed to be the day that Christ rose from the dead. For Christians, this is the fulfillment of God’s promise to redeem them from their sins and grant them eternal salvation through the sacrifice of His son. Easter Sunday is a joyous time for Christians as it represents Christ’s triumph over death and the possibility of their own salvation.

Easter is preceded by the season of Lent. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. The Tuesday before Ash Wednesday is celebrated as the end of Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, or Shrove Tuesday. It is a time of feasting in anticipation of the great

period of fasting, which is about to begin. On Ash Wednesday, Catholics go to Mass and receive ashes on their foreheads. This is to remind them of their mortality, as the priest recites, “Remember you are dust and unto dust you shall return.” Lent lasts for 40 days and is a time of repentance, sacrifice, and preparation for Easter. For Catholics, Fridays in Lent are days of abstinence from meat. Easter Sunday is immediately preceded by Holy Thursday and Good Friday, two of the holiest days of the Christian year. For Catholics, Good Friday is a day of fasting.

Some ethnic groups have particular foods that they eat on Easter Sunday. In the Byzantine Catholic Rite, and for some Eastern European Roman Catholics, people bring baskets of special foods to be blessed by the priest. The baskets typically contain foods such as homemade bread, homemade cheese, horseradish and beets, kielbasa, ham, and decorated eggs. Many families celebrate Easter with lamb which symbolizes Jesus as the sacrificial “Lamb of God.” The appropriate greeting for this holiday is “Happy Easter.”

### **SIKHISM**

Sikhism, an Indian religion that originated in the Punjab region in northwest India, was established through a series of 10 Gurus. Sikhism is a monotheistic religion, and its basic teaching is found in the mul Mantra, “There is but one God. He is the Supreme Truth.” Like Jainism and Buddhism, Sikhism developed as a distinct religion, whose founders rejected certain aspects of Hinduism.

Guru Nanak (1469-1539) started Sikhism and it continued to be developed by subsequent Gurus until the tenth and final Guru Gobind Singh, who was assassinated in 1708. Guru Gobind Singh was the last of the Gurus and during his time, he established the tradition of the five “Ks,” which are an important part of Sikhism today.

The five “Ks” make Sikhism unique and immediately distinguishable in the world: kesh—long hair; kanga—a comb in the hair; kachha—a pair of soldier’s shorts; kara—a steel bracelet or bangle on the right wrist; and karpan—a sword. These are intentional outward signs of their religious beliefs.

Sikhism is distinguished from other Indian religions by its emphasis on a pure and disciplined lifestyle, its rejection of the caste system, rituals, self-torture, self-denial, and fasting. The Sikh religion prohibits idolatry, the use of wine, and tobacco smoking. It stresses living a moral and virtuous life in the world.

Social equality and a rejection of the caste system are some of the fundamental beliefs embraced by Sikhism. Because of their strong belief in equality, women are accorded equal social status in the Sikh community; they are not considered inferior to men. The doors of the Sikh temple (called the Gurdwara) are open to everyone, and all services are open to Sikhs and non-Sikhs. Sikhism strives to be an inclusive religion. This principle of equality is put into practice through Pangat, the Guru’s free kitchen, known as Langar. The third Guru insisted that

all who came to see him would sit in his kitchen in a row and partake of a meal together, regardless of class, religion, or sex. No one could have an audience with the Guru until they ate in the Langar. This is an essential element of Sikhism, and it embodies their belief in equality. Beyond this concept of equality is the belief that all people should be treated as one universal brotherhood, and that all humans are linked together. In fact, part of a Sikh’s daily prayers end, “By Thy Grace, may every one be blessed in the world.”

Sikhism also rejects asceticism, self-deprivation, and fasting as paths to righteousness and spirituality. Sikhs must live in the world and live virtuously. This requires continuous and deep meditation. Only meditation on Nam, the holy name of God, is the way to purity. According to Sikh beliefs, the five vices—lust, anger, greed, attachment, and ego, prevent unity with Nam. Of all the vices, egoism is the most obstructive.

The Sikh holy book is called Guru Granth Sahib. It does not narrate the lives of the Gurus; it is entirely dedicated to the glorification of the Almighty God. This book was written by the Gurus and contains their direct revelations from God.

Sikh history is riddled with war and persecution. More recently there have been confrontations with the Indian government and violent demonstrations in the Punjab, where Sikhs have demanded more autonomy. As fighting escalated between Sikhs and Hindus, the Indian government took control of the state in 1983.

### ***Sikh Celebrations***

Sikhs celebrate Baisakhi, marking the birth of Khalsa, the militant church, established in the time of Guru Gobind Singh. This happened in 1699, on the day when Guru Gobind Singh baptized five of his disciples, and they in turn baptized him. In this exchange, the disciples were initiated with water that had been sweetened (making it amrit) and which was stirred with a two-edged dagger. The disciples drank from a bowl containing the amrit, and thus, Khalsa, or militant church, was formed. After the ceremony, the disciples took the name of Singh, which means lion. This was a step toward rejuvenating Sikhism. Today, many Sikhs take the name Singh, and the ceremony is only slightly changed: the amrit is sprinkled on the candidate's head and face, and he is given some to drink.

Guru Purbs commemorate the anniversaries of the birth, death, or martyrdom of the Gurus. Because Guru Purab dates are charted on a lunar calendar, they vary from year to year when translated to the Western calendar. Much like Hindus, some Sikhs also celebrate Diwali and Holi (known as Hola Mohalla).



## SECTION III

African-American	Native Americans
Cambodian	Norwegians
Chinese	Pakistani
Danish/Danes	Polish
Filipino	Russian
Finns	Scandinavians
Germans	Swedish
Greeks	Taiwanese
Hispanic	Vietnamese
Iceland	
Indian	
Irish	
Israeli	
Italian	
Japanese	
Korean	
Laotian	
Middle Eastern	

# Cultural *groups*

## AFRICAN-AMERICAN

Americans of African descent represent a large percentage of the minority population in the United States. Some identify strongly with particular Southern traditions, while others identify more closely with Northern and urban lifestyles. There are also some Black Americans who are thought to be African-American, but who more readily identify with their Caribbean heritage. Regardless of the regional or religious differences among Black communities in the United States, there is one holiday in which all are invited and encouraged to participate: Kwanzaa.

### **Kwanzaa**

Kwanzaa is an African-American holiday that was established in 1966 by Maulana Karenga, a civil rights activist and teacher. Mr. Karenga initiated the celebration of Kwanzaa in the United States because he thought that it was important and valuable for Black Americans to learn more about the African traditions that may be part of their heritage. Through the promotion of this holiday, Mr. Karenga hoped to establish a holiday that would have special meaning for Black communities in the United States.

The word Kwanzaa means “first fruits” in the African trade language of Swahili. In fact, most of the terms relating to Kwanzaa are Swahili words. Swahili being a neutral language which has no affiliation with any particular ethnic group in Africa. Although the holiday is based on African festivals that celebrate the gathering of crops, Kwanzaa is more than a harvest festival.

Kwanzaa is celebrated for seven days, ending December 31 when families and friends gather to celebrate a feast or “karamu.” Kwanzaa is not a religious holiday. It is a time for African-Americans to gather and celebrate their history and culture. Kwanzaa is a community-oriented holiday and focuses around seven principles.

The seven principles of Kwanzaa are:

- *umoya = unity*
- *kujichagulia = self-determination*
- *ujima = collective work and responsibility*
- *juamaa = cooperative economics*
- *nia = purpose*
- *kuumba = creativity*
- *imani = faith*

These seven principles form a complex concept that essentially hinges on people coming together to work in unity for the benefit of everyone in the community and believing in the strength that working together produces.

During Kwanzaa, homes are decorated with red, black, and green. The Kwanzaa table is set with a straw mat, called a “mkeka,” which is said to symbolize the traditions of Africa. A candleholder, called a “kinara,” is set on the mkeka. The candleholder contains one candle for each of the seven principles. Each night of Kwanzaa, a candle is lit and its corresponding principle is invoked. Kwanzaa culminates in the “karamu” on December 31.

## CAMBODIAN (KHMER)

### Cambodia

Cambodia, once known as Kampuchea, is located in mainland Southeast Asia, bordering Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. At one time, from the 9th to the 15th century, the Khmer Empire of Cambodia had significant military and economic status in Southeast Asia. By the late 1800s, Cambodia had become a part of French Indochina and was under colonial rule until 1954. As the result of the Geneva Convention, in 1954, Cambodia established an independent government that was ruled by Prince Norodom Sihanouk. In the late 1960s, the Khmer Rouge—led by a Maoist named Pol Pot—emerged as a brutal and active force in the country, and Cambodia became involved in an internal struggle that included a coup d'état and the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk in 1970. The civil strife escalated, and on April 17, 1975, Cambodia fell to the Khmer Rouge.

In the wake of the Khmer Rouge's victory, Cambodians experienced a radical and brutal restructuring of their society. All non-communist leaders were "liquidated," and eventually teachers, monks, non-political leaders, and individuals who were "corrupted by capitalism" were also targeted. The Khmer Rouge forced Cambodians out of the cities and onto agricultural plots in order to support their communist goals. As a result of these policies, traditional relationships and structures, such as the family, the village, and Buddhism, were nearly eradicated. Cambodians lived under persecution and

terror until the Khmer Rouge were overthrown by the Vietnamese army in 1979. Many Cambodians interpret their experience under the Khmer Rouge regime as genocide. During the reign of the Khmer Rouge, 1.5 million Cambodians (out of a population of 7 million) were either murdered, starved, or died of disease.

In late 1978, Cambodians became refugees in Thailand, and between 1981 and 1985 nearly 150,000 Khmer were settled in the United States.

### People

The Khmer are thought to have migrated from southern China prior to 200 BC. They currently make up about 90% of Cambodia's population. The Khmer also live in Thailand and southern Vietnam. They are an agricultural people, traditionally practicing rice farming in the lowland areas of Cambodia. The two primary minority groups in Cambodia are the Chinese and Vietnamese. Two upland minority groups in Cambodia are the Cham-Malays and the Khmer Loeus.

As in most cultures, respect is essential. In the Khmer culture, older people must be greeted first and last. Also, like other Southeast Asian cultures, if one notices that shoes are left outside the home, one should pay attention and also remove one's shoes. Hospitality is important and if offered the only chair in a room, one should accept the gesture rather than refuse. Communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is often indirect. Consequently, eye-contact and direct "no" answers may be avoided.

## Religion

Most Khmer practice Theravada Buddhism; it has been the major religion of the Cambodian people since the 13th century. Theravada Buddhism replaced Brahmanic beliefs among the court classes and animism and ancestor worship among the peasant populations.

Buddhist practices are organized much differently and are less ritualized than most formally structured religions. Worship occurs at the temple (wat), as well as at altars in homes. One or more monks leads worship in the temple, and the congregation includes other monks as well as lay elders and community members. The worship includes chanting, praying, and burning incense; the ceremony may be concluded by eating food that has been brought by the congregation.

The Khmer Rouge banned all religions. Under their communist rule, they destroyed temples and monasteries, disrobing and punishing thousands of monks. Buddhism has since been legally practiced in Cambodia since 1979, and in 1989 it was established as the official religion of Cambodia.

Evangelical Christian churches are very active in many Cambodian communities. Their willingness to offer assistance to, and care for, Cambodian refugees has resulted in their acceptance within this cultural group.

## Selected Celebrations

Since the majority of Cambodians are Buddhist, they celebrate Buddhist holidays in addition to the following specifically Cambodian celebrations.

### ***Khmer New Year (also known as Bonn Chaul Chhnaim)***

This New Year celebration begins on April 13 and continues for three days. During this festive time, people participate in religious ceremonies, folk and classical dancing, and traditional games. Since it is considered bad luck to begin the New Year with a dirty house, the celebrations involve cleaning and decorating houses, both inside and outside. Many people prepare altars in their homes, where they make offerings to the Tevoda of the coming year. Cambodians also visit temples, where they offer prayers and sprinkle Buddha's statue with water for good luck in the coming year. Sometimes, Cambodians will leave sand in the temple yard as a prayer for a life with as many days as there are grains of sand.

### ***Bonn Dak Ben***

This celebration takes place in September and lasts for 15 days. During this festival, the community organizes its efforts to prepare food for monks and other people in the temple. On the 15th day of the festival (marked by the full moon), members of the community bring their food to the temple and share it with one another. This festival is held to honor the spirits of the dead. People believe that the spirits of their deceased relatives may come throughout the year to bother them if they do not make an offering during this time. Families in the community come together to offer food to the monks, so that their deceased relatives will see their offering and remain peaceful.

### ***Bonn Kathin***

Bonn Kathin is a one-day religious festival during the month of October. On this day, Cambodians gather in their towns and march in a parade to bring money, food, and other goods to their community temple.

### ***Independence Day***

Cambodian Independence Day is November 9, a commemoration of the day in 1953 when Cambodia gained its independence from France. This civil celebration includes a large parade with floats and marching bands that pass in front of the Royal Palace.

### ***Bonn Om Touk***

Bonn Om Touk takes place in November and is a three-day water festival that commences the fishing season. Bonn Om Touk celebrates the change of the river's flow. During this celebration, Cambodian communities gather together and participate in boat races.

## **CHINESE**

### **China**

China, located in East Asia, is the third largest country in the world and contains nearly one-fourth of the world's population. China also is known as the People's Republic of China.

China's history pre-dates written records. Historically, China was ruled by a series of Dynasties until 1912, when a republic was established. The communist party emerged in 1921, and by 1926 a civil war began that was not completely settled

until the communists took over mainland China and established what is now known as the People's Republic of China. China's possession of Taiwan, the Republic of China, has been and for some people still is in dispute. China's history also includes participation in the Korean War, as well as conflict with neighboring Tibet.

China is divided into 23 provinces, including Taiwan, and five autonomous border regions. In these border regions, various ethnic groups constitute the majority of the population.

China has an ancient history, and the influence of Chinese culture can be seen in many of its neighboring countries. Korea, Taiwan, and Japan are just a few of the countries whose histories and cultures have been directly affected by the Chinese.

### **People**

China has a multiracial population. Approximately 92% of the Chinese population is Han Chinese; the other 8% consists of nearly 60 ethnic groups. The largest Chinese ethnic groups are the Huis, Mongols, Uighurs, Zhuangs (Chuangs), Yis, Tibetans, Miaos (Meos), Manchus, Buyis (Pu-is), and Koreans. China's ethnic groups are primarily located in its autonomous regions.

Mongols played an important part in China's history, particularly during the 13th century. For almost two hundred years Mongols invaded, pillaged, conquered, and destroyed many of the most highly developed cultures of the time. Today, approximately 5 million Mongols are under

Chinese rule; most are located in Inner Mongolia. Nearly 500,000 Mongols also live in Russia and Kazakhstan.

The Uighur are the major ethnic group of the Xinjiang province. Their indigenous religion combined Shamanism and Buddhist practices; however, they converted to Islam around 900 AD.

The Meo people migrated from China into upland Southeast Asia in the 19th century. The Laotian Meo call themselves Hmong. Like many Southeast Asian clans, they practice animism in combination with Chinese ancestor worship.

The Hui are a Chinese ethnic group that descends from Arab and Persian settlers who married Chinese women. The term Hui actually means Chinese Muslim, and the Hui are known to be Islamic. With the exception of their religious and dietary practices, the Hui are well integrated into Chinese society.

## **Religion**

The major religions in China are Daoism (Taoism), Confucianism, Buddhism, and Islam. Folk religions are also practiced in the more rural areas. Most Chinese also believe in ancestor worship and incorporate this into their celebrations and festivals. Confucianism has also had an enormous impact on the ethics of many Chinese and is an integral part of Chinese social and political values.

After the 1949 communist takeover of the Chinese mainland, all practice of religion was discouraged. Two decades later, during the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1960s, religious institutions were

completely destroyed. In contemporary China, however, there is a growing tolerance for religious practices.

## **Daoism**

Daoism (Taoism) refers to a movement whose development coincided with Confucianism and became both a philosophy and religion. Daoism has been one of the most influential religions in China. The Daode Jing, also called the Laozi, and the Zuangzi are the core texts of Daoism.

The Daoist movement began during the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770-256 BC) in response to Confucius's concept of Dao, or "the Way." As the Daoist movement developed over time, it was argued that there is only one Dao and that to follow a variety of prescriptives to achieve it was a distraction that interfered with its inevitable and natural course.

Daoist mastery is achieved through any skill or activity one chooses, for example, woodworking, cleaning, playing music, athletics, etc. It can be described as the mystical sense that one has transcended deliberate skill and action through guidance of the dao.

Daoist religion created fertile ground for the successful introduction of Buddhism to China.

## **Confucianism**

Confucianism is a philosophical system founded on the teachings of Confucius, who lived between 551 and 479 BC. Confucianism has had a profound influence since its introduction. It has also greatly influenced the Japanese, Taiwanese, Korean, and Indochinese cultures.

Confucianism was easily incorporated into Chinese political structures, since one of its primary principles is that the true legitimate ruler derives his authority from a heavenly command. Chinese rulers relied on this theory of divine authority to establish and maintain order, respect for elders, loyalty, filial piety, ritual, and respect for authority.

The Analects are a collection of sayings and teachings of Confucius, which were compiled by his students after his death. This book is a primary reference for followers of Confucianism.

Confucianism includes the belief that, with practice, all people can achieve the status of the sage. By acting in accordance with li, and achieving the highest level of moral development, one's actions will be in harmony with the dao.

### **Buddhism**

Buddhism, founded in India by Siddhartha Gautama—the Buddha—is a major religion in the world. The Buddha lived in northern India between 560 and 480 BC.

Mahayana, also known as Great Vehicle, is the type of Buddhism found primarily in Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and Tibet. It is known as a more liberal form of Buddhism and is distinguished by its emphasis on Buddhist Tantras.

Buddhism has been successfully blended with a number of other religions, namely, Shinto, Daoism, and Hinduism. The current number of adherents of Buddhism is estimated at 350 million people.

The basic beliefs of Buddhism are founded on the Four Noble Truths, which are:

1. *To live is to suffer—all sentient beings suffer.*
2. *The cause of suffering is desire—a desire for life, for happiness, for a cessation of suffering, etc.*
3. *To cease to suffer, one must cease to desire.*
4. *Cessation of desire (also known as enlightenment or nirvana) is achieved by adhering to the Eight Fold Path which includes: right thought, right resolve, right action, right livelihood, right speech, right effort, right concentration, and right mindfulness.*

The golden age of Buddhism in China was during the Tang dynasty. A number of Buddhist schools flourished, including the Chan (known as Zen Buddhism in Japan), the Faxiang, and Huayan schools, as well as Pure Land Buddhism.

Buddhism was introduced into Japan by Korea in the 6th century. Buddhism gained state support early and quickly became the state religion during the Nara period (710-784 AD).

Traditionally, Buddhist monastic communities relied on the local lay community for material support. Offerings of food and money sustained Buddhist monks and nuns; in fact, monks were traditionally beggars in Southeast Asian countries. Today they still rely on alms given by the faithful. Most local Buddhist festivals and celebrations involve processions to local shrines and the presentation of alms including gifts of food, incense, flowers, and

money. Such offerings are known as dana. For their part, monks offer sermons, chant scriptures, and recite sutras for the dead. These acts of offering are connected with the concept of karma and the necessary merit-making that Buddhists must do to assure rebirth and, ultimately, enlightenment.

### ***Ancestor Worship***

Ancestor worship refers to the rites conducted by communities, families, and individuals in honor of their deceased ancestors. It is connected to the fundamental belief that the dead continue to interact with, and influence the lives of, the living. Ancestor worship plays an important role in the celebrations, holidays, and festivities of many cultural groups throughout East and Southeast Asia.

### **Selected Celebrations**

#### ***Chinese New Year***

The Chinese New Year is celebrated between January 21st and February 20. Preparations, known as “little New Year,” last an entire month for many Chinese. These preparations include cleaning house, making food, and hanging a picture of Tsao-Chin, the “God of the kitchen.” One week before New Year’s day, Chinese burn the picture, sending him to tell the spirit world of the family’s hard work.

For New Year’s, Chinese hang a new picture of Tsao-Chin and begin five days of celebration. There are feasts of food and plenty of fireworks. Relatives and friends visit each other and children receive red envelopes with money, red being a lucky

color. Dragon dancing takes place in the streets both to chase away evil spirits and to bring in the New Year. Firecrackers are also believed to chase away the evil spirits.

#### ***Ch’ing Ming***

Ch’ing Ming is a time to remember ancestors. Known as the “Pure and Bright festival,” Ch’ing Ming is celebrated 106 days after the winter solstice. It marks the beginning of spring. Three days prior to the celebration, Chinese people turn off their stoves and eat only cold food.

Ch’ing Ming is a memorial day for the Chinese; they go to the graves of their ancestors with small gifts and food and clean the area. Many Chinese plant new trees in remembrance of the dead. After the visitation, people celebrate with a large feast.

### **DANISH/DANES**

#### **Denmark**

The term, “Denmark,” first came into use during the ninth century. Although the smallest of the Scandinavian nations, for a time Denmark ruled over its neighboring countries. During the late 1300s and early 1400s, it created a union of nations that included Norway, Sweden, the Faeroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, and parts of Finland. Sweden and Finland left the union in the early 1500s, but the rest of the union remained together until 1814.

Denmark remained neutral during World War I, but in World War II, its declaration of neutrality was ignored by Germany, which occupied the country in 1940.

Iceland, previously a part of Denmark, became independent in 1944, and Denmark itself was liberated in 1945. In 1948, the Danish-held Faeroe Islands were granted home rule. Greenland, which had become an integral part of Denmark under the new constitution of 1953, received home rule in 1979. Today, the Faeroe Islands and Greenland remain self-governing units within Denmark.

## **People**

The people of Denmark are fairly homogeneous: the vast majority are Nordic Scandinavians, although the country, which shares a 43-mile border with Germany, does have a significant German minority population. While the country's official language is Danish, two other languages are spoke fairly widely: Faeroe in the Faeroe Islands, and an Eskimo tongue is spoken in Greenland.

## **Religion**

90% of the people of Denmark are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is supported by the state. The largest minority faith is the Roman Catholic Church.

## **Selected Celebrations**

### ***Shrovetide***

Also known as Fastelavn, Shrovetide once was a holiday that required fasting but is now known for its carnival-like atmosphere. Children awaken their parents by waving decorated birch branches called Fastelavnsris and then dress in costumes and go from door to door, singing and

collecting treats. One of the best-known children's games of Shrovetide is called "knocking the cat out of the barrel": children take turns hitting a barrel with a wooden club, and the child whose blow makes the barrel fall to the ground is chosen king or queen and given paper crowns and "rule" for the day.

### ***Christmas***

In Denmark, Christmas is known as "Jul," an old Nordic word that means "feast." Its celebration begins four Sundays before Christmas Eve with Advent, which celebrates the coming of Christ. Danes mount four candles on wreaths made of pine twigs and red or purple ribbons and light one of the candles. Each successive Sunday they light another candle. On December 13, Lucia processions are held in schools, hospitals, rest homes, and other institutions to commemorate Lucia, the saint of the light in the Catholic Church. In most homes, Christmas trees are kept outdoors until the day before Christmas, when they are brought inside to be decorated. Food is a major part of the Christmas celebration and includes sweets, cookies, herring, and a beer brewed especially for Christmas.

## **FILIPINO**

### **The Philippines**

The Philippines is an independent island nation located in the Pacific Ocean, approximately 500 miles off the coast of mainland Southeast Asia.

The Philippine people have a history of contact with other cultures, and there has

been a great deal of migration throughout the Philippines. Beginning with traders from Asia, colonization by Spain in 1565, its cession to the United States in 1898, and its independence in 1946, the Philippines has been affected by some of the world's most influential cultures.

There has been a great deal of migration within the Philippines as well. Filipinos have been consistently moving from rural communities to urban settings as they seek work in the growing industries of the Philippines.

In its most recent history, Ferdinand Marcos led the country. Elected president of the Philippines in 1965, Marcos ruled the country under martial law between 1972 and 1981, and retained his tight control after martial law was lifted until he was forced into exile in 1986, whereupon Corazon Aquino was elected president.

## People

The Philippines has been inhabited for over 30,000 years and has always been an important link in the trade routes of India, Asia, and Southeast Asia. It is thought that the Philippines was populated through waves of migration by neighboring Indonesians. However, Malay is the indigenous culture of the Philippines.

The Philippine people are scattered across the many islands that make up the Philippines. There is a remarkable sense of identity among Filipinos, despite their history of colonization and the influence of foreign powers. Their common languages, Philippine (Tagalog) and English, and their Christianization are

thought to contribute as much to a sense of Filipino identity as their long struggle for independence.

There is a unique mixture of ethnicity among the Filipino people. Most share Malay and Mongoloid racial attributes, all the while mixed with Chinese, Indian, Spanish, and American elements. Some Filipinos use the Spanish word *mestizo* to describe people of "mixed blood."

Upland hill tribes, known as Negrito and Igorot, and the Muslims in the south, known as Moros, are the few groups of Filipinos that are less integrated into Filipino culture than most. Small communities of approximately 35,000 pygmies, who live throughout Southeast Asia and Oceania, including the Aeta of the Philippines, are referred to as Negrito, a Spanish word for "little Negro." These communities continue to live a traditional hunting and gathering existence. Igorot, a Tagalog word meaning "mountaineer," is a term applied to the various people living in the mountains of northern Luzon in the Philippines. Such Filipino groups referred to as Igorot include the Bontok, Ibaloi (Nabaloi), Ifugao, Isneg (Apayao), Kalinga, and Tinggian. All of these people are ethnically Filipino.

## Religion

The Philippines has been greatly influenced by Roman Catholicism. More than 90% of Filipinos are Roman Catholic, although other Christian denominations, such as the Philippine Independent Church and the Iglesia ni Cristo, also have significant followings.

Historically the Igorot held traditional animistic beliefs, although today, more are turning to Christianity.

Islam, introduced to the southern Philippine islands in the 15th century, is very strong in the Sulu Archipelago, Palawan, and parts of southern Mindanao, although Muslims generally account for a small minority of the Filipino population.

### **Selected Celebrations**

Since the majority of Filipinos are Roman Catholic, many of their holidays and festivals are linked to the Catholic calendar or involve the images of saints. For example, there are grand processions in May, known as Flores de Mayo, that honor the Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

#### ***Black Nazarene Procession***

The Black Nazarene Procession, which takes place on January 9th, is the largest procession in the Philippines, during which Filipinos carry a life-size statue of Jesus Christ, also referred to as Jesus of Nazareth, through the streets of the town of Quiapo.

#### ***Ati-Atihan***

Ati-Atihan, celebrated in the coastal town of Kalibo, is the Filipino equivalent of Mardi Gras. Celebrated in the third week of January, Ati-Atihan is a three-day festival that celebrates the sale of Panay Island in the 13th century. This festival also pays tribute to Kalibo's patron saint, Santo Nino (the baby Jesus). Ati-Atihan celebrations include dancing in the streets, music, and festive food. Traditionally, Filipinos

cover their bodies in ash to resemble the original Kalibo natives.

#### ***Good Friday***

Good Friday is one of the holiest days of the Roman Catholic Church year. In the Philippines, some devoted Catholics re-enact the passion of their Lord, Jesus Christ. Part of these re-enactments include scourgings which take place throughout the country; the most popular are those at San Fernando and Antipolo.

#### ***Apalit River Festival, The Feast of Saints Peter and Paul***

The Apalit River festival takes place over a period of three days and is most commonly celebrated by fishing villagers. Saint Peter is considered the patron saint of fishermen, and during this festival, Filipinos mount huge statues of the saints on pagodas. These statues are carried down the river on barges decorated with colored paper flowers. The barges are usually followed by a flotilla with music and celebrating Filipinos.

#### ***Rizal Day***

December 30th marks the death of Dr. Jose Rizal, a martyr for Philippine independence. He is said to have exposed the exploitation of Spanish colonial rule over the Philippines through his writing. Dr. Jose Rizal was shot and killed on December 30, 1896, for the "alleged crime of rebellion." It is said that Rizal's martyrdom was a catalyst for Philippine independence.

## FINNS

### Finland

With one-third of its country located within the Arctic Circle, Finland is surrounded by both land and sea: by Norway, Russia, and Sweden, as well as by the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia. The first settlements probably came around 7000 BC. Over a period of years beginning in the 12th century, Sweden gradually conquered Finland. Sweden lost some of its Finnish territory to Russia in the 18th century and ultimately ceded the entire nation to Russia in 1809, although Russia allowed Finland to operate with relative autonomy.

When the Russian revolution broke out in 1917, Finland declared its independence. Although Finland declared its neutrality at the outset of World War II, the U.S.S.R. demanded Finnish land to use as military bases. Finland ceded this land to the U.S.S.R. in a treaty in 1940 but reoccupied it the following year when Germany invaded the U.S.S.R. Eventually the Soviets returned and Finland was forced to grant a 50-year lease to the U.S.S.R. again for use of the land for military purposes. The U.S.S.R. returned the land in 1955 as a gesture of thanks for Finland's continued friendship.

Emigration to the United States began in the 17th century, when Finnish settlers helped found New Sweden, a settlement at the mouth of the Delaware River. Finns, however, did not emigrate there in any significant numbers. Finnish emigration to the U.S. did not begin in large numbers until the 1860s. This emigration peaked at the beginning of the 20th century.

### People

Finland is a somewhat racially mixed nation. People of east Baltic stock reside mostly in the eastern part of the country while residents of the west and the south are typically of Nordic stock. Like other Scandinavian countries, Finland also has a Lapp population.

The Finnish language is one of the Finno-Ugric languages, related to Estonian and Hungarian and one of the family of Ural-Altai languages; it has at least seven distinguishable dialects. 93.6% of the population speaks Finnish; most of the remaining 6% speak Swedish. Both Finnish and Swedish are the country's official languages.

### Religion

The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the dominant religion in Finland, numbering 88.4% of the country among its members. Both the Lutheran and Orthodox churches are recognized as official state churches.

### Selected Celebrations

#### *Christmas*

Christmas in Finland begins with Advent, four Sundays before Christmas itself, with the hanging of wreaths and the lighting of candles. On December 13, Finland's national Lucia, selected from 10 teenage girls in a public vote, makes her first appearance on St. Lucia Day, wearing a long white dress and a crown of lighted candles. An important part of Christmas in Finland is saunas—most Finns enjoy a sauna on Christmas eve. Christmas eve is actually the highlight of Christmas in Finland, as opposed to Christmas day itself.

At sunset, families attend church and, after services, light candles at the graves of loved ones. Finland is, in fact, well-known for its brightly lit graveyards on Christmas eve. Also on Christmas eve comes a visit from the Finnish Father Christmas, known as Joulupukki—a person dressed in a more modest version of a Santa Claus suit who visits every household; usually, it is the family’s father or a neighbor.

### ***Midsummer’s Eve***

Held six months after Christmas, Midsummer’s Eve is one of the most important holidays in Finland. Held at a time when the sun remains above the horizon the entire night, Midsummer’s eve is a celebration of the countryside. People living in cities and towns go to the country and participate in celebrations in which bonfires are lit and the arrival of summer is celebrated.

### ***May Day or Vappu***

May Day, also known as Vappu, celebrates a combination of events: the international workers’ movement, a celebration of spring, a springtime celebration by students, and a modern street carnival. Even though it still may be snowing, Finns participate in street festivals in which eating and drinking are very popular. Among the more popular during this day of revelry are mead, known as sima, and fritters, which Finns call tippaleipa.

### ***St. Michael’s Day (Mikkelin Paiva)***

On the first Sunday of October, Finns attend church to offer thanks for the safe gathering of the harvest. A day or two

before this holiday, they participate in candle-dances to celebrate the end of the hard work of harvesting the year’s crops. On St. Michael’s Day, Finns also traditionally enter into contracts with farm laborers for the coming year.

## **GERMANS**

### **Germany**

The nation that we know today as Germany has a long and tumultuous history. Bordered on the north by the North Sea, the Baltic Sea, and Denmark; on the west by France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands; on the south by Austria and Switzerland; and on the east by Poland and the Czech Republic, Germany’s geographic location has left it vulnerable to attacks from more powerful neighbors and created great sensitivity to the need for security within the country.

Settled between 1000 and 100 BC, Germany consisted at first of many tribes and then of small nations, or states, that functioned mostly independent from one another through most of the 19th century. When Napoleon conquered Germany, however, the German people began to develop a sense of nationalism and unity. When Bismarck ousted Danish, Austrian, and French influences in the 1860s, the German states rallied together in a confederation that remained largely intact until the end of World War II, when the allies divided Germany into two parts: the Federal Republic of Germany, also known as West Germany, and the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany.

In 1990, East Germany became part of West Germany, and Germans again were unified.

Most of the earliest German immigrants to the U.S. came from small religious groups that were uncomfortable in a German society dominated by three major religions—Lutherans, Catholics, and Calvinists. They came to America in search of religious freedom and were among the New World’s earliest settlers. Many German immigrants were farmers, and for this reason they were attracted by the availability of land in the American West, so by the 1840s they were moving in growing numbers into Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

## **People**

The origins of the people of Germany are not clear, although many experts believe they came from tribes of Scandinavians that migrated south between 1000 and 100 BC, displacing Celts who lived in the area. The official language of Germany is modern German, or High German (Hochdeutsch). Most Germans speak dialects of German based on where they live. One German state, Schleswig Holstein, has a small Danish-speaking population, and another state, Brandenburg, has a minority population of Sorbs, or Wends, whose language is more Slavic than German.

## **Religion**

Most people trace the origins of Protestantism to Germany in 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses

to a church door in Wittenberg. Today, Germany is a divided country religiously, with Protestants generally living in the north and Roman Catholics in the south and west. The country is about 42% Protestant and 35% Roman Catholic; most of the Protestants belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The communist regime that formerly ruled East Germany strongly discouraged religious practice, so about half of all Germans who come from the former East Germany claim no religious affiliation at all.

## **Selected Celebrations**

### ***Erntedankfest***

On the first Sunday of October, Germans celebrate Erntedankfest. More popular in the past than it is today, Erntedankfest is the German version of Thanksgiving, in which Germans thank God for their crops and express their hopes for good crops next year as well.

### ***Corpus Christi***

This Catholic holiday celebrates the body of Christ as transformed in the Eucharist. For this celebration, the Eucharist is carried from the church around the town under a special canopy. For the occasion, the procession routes are decorated with greenery and flowers; the greenery is thought to protect homes from lightning for the coming year. Traditionally, the procession makes four stops—one in each quarter of the town—for a blessing.

## **Carnival**

Also known as Karneval, Fasnacht, and Fasching—depending on the part of the country—Carnival is a Catholic holiday whose name comes from the Latin phrase, *carnem levare*, which means “to take meat away.” Carnival is the final feast before Lent and is marked by parades, processions, ceremonies, fancy balls, speeches that mock everyday life (such as politics and international events), eating (especially meat and doughnuts called *Kaschingkrapfen*), and drinking, as well as street festivals; many people—adults as well as children—dress up in costumes. Carnival ends on Ash Wednesday, when Lent begins.

## **Epiphany**

Epiphany marks the end of Christmas and also celebrates three events: the baptism of Jesus by St. John; the adoration of the baby Jesus by the magi; and Jesus’ first miracle—the transformation of water into wine. In Germany, carolers go singing from house-to-house as people take down and often burn their Christmas trees in great bonfires. The focus of the caroling are the *sternsinger*—usually, three boys who wear royal gowns with gold paper crowns, with one wearing blackface, together, they represent the Three Kings. These *sternsinger* pass through the streets singing carols, carrying a pole with a star atop it, and handing out treats. In some towns the *sternsinger* are men, not boys, and they are treated to drinks as they proceed from house-to-house. To many Germans, Epiphany is as significant and meaningful as Christmas itself.

## **GREEKS**

### **Greece**

Greece is surrounded by both land and sea: to the north, by Albania, the Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Turkey; and on the west, south, and east, by the Ionian, Mediterranean, and Aegean Seas. Greece includes many groups of islands, including the Ionians, Sporades, Cyclades, Crete, Lesbos, Rhodes, Samos, Samothrace, Chios, and Lemnos.

Ancient Greece provided the foundation for much of today’s western civilization, going back to 2000 BC. Ancient Greece consisted of many city-states, so in some respects it was not quite a “country” as we think of countries today. They were subject to numerous conquests over the years, most notably by the Roman Empire, which accorded great respect to Greece, even though it conquered it. Later, Greece became part of the Byzantine Empire for 400 years and only in the 1830s was the modern state of Greece born.

Greece has had a parliamentary government since 1975. The president of Greece holds a largely ceremonial position. Most power belongs to the prime minister, who heads a cabinet that administers the country and reports to a 300-member parliament. The capital of Greece is Athens, the nation’s largest city.

### **People**

Approximately 98% of all residents of Greece are of Greek ethnic heritage. After World War I, Greece and Bulgaria traded their ethnic minority populations,

with Greece sending 92,000 Bulgarian residents back to Bulgaria and Bulgaria sending 46,000 of its Greek residents to Greece.

## **Religion**

98% of all residents of Greece belong to the Greek Orthodox Church. Most of the remaining residents are Muslims, who generally are of Turkish ancestry.

## **Selected Celebrations**

### ***Easter***

Easter is the most important holiday for members of the Greek Orthodox Church. Because the Orthodox Church uses a different calendar than other Christian churches, Greeks sometimes celebrate Easter at different times than other Christians. The Greek Orthodox religion devotes 100 days to Easter: 50 days before Easter Sunday, which focus on strengthening faith in the lord, and 50 days after Easter Sunday, which are dedicated to the belief that god is with all people at all times.

The week before Easter is known as “The Great Week,” and during this period, people do not eat meat or dairy products. On Good Friday everyone goes to church, and after church the church bells ring and a funeral procession, known as the epitaphios, goes through the streets around the church as people carrying lighted candles follow Christ’s bier in the procession. On Easter eve, everyone attends midnight mass, and at midnight, the church bells ring and people light candles. People also fast leading up to holy communion on Saturday. After

communion, people go home and eat a soup called mayirtsa soupa, which features lamb innards, before bed.

### ***Christmas***

While Christmas has long been celebrated in Greece, only in recent years has it become a highly celebrated occasion. St. Nicholas’s greatest significance in Greece is as the patron saint of sailors. In Greek tradition, St. Nicholas is brine-and sweat-covered from protecting and rescuing ships. On Christmas eve, children often travel in groups from house-to-house, extending good wishes and singing kalanda – the Greek version of Christmas carols. They often play small metal triangles and little clay drums as they sing, and they typically are rewarded with sweets and dried fruit.

Greeks generally do not have Christmas trees. Instead, the main symbol of Christmas is a shallow wooden bowl with a sprig of basil hanging from a piece of wire suspended above its rim. Christmas goblins, known as Killantzaroi, are thought to emerge from the center of the earth during Christmas and enter homes through chimneys, where they perform all sorts of mischief: extinguishing fires, riding on people’s backs, souring milk, and braiding horses’ tails. Greeks exchange gifts on January 1, which is St. Basil’s Day.

### ***Oxi Day***

On October 28, the Greeks celebrate Oxi Day to commemorate their government’s refusal to allow Mussolini’s troops to come onto Greek soil at the start of World War II in 1940. On that day, which also marked

the country's entry into the war, Greece holds lavish military parades in Athens and Thessaloniki.

## **HISPANIC**

There are many countries whose populations constitute the Hispanic people and whose cultures contribute to their sense of ethnic heritage.

### **Central Americans**

Central America is composed of: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Central America's history includes the rise and fall of many indigenous Indian tribes as well as Spanish conquest and settlement. The most well-known Indian civilization was the Maya. After the Spanish arrived in Central America, the majority of the various Indian populations were decimated.

The ancient Maya were an advanced civilization that lived in Southern Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras. Their modern-day descendants live in the same areas today. The written history of the Maya begins approximately 50 BC; it is found on the crafts they made, the bones they inscribed, and the monuments and walls they erected. Today, nearly 4 million Maya speak one of the 30 Mayan languages; many also maintain the traditions, customs, dress, diet, and housing practices of their ancestors.

There are Maya rituals for naming children, invoking the agricultural cycle, marriage, death, sickness, and discerning the future. In the northern lowlands, the god of rain, Chaac is worshiped. When the

agricultural season is dry, a chachaac or rainmaking ceremony is held in hopes of inducing rain. At one time, the last five days of the year, known as the uayeb, were considered a dangerous time. Today's Maya now identify this time with Holy Week and observe this, along with Carnival, very closely.

### **South Americans**

The continent of South America includes 13 countries: Chile, Columbia, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, Bolivia, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guyana. Cultural characteristics of the Spanish and Portuguese colonizers include the Portuguese language (spoken primarily in Brazil), the Spanish language, Roman Catholicism, and a two-class social system that was largely determined by land ownership. People from any of these countries may be Hispanic.

South America's population has a racial mixture from three basic groups: indigenous Indian, African, and Caucasian. Many South Americans are a combination of these groups. Many indigenous Indian communities were enslaved during colonization; many were converted to Christianity during this time as well. Today most Indian populations are concentrated in the Andean Highlands, including areas of Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, and the tropical lowlands. Argentina, Uruguay, and Southern Brazil have high concentrations of Caucasians. Blacks and mulattos—people of mixed race—are dominant in parts of Brazil and Columbia.

The Chibcha are a Colombian Indian tribe that is primarily found in the highlands.

Historically they were intense agriculturists. Currently, Chibcha-speaking tribes include the Cuna and Lenca of Central America.

The Inca are the most well-known indigenous Indian tribe of South America. They have an ancient civilization and were rulers of most of South America before the Spanish invasion. At the time of its demise, the Inca Empire included approximately 12 million people spread over what are now known as Peru, Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina. The Inca were a highly developed, highly organized people, with their religion permeating their social and political structures. The Inca erected a great Temple of the Sun in Cuzco, and organized their town around it, modeling it after the rays of the sun itself. Their religious practices included offering of sacrifices, consulting oracles, entering trances, and making public confessions. An annual cycle of religious festivals was intimately connected to the Inca calendar, as much as the agricultural cycle was.

### **Cuban Americans**

Most Cuban Americans did not emigrate to the United States until 1959, when nearly one million Cubans began to flee the rule of Fidel Castro. The first wave of immigrants was primarily middle class and highly educated. The latest wave of Cubans came to the US in the 1980s. This second group of immigrants was much poorer than the first group; their attempts to immigrate have been highly political. Heightened sensitivity due to past U.S.-Cuba relations has led to policies that have restricted this immigration.

### **Mexican Americans**

Mexican Americans have their most recent roots in Mexico; however, they may also share their heritage with a number of indigenous cultures of ancient Mexico, such as the Aztec, Maya, and Mixtec.

### **Puerto Ricans**

Puerto Ricans historically settled in New York City, but are certainly found in communities across the country. There are significantly large Puerto Rican communities in the South, as well as in the Midwest, particularly Chicago.

### **People**

The three largest groups of Hispanics living in the United States are Cuban Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans. Mexican Americans live primarily in the Southwest, Cuban Americans live primarily in the Southeast, and Puerto Ricans primarily live in the Northeast. Of course, these are generalizations about the traditional settlement patterns of Hispanics in the United States; Hispanic communities can be found throughout the U.S.

The term Hispanic is used to refer to people who have a common connection to the Spanish Language. Many members of the Hispanic community choose to identify themselves as Latinos. Certainly within the United States, there are regional variations in the use of the term Hispanic or Latino. Many communities, such as those in California, New York, and Chicago, prefer Latino; many communities in Florida and

Texas, on the other hand, prefer the term Hispanic. Still others prefer more narrowly defined terms, such as Puerto Rican or Mexican American, for example.

Hispanics may be of any race, but they have ancestral links to any of the Spanish-speaking countries. There is tremendous diversity among the Hispanic population and preferences over their name are just one indication of the depth and significance of their diversity.

Hispanic Americans are the fastest growing ethnic group in the American population. They are also becoming an increasingly important political group across the United States.

### **Religions**

Because of the Spanish conquest of Central and South America, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, many Hispanics are Roman Catholic. However, increasing numbers of Hispanics are becoming Evangelical Protestants. Regardless of their denomination, most Hispanics are Christian, and this is reflected in their observances, as well as in the material culture in their homes. Many Hispanics have home altars and pray to particular patron saints, such as Our Lady of Guadeloupe.

In South America, Argentina has a large Jewish population; Guyana is predominantly Protestant.

### **Selected Celebrations**

Since the great majority of Hispanics are Roman Catholic, many of their celebrations

include Catholic Saints and focus on Catholic holidays. One of the most well-known Hispanic celebrations is Cinco de Mayo. While this has historically been a Mexican celebration, it is being embraced by more and more Hispanic groups as general celebration of Hispanic heritage.

### ***Cinco De Mayo***

Cinco de Mayo celebrates the famous battle that took place in Puebla, Mexico, on May 5th, 1862.

After Mexico's liberation from Spanish rule in 1822, there was a political division, and two Mexican parties emerged, the Liberals and the Conservatives. The Conservatives petitioned Emperor Napoleon for his help in defeating the Liberals; consequently Napoleon sent some of his forces to Mexico. Much to everyone's surprise, a small army of Mexicans led by General Zargosa drove back the French forces that were sent by Napoleon. Although their victory was short-lived, and the French took Mexico City almost two years later, the Mexican people were encouraged by their success.

In Mexico, Cinco de Mayo is celebrated with parades and political speeches. In the United States, it is a festive time to celebrate one's Hispanic heritage. For many non-Mexican Hispanic communities, Cinco de Mayo has become an opportunity to celebrate Hispanic culture and achievements in general. Cinco de Mayo festivities usually include feasts with food, singing, music, and dancing.

## ICELAND

An island located just south of the Arctic Circle in the northern Atlantic Ocean, Iceland was discovered by Irish explorers around 800 and settled by Norse seamen a century later. Iceland boasts the oldest parliament in the world, created in 930. Norway conquered Iceland in 1262 and brought it into the Danish-Norwegian union in 1381. Four hundred years of problems wiped out most of Iceland's population until a resurgence began early in the 19th century. Iceland received a new constitution from Norway in 1874 and was awarded home rule 30 years later. In 1918, Norway recognized Iceland's independence as a separate nation, with an option to decide on its total independence in 25 years. In 1944, the people of Iceland exercised that right and declared their nation a republic.

### People

With little immigration because of its harsh living conditions, Iceland is extremely homogeneous: most of its citizens are Scandinavian and the rest are Celts. They speak Icelandic.

### Religion

Iceland's racial and ethnic homogeneity extends to its religious life as well: more than 95% of its people are Evangelical Lutheran.

## Selected Celebrations

### *Shrove Monday (Bolludagur or Flengingardagur) and Ash Wednesday*

Celebrated the Monday before Ash Wednesday, Shrove Monday is known as a pastry holiday in many Icelandic countries. Also known as "Bun Day" it begins with children awakening early and "whipping" adults who remain in bed with small whips made of colored paper. Those adults then give the children buns or muffins (bollu) with whipped cream.

The following day, Tuesday, is a great meat-eating day in Iceland—a remnant of Catholicism. On Ash Wednesday, children carry small cloth handbags filled with ashes or small stones with bent pins on the outside. They then try to hook these pins on other children or even adults.

### *Christmas*

Christmas is celebrated with greater solemnity in Iceland than in many other countries; some people attribute this to the harshness of its weather and the almost total, around-the-clock darkness that envelops the country this time of year. Christmas, known as Jol, is a very family-oriented and child-focused holiday in Iceland. Christmas is celebrated in their homes, not in public, for three consecutive nights—Christmas eve, Christmas day, and the second day of Christmas. Although fishing is a major part of the country's economy, Christmas meals tend to center around meat; the traditional Icelandic Christmas dinner is Hangikjot, or smoked mutton. Other popular Christmas foods

are Rjupa, or rock ptarmigan; grautur, or porridge; and Laufabrau, or leaf bread. Celebrants wear their best clothes and often watch religious services on television instead of attending church, and the highlight of the holiday is Christmas eve, not Christmas Day. The most popular characters in Christmas stories are the Jolasveinar, or Christmas lads.

## INDIAN

### India

Indian civilization dates back to prerecorded history. In India, there is evidence of the earliest human activity known to scholars.

Historically, India has seen a great migration of peoples across its borders. As early as the 8th century, Arabs, Persians, Mongols, and other groups from Central Asia have invaded this Asian Sub-continent. In more recent history, trading with the Portuguese, Dutch, and French led to settlements that in turn led to pockets of Christian communities in India. In the mid-18th century India began to be absorbed into the British Empire.

English colonial rule had a tremendous impact on the Indian people. India gained its independence from the British on August 15, 1947. Today India is composed of 25 states: Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa,

Punjab, Rajasthan, Kikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. India also includes seven union territories. These territories and states, in combination with the tremendous range of climate and geography in India, contribute to the variety of regional identities of India.

### People

There is a great diversity among the Indian people. Geographic regions account for many of the differences in language (there are more than 200 languages spoken in India), religious practices, and customs.

Indian cuisine is as diverse as its people. Depending on the region, the food may be more or less spicy, and there may be variations in the method of cooking. The religious traditions of Hinduism and Islam have had the most direct impact on Indian cuisine. The vegetarian practices of the Hindus, and the cooking and food habits of the Muslims, such as the use of curries, biryani (a rice and meat preparation), and the tandoor clay oven, have all been important contributions to Indian cuisine.

The Indian caste system, which has historical links with Hinduism, has played an important role in Indian society. Not to be confused with a class system, the caste system includes five levels: priests (Brahmins), warriors or political rulers (Kshatriya), traders and cultivators (Vaishya), artisans (Shudra), and untouchables (Harijans). Untouchables traditionally occupied the lowest place in the Hindu caste systems. Their impurities were associated with their occupations which may have involved the taking of life, or dealing

with waste. Traditionally, they were banned from Hindu temples, and the sight of an untouchable was believed to be enough to pollute members of higher castes.

Namaste (pronounced nah-ma-stay) is a common Indian greeting. It involves putting one's hands together as if to pray, and then bowing one's head. The height of the hands and the depth of the bow are determined by the spiritual status of the person being greeted. The word "Namaste" is said as part of this greeting.

## Religion

Many of the world's religions are represented in India. In fact, religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism originated in India. Approximately 83% of the Indian population is Hindu and about 11% are Muslim. Christianity and Sikhism account for approximately 2% of the Indian population, while Jains and Buddhists make up less than 1% of the Indian population.

Indian religious traditions have an important impact on both the history and culture of India. Many religiously oriented wars have been fought in India, such as the India-Pakistan wars over the Muslim free state that resulted in the formation of Pakistan.

## Celebrations

There are a variety of religious groups represented in India, and Indians celebrate numerous religiously connected holidays. Since there is a great deal of regional identity in India as well, many holidays and celebrations are observed in pockets of religious or regional groups.

Hindu festivals are heavily represented on the Indian festival calendar; for example, Holi, Diawali, Janmashtami, and Dussehra are all widely celebrated. In the Punjab region, for example, the Sikh religion enjoys a substantial following, and Sikh holidays such as Baisakhi and Nanak Jayanti are celebrated there. Indian Muslims, like Muslims in other nations, celebrate their own religious holidays. For example, Muslim Indians observe Ramadan and celebrate Id-Ul-Fitr, as do all Muslims.

Smaller, more localized celebrations that take place in a particular town or region are called Melas. These festive events may include pilgrimages to the shrines of local gods and goddesses, dances and plays in celebration of local rivers and local harvests, or carnivals to mark the change of seasons or the onset of the monsoons in various places throughout India.

## IRISH

### Ireland

Ireland consists of two parts: the Republic of Ireland—an independent nation, known as Eire in the Irish language—and Northern Ireland, a disputed territory currently under the control of the United Kingdom (Great Britain). The geographic space with which we identify Ireland is a large island surrounded on the west and south by the Atlantic Ocean and on the east by the Irish Sea.

The first settlers in Ireland came from Great Britain around 7000 B.C. Celts arrived from the European mainland

about 1000 years later, followed by Vikings, Anglo-Normans, and New English and Scotch. The country first came under strong English control beginning in 1601 when the British subdued Irish resistance and began colonizing Ireland.

The next several hundred years witnessed numerous attempts by the Irish to assert their independence. These efforts finally succeeded in 1921, when the Irish and British signed a treaty that created an Irish Free State that included 26 of the 32 counties that constituted Ireland. In 1948, these 26 counties declared their independence and became the Republic of Ireland. The other six counties became Northern Ireland and remained under the control of the British. Both the British and the Republic of Ireland claim possession of these six counties, which have witnessed conflict and strife over the years.

The first wave of Irish immigrants came to the U.S. during the colonial era—several hundred thousand people. Irish immigration to the U.S. began in greater numbers around the time of the Irish potato famine, from 1830 through the 1850s.

## **People**

The people of Ireland are of British, Celtic, Viking, and Anglo-Norman ancestry. The constitution of the Republic of Ireland recognizes Irish, a Celtic language, as the country's first official language and English as its second official language. Today, only a few small, isolated parts of the Republic of Ireland use Irish as their everyday language.

## **Religion**

More than 90% of the people who live in the Republic of Ireland are Roman Catholic. The largest of the country's minority religions is the Church of Ireland, which attracts 2.4% of the Irish population.

## **Selected Celebrations**

### ***St. Brigid's Day***

St. Brigid was a nun who founded the first convent in Ireland during the fifth century. She is the patron saint of Ireland, and her works are celebrated February 1. Legend holds that the celebration of St. Brigid's Day precedes that of the Virgin Mary by one day, because when Mary was giving birth to Jesus, Brigid averted the eyes of onlookers, thereby earning Mary's gratitude.

### ***St. Patrick's Day***

The Irish holiday of St. Patrick's Day commemorates the work of St. Patrick, who converted the Irish people to Christianity in the fourth century. It is believed that St. Patrick was born in Scotland, Wales, or England, and was kidnapped by pirates and taken to Ireland.

During his captivity he gained renewed faith and a desire to free the Irish people. When he escaped from his captors, he traveled to France and became a priest, returning to Ireland at the age of 60 to convert the Irish people.

St. Patrick's Day is celebrated very differently in Ireland and the United States. The first St. Patrick's Day celebration in the U.S. was held in Boston in 1737, and over the next 250 years, the holiday has become known for large-scale parades, for the wearing of green, and for eating corned beef and cabbage and drinking green beer. In Ireland, however, it is a more holy day—a day that does not differ significantly from celebrations for other saints. In recent years, however, St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Ireland have become more like their American counterparts. Today, during the holiday, the Irish attend Mass and hold family gatherings at which they are more likely to eat pink bacon or roasted chicken than the American holiday traditions. The wearing of the green is prevalent in both countries, with green representing the color of spring, of Ireland, and of the shamrock. The significance of the shamrock is that according to legend, St. Patrick would pick up three-leaf clovers, or shamrocks, and use the three leaves to illustrate the Trinity to those whom he was trying to convert. As a spring holiday, St. Patrick's Day in Ireland has traditionally been the day on which stock is driven to pasture and potatoes are planted.

### ***Puck's Fair***

In the city of Killorglin in County Kerry, August 10 through August 12 marks a traditional gathering known as Puck's Fair. The three days of the festival are known as Gathering Day, Puck's Fair Day, and Scattering Day. On Gathering Day, a large

“puck”—a male goat—is decorated with ribbons, paraded through the city's streets, and enthroned on a three-story platform in the town square. On the second day, Puck's Fair Day, the townspeople hold a livestock fair. On the final day, Scattering Day—also known as children's day—King Puck is led out of town.

## **ISRAEL**

### **Israeli**

Israel was established a sovereign Jewish state on May 14, 1948. The ancient land was part of the British mandate for Palestine that was used to create a homeland for the Jewish people. This area in the Middle East has historically been considered the Holy Land for Christians, Jews, and Muslims.

Since its formation in 1948, Israel has fought many wars with neighboring Arab countries. For example, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, eastern and northern portions of Jerusalem, Sinai, and the West Bank of the Jordan River are all areas brought under Israeli control as a result of the war of 1967. In accordance with a peace treaty, Israel returned Sinai to Egypt in 1979. In May of 1994, most of Israel's troops began to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

There have been constant struggles and tensions in Israel since its establishment. Arabs in the region have contested Israel's right to the land and violence has marred the history of the state from the very beginning. The establishment of this

Jewish state meant the displacement of numerous Palestinians who were living in and around the area that was turned over to Israel. When the modern State of Israel was created, neighboring Arabs immediately waged war.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) emerged in 1964 as an umbrella organization for the many Palestinian resistance groups that were, and still are, fighting with Israel over rights to occupy the land. In September of 1993 an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord was signed. For the first time, Israel officially recognized the PLO and agreements were reached for Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, and a gradual withdraw of Israeli troops from the West Bank.

Today, people on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian issue continue to work for a lasting peace in the area.

## People

Since Israel was established as a homeland for Jews, the majority of Israelis are Jewish immigrants from many national backgrounds. Early in its history, Israel received Jewish refugees from post-war Europe, as well as many Jews from predominantly Islamic countries in Asia and North Africa. In the 1980s and 1990s, Ethiopian Jewish immigrants began arriving in Israel by the plane-ful. Another mass immigration of Jews came from the Soviet Union. Since winning the right to emigrate, more than 700,000 “Russian” Jews have settled in Israel since 1989.

There are several minority groups among the Israeli population; in fact, minority groups constitute nearly 19% of Israel’s population. Muslim Arabs, primarily Sunni, make up approximately 75% of the non-Jewish population in Israel. Christian Arabs constitute the second largest minority group in Israel. Predominantly settled in urban areas, 42% of the Christian Arabs are Greek Catholic, 32% are Greek Orthodox, and 16% are Roman Catholic. Bedouin Arabs account for almost 10% of Israel’s Muslim population; they belong to approximately 30 tribes and are scattered over a wide area in the south of Israel. The Druze are an Arabic-speaking minority who live in approximately 22 villages in northern Israel. They are a separate cultural, religious, and social community entirely. The Circassians are a small group of Sunni Muslims who have a distinct identity. They do not share the Arab ancestry or cultural background of the larger Islamic community.

## Religion

While the majority of Israelis are Jewish, there is a great deal of religious diversity among them. The Jewish society in Israel ranges from observant to non-observant, from ultra-Orthodox to those who regard themselves as secular.

As already described, 75% of the minority groups are Muslim, 14% are Christian, and less than 10% are Druze.

## Selected Celebrations

### *Yom haShoah*

Yom haShoah is Holocaust Memorial Day, this is an official holiday in Israel. This is a relatively new holiday for the Israeli calendar. Yom haShoah begins the evening prior when a siren is sounded throughout Israel and people stand in silence for two minutes to remember and reflect on the Holocaust. Ceremonies of remembrance mark the actual holiday. Often memorial candles are lit, and survivors of the Holocaust give presentations. Jewish people in Israel and around the world celebrate Yom haShoah in different and personal ways.

## ITALIAN

### *Italy*

Officially known as the Italian Republic, Italy extends southward as a narrow peninsula from the Alps to the Mediterranean, is surrounded by the Adriatic Sea on the east, the Ligurian Sea and Tyrrhenian Sea on the west, and the Ionian Sea on the south. Land borders include France to the northwest, Switzerland to the north, Austria on the northeast, and Yugoslavia on the east. In addition to the mainland peninsula, Italy also includes large offshore islands that include Sardinia, Sicily, and Capri. Located within Italy proper are two small, independent enclaves: Vatican City in Rome, and the Republic of San Marino.

The first Italian immigrants to the U. S. came from northern Italy, but the first

meaningful numbers of Italians emigrated to the U.S. in the 1820s. Northern Italians founded the earliest Italian settlement in Chicago and dominated that area until the 1880s when growing numbers of immigrants from southern Italy began arriving. The greatest period of Italian immigration to the U.S. was between 1875 and 1925.

## People

As a country easily accessible from many parts of Europe and one that has been involved in numerous conflicts over the years, Italy has a more heterogeneous population than many other parts of Europe. Nevertheless, most Italians speak Italian or a dialect thereof. The primary minorities living in Italy are approximately 260,000 German-Italians, who speak German dialects, and 50,000 Slavic Italians. There are a few isolated minority groups in southern Italy, including several Greek communities, two Albanian communities, a Serbo-Croatian community, and a French community. About 1.2 million Italians who live in Sardinia speak Sardinian, a separate language, and another half-million people who live in the area of Friuli speak Friulian, a Rhaeto-Romanic language.

## Religion

Nearly 90% of all Italians are Roman Catholic. While Catholicism was declared the country's official religion in 1929, that designation was abolished in 1984.

## **Selected Celebrations**

### ***Feast of St. Joseph***

On February 19, Italians celebrate the two-day Feast of St. Joseph in honor of the carpenter of Nazareth, who was the protector of Mary and Jesus and is the patron saint of many places and trades, and is the guardian of the spiritual home of Christians and the Catholic Church. Amid a serious drought in Sicily during the middle ages the people there asked St. Joseph, their patron saint, for help, promising that if he did, they would hold a great feast in his honor. Rain soon fell, so every year, huge banquet tables are set up in public and the poor are invited to eat. In Italy, special foods such as bread shaped like a scepter and a special minestrone are served and linens, statuary, and flowers adorn a special St. Joseph altar built with three steps to represent the Holy Trinity. The day begins with Mass, after which participants move in a procession to the banquet tables. The Feast of St. Joseph is especially popular in Sicily.

### ***Christmas***

The Italian Christmas differs from the American Christmas in several ways. The beginning of the Christmas holiday is signaled by the firing of a cannon at the Castel St. Angelo in Rome. Following a daylong fast there is an elaborate meal, the traditional Italian Christmas dinner. Called Cennone, it is meatless; instead, fish and seafood are prepared as a stew or soup, or are fried and served with spaghetti, anchovies, broccoli, salad, fruit, and sweets. The next day there is another, more

massive meal. As far as decorations, while some Italians put up and decorate Christmas trees, Italy's most important Christmas decorations are Nativity scenes, which can be found almost everywhere. In addition, Italians do not open their Christmas presents on December 25; instead, they wait until January 6, Epiphany, a date that many consider more important than Christmas itself. Epiphany commemorates the visit of the Magi to the Christ child. Instead of waiting for Santa Claus on this day, Italian children await the arrival of Befana, a witch-like woman who rides around on a broom. According to the legend, the Three Wise Men stopped at Befana's home on their way to Bethlehem to ask directions and invited her to join them. She declined but later changed her mind, gathering presents and trying to catch up with them. Each year she resumes her search for the Christ child, but because she cannot find him, she leaves gifts for all good children and pieces of coal for bad children.

## **JAPANESE**

### **Japan**

Prior to World War II, the Japanese Empire at times included Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria, parts of Eastern China, and several islands in the South Pacific. Today Japan consists of four main islands—Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku—and hundreds of smaller islands that stretch along the coast of the Asian mainland. Imperial authority has been an important part of Japan's history since

it was first recorded. Historically Japan has had a series of emperors who have ruled its people for centuries. In 1180, the Gempei war (1180-85) resulted in the establishment of the Kamakura shogunate, the first of the military governments that would rule Japan from 1180 until 1868. Japanese warriors are renowned the world over; even up until World War II the Japanese kamikaze warrior played an important role in the history and identity of Japan.

In recent history, Japan has been very active throughout the world. From 1938 to 1941, Japanese forces occupied Southeast Asia and China. Japan was a significant military presence in the Pacific arena, and eventually expelled the British from Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Singapore. During World War II, Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor, which brought the United States into the war. Following nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan was eventually occupied by American troops, and a constitution was imposed that governs Japan today. In modern times, Japan has been at the forefront of advances in the development and production of technology. Its strong economy has enabled it to become a world leader and one of the top industrialized nations in the world.

## **People**

The ancient people of Japan were the Jomon culture, which dates back to 8000 BC. The Yayoi culture subsequently came to Japan from the Asian mainland in the third century BC. Eventually, the

Jomon and Yayoi cultures fused to create the foundations of Japanese culture.

The Ainu are an aboriginal people from the north Pacific that primarily live on Japan's Hokkaido Island. Originally a hunting and gathering community, they lived throughout the Japanese archipelago but were pushed to Hokkaido by the Japanese as they expanded their realm of influence. They practice an animistic religion and believe in many gods of the mountains, sea, and sky. One of their most important cults is the bear cult, which involved elaborate rites and rituals. There are only about 25,000 Ainu of unmixed descent in Japan today.

## **Religion**

The majority of Japanese are Buddhist or Shinto; less than 2% of the population is Christian.

Shinto is the indigenous religious tradition of Japan. There is no individual founder of Shinto; it is based on the prehistoric religious practices of the Japanese. Unlike many other religions, Shinto has no canon of sacred scriptures. Shinto is derived from the kaminomichi, meaning "the way of the kami," the kami being variety of Japanese deities that include: divinized souls of great people (such as warriors, leaders, scholars, and poets); ancestral divinities of clans; spirits of specific places and natural beauty; and abstract forces of nature, to name just a few. The kami are worshiped at shrines called jinja. Shrines include a sacred arch designating the sacred area for those who come to worship. Japanese worshipers purify themselves by washing

their hands and rinsing their mouths before they enter the shrine to make offerings and pray silently. Occasions for worship include life cycle events such as marriage, birth, and death, and festivals that are associated with the cycle of the year.

Buddhism was established in Japan and, together with Confucianism, became an important influence on Japanese culture from 710 to 1868 AD. Eventually these foreign ideologies were rejected, and by the 1880s Shinto had emerged as a unique source of Japanese identity. Distinctions were made between shrine or state Shinto and sect Shinto, the state and other nationalists using Shrine Shinto as a vehicle for their ideologies. Sect Shinto, on the other hand, remained relatively private compared to the state-sponsored shrines. Following World War II, Shinto was entirely disassociated from the state and has become one of the most sacred aspects of Japanese religion and spirituality.

## **Selected Celebrations**

### ***New Year's Day***

New Year's Day is a time of great celebration in Japan; it is one of the biggest of the year. Japanese clean and decorate their homes, shop for gifts, and make rice cakes and prepare traditional New Year dishes called "osechi." At midnight, temple bells are rung as the Japanese ring out the old year and ring in the new one. While the bells are ringing, the Japanese eat end-of-the-year soba called toshikoshisoba. The traditional greeting is "Akemashite omedeto gozaimasu," or "Happy New

Year." Children are given New Year money called "otoshidama," and greeting cards are exchanged. In Japan, New Year's celebrations last for three days. Many offices are closed during this time.

### ***Bon Festival***

Like many Asian cultures, the Japanese honor their ancestors with rites and celebrations. The Bon Festival is held in mid-August, and is a three-day festival for the dead, a kind of homecoming for the Japanese, who believe that the souls of the deceased come home to stay from August 13-15. Many Japanese take this opportunity to return home as well and renew ties with family and friends. Services are held in Buddhist temples and homes during this period.

### ***Hina Matsuri, Girls Day***

This annual festival for girls is held on March 3. Tiered platforms are constructed and set up in Japanese homes. These platforms hold China dolls representing the emperor, empress, musicians in ancient courtly dress, and attendants. Japanese families celebrate Hina Matsuri with a special meal that includes hishimochi, diamond shaped rice cakes, and drinks called shirozake, which are made with rice malt and sake.

### ***Kodomo No Hi, Children's Day***

May 5th is a day the Japanese set aside to pray for the well being of children. Many families put a boy warrior on display in their homes on this day, since the day was traditionally celebrated as a festival for boys. When it was celebrated as Boy's Day, it was called Tango No Sekku.

## **KOREAN**

### **Korea**

The history of Korea is one of tribal federations and great kingdoms.

Throughout its history, both China and Japan have influenced Korea. China, through its installation of military colonies in Korea beginning in 108 BC, has greatly influenced the history of Korea. In the late 1800s, Japan forced a commercial treaty with Korea, and shortly thereafter Korea opened its doors to the West. Rivalries over Korea emerged between China, Japan, and Russia. After years of rebellions and invasion, Japan annexed Korea in 1910. With the end of World War II, Korea was liberated from Japan, but was divided internally. In 1948, the Republic of Korea was inaugurated in the South, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was inaugurated in the North. The 38th parallel became the dividing line between Soviet and U.N. forces within Korea. This temporary military demarcation eventually led to the devastating Korean War (1950-53), when communist North Korea invaded the South. The DMZ (demilitarized zone) was subsequently established once again, but to this day, there is an uneasy tension between North and South Korea.

### **People**

Korea was originally settled in approximately 3000 BC by Tungusic tribes that spoke a Ural-Altaic language and practiced a shamanic religion. Korea's history of invasion and influence from both China and Japan has created a unique culture.

Koreans are an orderly and traditional people. Traditionally Korean society has been very agricultural.

Korean people make a traditional dish called Kimchi. Some of the ingredients are garlic, ginger, fermented shrimp or anchovies, cabbage, red peppers, green onions, and white radish. Kimchi contains the five cardinal colors in East Asian Cosmology: green, red, yellow, black, and white.

Another Korean tradition is to wait 21 days before visiting a new mother and child. All visitations are restricted for this time period, and ropes are hung across the gate to keep people out. The ropes, called kumchul, are decorated according to the sex of the child. Charcoal, white paper, and pine needles let people know that a girl has been born; charcoal and red paper signify that a boy has been born to the family. The charcoal symbolizes cleanliness, red symbolizes the male, pine needles symbolize chastity in women, and white is to prevent impurities from entering the house.

### **Religion**

Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism (Taoism) were each introduced to Korean culture during various dynasties. In the Yi dynasty (early 15th century), Buddhism was rejected and Ju Xi (Chu Hsi) Confucianism was instituted as the national orthodoxy. Roman Catholicism was introduced to Korea, via China, in the 17th century. In the middle of the 19th century a new native religion called Tonghak (Eastern Learning) founded, as a movement against foreign religions.

While most Koreans do not belong to an organized religion, Buddhism—which China introduced to Korea in the 4th century—has approximately 13 million followers, and Confucianism has approximately 4.7 million followers. Also, there are about 6 million Christians, mostly Protestants, in Korea. By the late 1970s, Chondogyo had about 815,000 adherents. Also, Shaminism is widely believed and practiced in the rural areas of Korea.

The communist North Korean government discourages the practice of any religion by its people.

### **Selected Celebrations**

Koreans, like members of any culture, celebrate the holidays of their religions. Because of their traditionally agricultural society, most secular Korean festivals and holidays are directly linked to the agricultural cycle, fishing, and farming. The dates of Korean festivals are calculated by the lunar calendar.

#### ***Taeborum, The First Full Moon***

This holiday falls on the first full moon, which occurs on the 15th day of the first lunar month and signals the beginning of the agricultural cycle. This day is marked by special foods: in the morning, Koreans eat nuts, which as a hard food are believed to strengthen the teeth; they also drink a special cold wine, called “ear-sharpening wine,” that is believed to open the ears to good news. Koreans also eat a special “five grain rice” on Taeborum, a meal believed to ward off heat in the coming summer. Since this is an agriculturally oriented celebration, people in rural

villages also often hold rites for local spirits, and hope for a good harvest. Kites inscribed with the saying song-aek, “good riddance to evil,” are flown and released for good fortune in the coming year.

#### ***Sol-nai, The Lunar New Year***

The Lunar New Year, Sol-nai, is a time of renewal and preparation as families come together to renew their ties. Straw scoops, rakes, or sieves are placed on doors and walls to protect the family from evil spirits in the New Year, and Koreans dress in new clothes to mark their new beginning. Everyone gathers at the home of the oldest male in the family, and rites are held to honor their ancestors. Younger family members then bow deeply in respect for the older family members, wishing them health and prosperity in the New Year. Older people then give money to the younger ones. Families play games outside on Sol-nai. Age is calculated at Sol-nai, and so everyone becomes a year older on this day. A special rice cake soup, ttokkuk, is eaten; it is believed that eating this soup adds one year of life.

#### ***The First Day of The Second Month***

This day is also known as “Slaves Day” or “Farmhands Day.” This is traditionally a day of rest from agricultural work. Special crescent-shaped cakes made of white rice and filled with sweet bean paste are prepared for this celebration.

This day may also be celebrated in honor of Yongdung Grandmother. This is a spiritual figure that is thought to come to earth as the Wind Spirit. On her arrival and departure, women place offerings

on their condiment jars, in the kitchen, and behind the house and pray for good fortune in the coming year. It is thought that the success of the harvest can be predicted by the position of the celestial body Pleiades at this time.

### ***Hanshik***

Hanshik is the 15th day after the winter solstice. This celebration usually takes place in February or March. Hanshik is a time for families to clean the cemeteries and graves of their ancestors. They perform memorial rites and eat cold foods, a custom brought to Korea from China, where legend has it that an emperor in the Qin dynasty banned the use of fire on this day out of respect for the ancestors. This practice of eating cold food on Hanshik is still carried on in Korea today.

### ***Tano***

Tano is one of Korea's oldest holidays. Like many Korean celebrations, ceremonies and rites honoring village spirits and ancestors mark this holiday. Korean women wash their hair with fragrant water, and Korean men participate in ssirum, Korean wrestling. Traditionally, gifts of fans were given at this time, and Koreans participated in games and festivities outside. The special food associated with Tano is a round rice cake cooked with mugwort leaves. These fragrant leaves are believed to have magical powers; the cakes are placed in front of the door to ward off evil spirits.

### ***Ch'ilsok, the 7th Day of the 7th Moon***

Ch'ilsok is a Korean holiday that incorporates the constellations of Altair and Vega. Their crossing symbolizes two lovers

meeting and parting. Rain in the evening is the tears of joy as the lovers meet; rain in the morning is tears of sorrow as the lovers part. Rural Korean villagers bring offerings of newly harvested rice to local shrines, and women and children clean around the communal well. They light candles in a well rite and pray for the well-being of children in the community. Young people sometimes pray to Altair and Vega for good luck.

### ***Paekchung***

Paekchung is held on the 15th day of the 7th lunar month. Also known as the "Day of Servants," or "Hoe Washing Holiday," Paekchung is primarily celebrated in the South Kyong-sang province and is traditionally marked by shamanic rites, by praying for a bountiful harvest, and by folk dances.

### ***Ch'usok, The Harvest Moon Festival***

Held on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month, Ch'usok includes rites honoring ancestors and offerings of newly harvested food. Songp'yon, which are crescent-shaped rice cakes stuffed with sesame seeds, chestnut paste, or beans are the traditional food for this holiday. Families visit the graves of ancestors and clean them for the coming winter. This is a time of giving thanks for the harvest and reaffirming community and family ties.

### ***Chunggu, Double Nine Day***

Chunggu is celebrated on the 9th day of the 9th lunar month. Chunggu marks the swallows' return and is traditionally a day of picnicking and grave cleaning. Chrysanthemums are used to make

chrysanthemum rice and wine. Hwachae, a special fruit salad of pears, citrons, pomegranates, and pine nuts is made for this day.

### ***Tongji, The Winter Solstice***

Tongji takes place on December 22, and Koreans celebrate this festive time with a special thick red bean porridge that has small round rice cakes in it. Sometimes it is sprinkled around the house to keep evil spirits away, since the color red is associated with this power. Traditionally, Koreans made new calendars and exchanged them as gifts on Tongji.

### ***Buddha's Birthday, Ch'op'ail***

Korean Buddhists celebrate the Buddha's birthday on the 8th day of the 4th lunar month. This special day is observed with chants, rites, and processions with paper lotus lanterns. The procession leads to a shrine and the t'apdori or "circling the pagoda" takes place. People pray for enlightenment and well-being of the family. Colorful paper lanterns with names and prayers of the believers are hung throughout the temple, prayers are chanted throughout the day, and in the evening, the lanterns are lit.

## **LAOTIAN**

### **Laos**

Laos is a landlocked country in mainland Southeast Asia; Cambodia, China, Thailand, and Vietnam border it. Since the sixth century AD, Laos has been ruled by numerous kings and foreign powers,

including Japan, France and Thailand. As with Cambodia, Laos achieved its independence through the 1954 Geneva Convention that ended French colonial rule in Indochina. Years of conflict followed this independence, and in 1975, the communist Pathet Lao emerged in control of Laos. As a result of this communist victory, thousands of both lowland Lao and highland Hmong refugees went to Thailand. A significant number of Laotians were resettled in the United States between 1975 and 1985. They initially established tight-knit communities in California, Iowa, Minnesota, Texas and Washington.

### **People**

As noted above, there are a number of ethnic and cultural groups from Laos, and many of them live in communities in the United States.

They include the Hmong, Mien, Tai Dam, and ethnic Chinese from Laos. The locations most well-documented and widely written about are the Hmong, who are from the highlands of Laos, and the Lao or Lao Lum, who are from the lowlands.

Laotians have a traditional, mutual assistance social structure, where the work and lives of community members are highly integrated.

Laotians demonstrate great respect toward their elders. In fact, an elder, rather than the patient, may make some healthcare decisions, even when the patient is an adult. It is essential to show respect in the Laotian community. It is advisable to sit on, or below, the level of the oldest

person in the group. For example, if an older person is sitting on a mat, it is impolite for a visitor to sit on a chair. Also, many Laotians leave their shoes outside the house. As a visitor, if one notices this practice, one should remove one's shoes, regardless if they are told it is all right not to do so.

Another point of social etiquette involves the head. For Laotians, the head is considered the highest, both literally and figuratively. Therefore, one should not touch another's head, or even shoulder, for that matter. It is also considered impolite to point one's foot at another. When sitting, one should not cross one leg over the other so that the bottom of the foot or toe is pointed toward another.

The traditional Laotian salutation, for coming or going, is called wai. This involves putting one's hands together as if to pray, and then bowing one's head. The height of the hands and the depth of the bow are determined by the spiritual status of the person being greeted.

## Religion

While Laotians may be members of many religious groups, most Laotians practice Theravada Buddhism. There are regional variations that are primarily associated with whether one is from the north or south. Burmese Buddhism influences northern Laotian Buddhism, while southern Laotian Buddhism is influenced more directly by Khmer Buddhism. Also, many Laotians practice both Buddhism and Brahmanism, and may combine both of these religions with elements of animism.

Regardless of the regional variations in the Buddhism practiced by Laotians, the main tenets of Buddhism known as the Four Noble Truths, guide Laotian traditional practices. The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism are:

1. *To live is to suffer (dukkha)—all sentient beings suffer.*
2. *The cause of suffering is desire—sometimes called attachment, desire may also mean a desire for life, for happiness, for a cessation of suffering, etc.*
3. *To cease to suffer, one must cease to desire.*
4. *Cessation of desire (also known as enlightenment or nirvana) is achieved by adhering to the Eight Fold Path which includes: right thought, right resolve, right action, right livelihood, right speech, right effort, right concentration, and right mindfulness.*

## Selected Celebrations

Since the majority of Laotians are Buddhist, they celebrate Buddhist holidays, in addition to the following specifically Laotian celebrations.

### ***That Luang Festival***

The That Luang festival lasts for three weeks and is celebrated every November. Buddhist Laotians go to the shrine or monument of Pha That Luang to mark this special occasion. The three levels of perfection in Buddhism are represented in the spires of the shrine. During this festival, Laotians practice the first level

of perfection, charity to the poor. Buddhist monks and nuns who have taken a vow of poverty gather outside the shrine during That Luang to receive alms from the community. Gifts of food, money, and flowers are presented to the devout men and women. That Luang also includes a festival of traditional Southeast Asian foods and is concluded on the night of the full moon.

### **Middle Eastern**

The term Middle East is generally used to describe the area where Asia, Africa, and Europe meet. Currently, it is comprised of many countries that can be categorized into four groups: the Arabian Peninsula (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen); the Fertile Crescent (Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria); Northeast Africa (Egypt and Libya); and the Northern Tier (Iran and Turkey). Other areas and countries that are sometimes considered part of the Middle East include North Africa, the new Muslim states of the former Soviet Union (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), Afghanistan, Cyprus, Greece, Pakistan, and the Sudan.

The presence of large quantities of petroleum, the conflicts between Arabs and Israelis, Iraqi expansionism, and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the region have all contributed to the complexity of its recent history. And, since World War II, the economic and political stability of the Middle East has had a great impact on the rest of the world.

### **Egyptian**

Egypt's ancient history has long been a source of identity and national pride. Like most other Middle Eastern countries, Egypt has been subjected to numerous invasions. The country has been conquered by Romans, Greeks, Turks, and Circassians (Mamluks). Europeans such as the French and British have also had a presence in Egypt.

While Egyptians are often assumed to be Arabs, there are several other groups that contribute to the Egyptian population. There are three ethnic groups that can be identified as Egyptian. The Bedouin Arabs are a nomadic tribal people who traditionally live in isolated areas throughout Egypt and the Middle East. They can be found in the Sinai Peninsula and along the Red Sea coast. Other Egyptians trace their ancestry to the Semitic tribe of Ham. With this lineage, they distinguish themselves from other Middle Eastern people. The third significant population is Nubian, who have an ancient history and have lived for thousands of years along the Nile in Nuba. After significant flooding of Nuba, the Nubians were resettled by the Egyptian government.

Egypt is an Islamic country that traditionally follows Islamic customs and laws. Nearly 90% of Egyptians are Sunni Muslims. There is a small Jewish community in Egypt that has been depleted through emigration. An important religious minority group in Egypt is the Orthodox Christians, who are members of the Christian Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt. The Egyptian government estimates that there are three million Copts, while

the Church estimates their membership to be seven million. There are also a small number of non-Coptic Christian groups in Egypt—Roman Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, and Protestant—who flourished during the colonial era but who are now part of a very small minority.

## **Iranian**

Iran is one of the largest countries in the Middle East. Until the Islamic revolution in 1979, when the Islamic Republic of Iran was established, Iran was a monarchy. Historically, Iran was known in the West as Persia. Today Iran borders Turkmenistan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Iran also controls several islands with access to the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Gulf of Oman. The first theocratic republic in the world, Iran's constitution gives its leader, the Faqih, extensive religious and secular power, including the right to appoint commanders of armed forces and the judiciary that confirms the elected president.

Iran has long been an Islamic country, becoming Muslim after the Arab conquest in the seventh century. In the 16th century, Shiite Islam became its official religion. The official language of Iran is Persian, also known as Farsi.

In the 1920s, nearly one quarter of Iran's population was made up of pastoral tribes, but by the late 1980s they only accounted for approximately 2% of the Iranian population. Other important tribal groups are the Kurds, who live in Kurdistan in the northern Zagros region, the Lurs; the Bakhtiari, who live in the southern Zagros

region; the Qashqai in Fars; the Baluchi in the southeast; and the Turkoman in the northeast.

Nearly 99% of Iranians are Muslims; more than 93% of them belong to the Shiite branch of Islam, while less than 6% belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. Kurds, Baluchi, and Turkomen are typically Sunni Muslims. Less than 0.5% of Iranians are Christian, and Jews and Zoroastrians account for an even smaller religious minority.

## **Iraqi**

The country of Iraq shares its borders with many Middle Eastern countries: Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey. Iraq also borders the Gulf of Oman. There is a neutral zone between the border of Iraq and Saudi Arabia that is jointly administered by both countries.

Like most countries in the Middle East, Iraq has an ancient history and culture. In 1932, after centuries of foreign intervention and imperial invasions, Iraq finally gained its independence. In recent history, Iraq has been in conflict with its neighboring countries as well as Western member countries of the United Nations. In 1967, Iraq declared war on Israel. In 1968, an internal power struggle took place resulting in a coup by which the Ba'ath party came into power. Around this same time, Syrian-Iraqi relations were also deteriorating. In 1980, Iraq invaded Iran; each country was involved in this war for the next eight years. Iraq also initiated an internal assault on the Kurds to the north in the 1990s, using biological weapons on them. In 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait and was

subsequently attacked in January of 1991 by a U.S.-led United Nations forces. Since the Persian Gulf War in 1991, Iraq has continued to be in conflict with the United Nations, as well as the United States.

Today, traditional Islamic culture dominates in Iraq. 45% of Iraqis are Sunni Muslim, 50% are Shia Muslim, with small Druze and Christian minorities among the Iraqi population.

Approximately 80% of Iraqis are Arab and 15% are Kurd, and nearly 2.5 million Christians live in Iraq. Koranic law applies throughout the country and influences the daily life of Iraqis.

### **Saudi Arabian**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia takes up four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula. Kuwait, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea border it. It also contains the two holiest cities in Islamic history, Mecca and Medina. Saudi Arabia, as it is known today, was formed by the conquests of Ibn Saud that took place between 1902 and 1932. While Saudi Arabia supported Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War, there was military action when Iraq invaded Kuwait. In fact, Saudi Arabia was the base for the U.N.'s multinational force during the Persian Gulf War.

Islam is the official religion of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Koranic law is integral to the laws of Saudi Arabia. There is strict enforcement of Islamic law, and public practice of any religion other than Islam is forbidden in Saudi Arabia.

Approximately 85% of the Saudi population is Sunni Muslim; the other 15% is Shiite Muslim, most of whom live on Saudi Arabia's East Coast. In keeping with Islamic law, men and women are segregated in public.

The majority of Saudi Arabians are Arabs who continue to maintain their ancient tribal affiliations. There is a small population of Iranians located along the Arabian Gulf coast, and there are also a fair number of foreign laborers who come from Egypt, Pakistan, the Philippines, and India.

### **Syrian**

The Syrian Arab Republic borders Turkey, Jordan, Israel, Iraq, Lebanon, and the Mediterranean Sea. Although Syria has an ancient history, modern Syria was not established until after the Second World War. Historically, the region known as Syria covered a vast majority of the Middle East, including what are now known as Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and modern Syria. Syria's post-World War II history has been somewhat turbulent. There have been frequent changes in government, and Syria has experienced many military coups. For a period of time (1958-1961), Syria was merged with Egypt. Syria also has a history of disputes with Israel losing the Golan Heights to Israel during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Currently, Syria has emerged as a significant force in the Middle East. Despite its history of conflict with other Middle Eastern countries, it has renewed diplomatic ties with Egypt. This helped broker the release of Western hostages held in

Lebanon, and supported the U.N. forces in their expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait in 1991.

The majority of Syrians, nearly 90%, are Muslim; approximately 74% of the Muslim population is Sunnite, the remainder is Shiite, Druze, Alawite, or Ismailite.

The non-Muslim Syrians are primarily Christians, belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church. Syria has a very small Jewish population that was given permission to travel abroad in 1992 for the first time since 1948.

Other Syrian minority groups include Kurds (which are the largest linguistic minority group in Syria), Armenians, Turks, and Circassians.

The Syrian population also contains approximately 260,000 Palestinian refugees, who are predominately found in the Damascus province.

## People

Because of the range of land that makes up the Middle East, there has been a great deal of integration and migration throughout the Middle East. Despite this flow of people, however, most Middle Eastern groups maintain a distinctive identity.

Three major groups of Middle Eastern people are Semites (which include Arabs and Jews), Turks, and Indo-Europeans, also known as Ayrans. In Egypt, Nubians maintain a distinct identity, and ancient Nilotic elements are still present among Egyptians. Other significant groups are Kurds, who live in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, historically great Iranian tribes, and

Bakhtiaris, Baluchis, Lurs, and Qashqais, to name a few.

## Religion

Each of the three major monotheistic religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—have their origins in the Middle East.

Islam is currently the dominant religion with the majority of Middle Eastern Muslims practicing the Sunni tradition of Islam. However, there is great diversity among these Islamic groups. Twelver Shiism is the official religion of Iran. Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon have large Shiite communities. Other Muslim groups include the Alawis of Syria, Zaydi Shia in Yemen, Druzes in the western Fertile Crescent, and the Ibadi Kharijites in Oman.

Orthodox Christianity is also strongly represented in the Middle East. The largest group of Orthodox Christians is the Copts in Egypt; other Eastern Orthodox/Greek Orthodox churches are located throughout the region. These Orthodox Christian churches have played an important role in the lives of Middle Eastern Christians and have served as an essential element of their identity in the region.

Judaism is the third major monotheistic religion represented in the Middle East. The long-standing conflict between the Jewish State of Israel and other Arab states has greatly influenced the history of the Middle East. While the majority of people who practice Judaism are concentrated in Israel, other groups, such as the Karaites and Samaritans, also represent Judaism in the region.

Other religions found in the Middle East are the Zoroastrians in Iran, the Yazidis in northern Iraq, and the Baha'i, which was founded in the 19th century in Iran.

### **Selected Celebrations**

There is considerable diversity in the Middle East, and the celebrations of each group of people covered by the term "Middle Eastern" vary greatly. Additionally, since so much of their identity has been developed around their religious affiliations, many people celebrate according to their religious traditions.

### **Middle Eastern Food**

There are many regional variations of Middle Eastern food. Some dishes are easily recognized Middle Eastern.

Tabouleh is a salad made of cracked wheat, parsley, mint, and tomato; Baba Ghannuj is an eggplant and garlic dip that is eaten with flat bread called pita; couscous is a North African grain; hoummous is another dip made of chickpeas and sesame seed paste. Shish kebab is a well-known Middle Eastern meat dish.

### **NATIVE AMERICANS**

When Christopher Columbus set sail from Spain in 1492, his destination was the East Indies. When he arrived at the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, he thought he had reached his destination and therefore referred to the natives there as "Indians." This term has remained in use for 500 years after people realized Columbus' error. A more fitting term, however,

"Native American" has come into wider use in recent years. It is an exceptionally broad term that is used today to refer to people from as many as 2000 or more different cultures throughout North, Central, and South America.

Native Americans originally walked to North America from Asia, crossing the Bering Land Bridge that once connected Siberia, part of the Eastern Hemisphere, to Alaska, part of the Western Hemisphere, about 20,000 years ago. Estimates of the number of Native Americans in the Western Hemisphere at the time Europeans started arriving ranged from a low of 8.4 million to as many as 112 million people.

### **THE NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES**

Different Native American cultures were established in different parts of the Western Hemisphere. This section will deal only with the Native Americans who settled in the United States.

In the so-called Arctic and sub-Arctic areas, the major Native American group is the Inuit, or Eskimos. The Native American cultures, or tribes, that settled in the Great Lakes area include the Cree, Ojibwa, and others. The major groups that settled along the Pacific Northwest were the Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Kwakiuti, Nootka, Salish, Hupa, Yurok, and Karok.

Other tribes settled in the land that spanned from the Pacific Northwest to the Rocky Mountains, including the Flathead, Kutenai, Nez Perce, Okanogan, Shuswap, Spokane, Yakima, Coeur D'Alene, Lilliet,

Thompson, and Umatilla. Moving further southwest, major tribes included the Comanche, Klamath, Paiute, Shoshone, Ute, Washo, and Panamint, as well as the Apache, Havasupai, Seri, Walapai, Yavapai, Mojave, Navajo, Papago, Pima, Yaqui, Yuma, Cocopa, Opata, and the Pueblo peoples, including the Hopi and Zuni. The area now known as California had its own sizable Native American settlements, including the Modoc, Pomo, Yana, Chumash, Costano, Maudu, Miwok, Patwin, Salinan, Wintun, Yokuts, and Yuki, as well as the so-called Mission tribes: the Cahuilla, Diegueno, Gabrielino, Luiseno, and Serrano.

Continuing to move eastward, Native American tribes along the Great Plains area—from southern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Rockies to the Mississippi—included the Arapaho, Arikara, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Crow, Hidatsa, Iowa, Mandan, Osage, Pawnee, Sioux, Wichita, Kiowa-Apache, Plains Cree, Sarci, Potawatomi, and Chippewa.

Even more groups of Native Americans could be found in the eastern part of the U.S. In the northeast, they could be divided into two groups. The first, Iroquoian speakers, included the Cayuga, Erie, Huron, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca, Tuscarora, and Neutral. The second group, known as Algonquian speakers, included the Delaware, Fox, Illinois, Kickapoo, Mahican, Massachuset, Menominee, Miami, Mohegan, Ottawa, Pequot, Sauk, Shawnee, Shinnecock, and Wampanoag. Finally, prominent tribes in the southeast included the Alabama, Caddo, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw,

Creek, Natchez, Quapaw, Seminole, Biloxi, Chitimacha, Timucua, and Tunica.

## Language

Experts estimate that there were once approximately 600 Native American languages spoken in the U.S. At the time the Europeans arrived, no tribes had a written language. The sounds and grammar of Native American languages differ significantly from English and European languages, they have proven very hard for non-native speakers to learn. In the U.S., the Navajo are the largest group to retain its original language.

## Religion

Allowing for differences among groups, Native American beliefs are generally based upon a foundation that accepts that the universe is controlled by supernatural forces and beings. Native American cultures typically believe in souls; in animistic spirits that occupy natural objects such as rocks, trees, bodies of water, and lightning; in distant, powerful, diffuse creator beings.

Native Americans generally believe in good and evil spirits that have the power to influence the outcome of activities in daily life. These spirits can be found in forests, caves, and mountains, as well as in other people. To succeed in life, overall Native Americans feel they need to maintain a balance between spirit forces and human needs.

Most Native American cultures believe in a supernatural power that anthropologists have called “mana.” They believe that

many animals and natural objects already possess this power and that, if violated by humans, they can cause a variety of problems and woes.

## **NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE U.S., YESTERDAY AND TODAY**

During its first 100 years, the U.S. government established 389 separate treaties with different Native American nations. Many of these treaties were broken as Native Americans were herded on the isolated reservations. Many Native American cultures have managed to survive despite these efforts; many have not.

According to the 1990 census, nearly two million Native Americans live in the U.S. Most live west of the Mississippi, especially in California, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona, and roughly half live on or near 287 reservations.

## **NORWEGIANS**

### **Norway**

Located on the Scandinavian peninsula and surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the Barents Sea, Finland, and Russia, nearly one-third of Norway is in the Arctic Circle. During parts of the summer, the northern sections of the country receive sunlight 24 hours a day, leading to Norway's nickname: "The Land of the Midnight Sun."

Norway's history can be traced to the end of the Ice Age, around 7000 BC, when moderating climates facilitated migration

from Europe and Asia. During the 10th century, King Harold I conquered much of Norway; eventually, Norway ruled Iceland and Greenland. When Harold's descendants died in the 14th century, ties of marriage left the country under Denmark's control as part of the Union of Kalmar, which united Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

Over time, Norway became more like a state of Denmark. The Danes eased their controls early in the 19th century and eventually ceded Norway to Sweden. When the Norwegians resisted and war broke out, Sweden granted self-rule, but not total independence to Norway. As the century progressed, however, tensions between Sweden and Norway grew, and in 1905 their ties were peacefully dissolved.

Neutral during World War I, Norway was invaded by Germany in 1940 and became known for its resistance to Nazi occupation. Its merchant fleet played a major role in aiding the allies.

### **People**

Norway is a largely homogeneous society—its residents are mostly Nordic. The predominant minority population is an indigenous group of about 20,000 Lapps, also known as Samme, who are thought to be of Mongolian origin.

The Norwegian language, a close relative of both Danish and Swedish, is a source of major controversy in the country, and two versions of it are spoken today. Bokmal was introduced by the Danes, and until the middle of the nineteenth century,

it was the country's only written language. At that point, many Norwegians sought to rid their language of its Danish influence. Drawing from rural dialects, a prominent philologist developed a new version of the language, known as Nynorsk. Today, both languages are used; Bokmal is more commonly used, although it has been modified to reflect Nynorsk's influence. Currently, efforts are under way to merge the two languages into a single language, known as Samnorsk.

## Religion

Most Norwegians belong to the Evangelical Lutheran church, while small numbers belong to other Protestant denominations or are Roman Catholic.

## Selected Celebrations

### ***Independence Day (also known as constitution day)***

On May 17, 1814, Norway declared its independence and introduced a constitutional government, so every year that is the day the country celebrates its independence. It is also a celebration of spring in a country that has a long, cold, hard winter. Beyond that, Independence Day has become a child-focused holiday in which children, wearing national and regional costumes, parade behind marching bands and banners. Norway's red, white, and blue flag also is displayed prominently on Independence Day.

## Christmas

The Norwegian Christmas begins four weeks before, with Advent, and the making of wreaths and lighting of candles. On December 13, Norwegians celebrate St. Lucia's Day in honor of the young girl who, according to legend, died as a martyr in Sicily. Celebrated mostly in schools, hospitals, and other institutions, St. Lucia's Day features processions led by a young Lucia carrying a candle and wearing a white robe with a crown of lights on her head.

Norway's Nisse is not very much like Santa Claus. Nisser are elves or gnomes, whose legend precedes Christianity. The best-known Nisse is Fjosnisse, who is short and bearded, wears wool clothes and a red knit cap, plays tricks on people and animals, and lives in a barn or stable. The Christmas Nisse is Julenissen, who is closer to the American Santa Claus and delivers presents to children, but delivers them through the front door, not by coming down the chimney.

## PAKISTANI

### **Pakistan**

Pakistan is located in South Asia, and is bordered by China, India, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The name Pakistan, adopted in 1933, is from Urdu and means "land of the pure." It was the largest of the world's first civilizations—the Inndus Valley Civilization. Iranian, Greek, Moghul, British, and Turkish imperialists subsequently fought over Pakistan.

Pakistan's more recent history has been marked by great struggle. After years of British rule, Pakistan became independent on August 4, 1947. It originally consisted of two separate land areas one on the east of India, and one on the west. The eastern portion seceded in 1971, forming the independent nation of Bangladesh. The western area remains as Pakistan.

## People

The people of Pakistan are a complex mix. Punjabis, from the Punjab region of India, make up over 60% of the population. There are many tribal peoples throughout Pakistan. There are also many areas named "Shah," indicative of their Arab heritage. There have also been waves of migration into Pakistan, so some Pakistani's have Greek, Arab, Persian, Moghul, and Indian backgrounds.

The Muslim religion is of central importance for the Pakistani people. Family life and involvement with the extended family are also extremely important. Many families have three or four generations living together in the same household. There is a strong emphasis on respect for elders and especially for one's father. Pakistanis place considerable emphasis on hospitality as well.

## Religion

Islam is the official religion of Pakistan and is practiced by approximately 97% of the Pakistani population. Most Pakistani Muslims belong to the Sunnite sect of Islam, while others—particularly the Ismailis—are Shiites.

Sunnite refers to the majority of the world's Muslims who strictly follow the sunna or practices of the Prophet Muhammad.

Shiism emphasizes the spiritual function of the imam (leader) in whom the Prophetic Light is ever-present. He is believed to be divinely protected from sin and error and to have an infallible understanding of the Koran, the sacred book of revelations made to Muhammad by Allah.

## Selected Celebrations

Since Pakistan is a Muslim state, all of its major celebrations and festivities focus on Islam. The two major festivals are: Id Ul-Fitar, which celebrates the end of Ramadan, and Id Ul-Azha, which commemorates Abraham's willingness to slaughter his own son as an act of obedience to God.

## POLISH

### Poland

Poland dominated most of Eastern Europe from the 14th to the 17th century. In the 18th century, however, Poland was taken over and divided among its neighbors. In 1918, Poland reemerged on the map of Europe, only to be divided again between Germany and the U.S.S.R. at the beginning of World War II. In 1945, Poland became a Soviet satellite state.

In the summer of 1980, the Solidarity-led strikes in the shipyards of Gdansk helped facilitate the overthrow of the police state. The unrest generated by Solidarity led to the imposition of martial law in 1981. In the late 1980s, with the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Communist Party in the USSR and the election of Pope John Paul II in Rome, the Polish Solidarity movement gained momentum and eventually forced the communists out of power. In 1990, Lech Walesa was elected the first president of free Poland.

Today Poland is a parliamentary democracy, although considerably smaller than it once was.

## **People**

Prior to World War II, Poland was a country with several minority groups: Germans, Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Jewish people, which comprised nearly 30% of its population. Since the Second World War, most Germans returned to Germany, the Ukrainian and Belorussian sections in the east were turned over to the USSR, and many of the Jewish people who survived the Nazi concentration camps emigrated to Israel. Today, more than 95% of the Polish population is people of the same origin, language, and religion.

There are many people of Polish heritage in the United States. A large number immigrated to the Chicago area between 1870 and 1920. When they first arrived, many of these immigrants, who came from rural areas, settled in separate communities and worked in the great industries and

factories of the Midwest. Today, Polish people live outside these originally established neighborhoods.

## **Religion**

Christianity was introduced to Poland as early as 966 AD under the rule of Prince Mieszko I. Under the Communist rule, the government actively discouraged religious participation. Today, Roman Catholicism is the predominant religion. Catholicism is closely linked to the Polish identity.

## **Selected Celebrations**

As a predominately Catholic country, the Polish people celebrate all of the major Christian holidays.

### ***Christmas***

For Poles, Christmas Eve is a very special occasion. The traditional Polish Christmas Eve supper consists of 12 courses, each dish representing a month in the year. The Christmas Eve meal is a meatless supper, and only fish such as carp, herring, or pike, is served. Among the many traditional Christmas Eve other dishes served are mushroom soup, fish soup, borscht, sauerkraut with mushrooms or peas, dried fruit compote, and boiled or fried pierogis—a dumpling-like food traditionally filled with sauerkraut and mushrooms for Christmas Eve.

### ***Easter***

As is the tradition among many Eastern European people, Poles bring baskets of special foods to the church to be blessed

by the priest. Some baskets contain foods such as homemade bread, homemade cheese, horseradish and beets, kielbasa, ham, and decorated eggs.

## **RUSSIAN**

### **Russia**

Russia, also known as the Russian Federation, is the largest country in the world. From 1922 to 1991, Russia was the primary republic in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

At one point during the reign of Tsar Peter I (Peter the Great), 1672-1725, Russia had close ties with the Western world. The educated classes of Russia adopted many attributes of European culture. However, Russia managed to maintain a distinct cultural heritage. With the overthrow of the Russian monarchy and the implementation of communism in 1917, the uniqueness of Russia became more pronounced.

Under the rule of Josef Stalin and the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics there were great internal struggles as forced collectivization and forced industrialization were instituted throughout the Republics. The repressive system of communism kept the Soviet Union in isolation for many years until the late 1980s, when Mikhail Gorbachev introduced the concept and policies of reform known as perestroika. In 1991 the Soviet Union was dissolved, and Russia is now an independent country.

### **People**

The majority of Russians trace their heritage back to the medieval Slavic State of Kievan Rus which at one time, included areas that are now known as Ukraine, Belarus, and European Russia. The largest ethnic group in Russia is comprised of Slavs. Today nearly 82% of Russia's population is made up of ethnic Russians, almost 3% are Ukrainian, and less than 0.8% are Belorussians.

Among the Russian people, the second largest ethnic group is of Turkish decent. Of this group, the Tatars are the largest and comprise almost 4% of Russia's population. Other Turkic groups are the Chuvash and Siberian peoples such as the Yakuts, the Tuvinians, the Khakass, and the Altai. The name Tatar has been historically associated with Turkic-speaking Muslim groups throughout Russia and what is now the former Soviet Union. In 1944, the Crimean Tatars were deported en masse to Central Asia for alleged collaboration with the Germans during World War II. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many Tatars moved back to Crimea.

The third largest ethnic group in Russia is the Finno-Ugric. Most of these people live along the Finnish border. In addition, there was once a fairly large Jewish population in Russia that has since been reduced in size, due to the large numbers of Jews who emigrated to Israel and the United States.

## **Religion**

For decades, Communist rulers actively eliminated religion from the lives of the Russian people. Many churches, church leaders, and church records were destroyed in support of the dominant communist ideology. However, despite the efforts of its communist leaders, Russia has remained a stronghold for the Orthodox faith. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian Orthodox Church has emerged to hold an important place in the lives of many Russians. In 1991, nearly 41% of the ethnic Russians in the former Soviet Union considered themselves Russian Orthodox.

Muslims are the second largest religious group among the Russian population. Primarily, because of the annexation of many southern republics that were traditionally Muslim, there are nearly 12 million Muslims in the country's population.

## **Selected Celebrations**

Since the majority of Russians are followers of the Orthodox Faith, they celebrate in the tradition of the Orthodox Church. Similarly, Muslim Russians observe Muslim holy days.

### ***Orthodox Christmas***

Christmas is an important Christian holiday in Russia, celebrated on the 7th of January rather than the 25th of December.

### ***Kolyadki***

The celebratory days that surround Christmas are called yuletide in Russia. One celebration is called Kolyadki. This

tradition includes wishing one's friends and relatives wealth and happiness. During the ceremony people make a "snow-lady" that has a carrot nose, eyes of prunes, and green beans for teeth. A Lady Kolyada is present at the festivities, and she is accompanied by people who sing and dance in a ring while carrying stars. People with torches join the ring of dancing and push the festive wheel.

### ***Maslyanitsa***

The season of Great Lent is preceded by what is known as "pancake week" or "cheese week." In Russia, this week is called Maslyanitsa, which means "butter" in English. It is a time much like Mardi Gras, where people wear bright-colored masks and costumes and join in a festival of drinking, eating, and dancing. Throughout the week, Russian people eat pancakes served with honey, caviar, fresh cream, and butter. Maslyanitsa culminates in the burning of a straw man as the final act of saying good-bye to winter.

### ***Easter***

Russians celebrate Easter in much the same way as other Christian communities. There are, however, some variations that arise due to their cultural heritage and their Orthodox religious beliefs. Round bread called Paskha, which is a mixture of sweetened curds, butter, and raisins, is prepared. Russians also prepare eggs that are painted with vivid colors, the red egg being a traditional symbol for Easter. Russians traditionally give each other gifts of brightly painted eggs at this time. The traditional greeting on Easter is,

“Christ is alive,” with the response,  
“Christ is truly alive.”

### ***Red Hill***

The Sunday immediately following Easter Sunday is known as the Red Hill holiday. Now a day considered to be an auspicious one for wedding ceremonies, traditionally, it was connected to the act of welcoming spring.

### ***Ivan Kupalo***

Because of the influence of the Orthodox Church in Russia, the feast of Saint John the Baptist is celebrated as Ivan Kupalo. The symbols and activities of this holiday are closely related to water, since St. John the Baptist used water to baptize Jesus Christ. Some traditional activities on this holiday include boys and girls swimming in rivers until late at night and the burning of bonfires. One tradition has it that boys and girls join hands and the jump over these fires; if they land with their hands still clasped together, there will be a wedding soon.

### ***Troitsa***

The folk holiday of Troitsa is still celebrated by some Russians. On this day, the houses are usually decorated with fresh green branches, and young women put their clothes on young birch trees. They sing songs and dance around the birch trees while garlands of birch and flowers are placed into water for fortune-telling.

### ***Spas***

Once the harvest is sown, the Russians celebrate three holidays called “spas” that

take place in August, the Apple and Nut Spas. After the first spas, the honey is collected; the second spas brings fresh fruit; the third one brings nuts.

## **SCANDINAVIANS**

The term “Scandinavia” has been used to identify the northernmost regions of Europe since classical times. Originally it meant Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, but during the past 1000 years it has been expanded to encompass Iceland and Finland as well.

## **SWEDISH**

### **Sweden**

The largest of the five Scandinavian countries, Sweden is surrounded by water and land: by the Gulf of Bothnia and the Baltic Sea, as well as by Norway and Finland.

Paleolithic hunters first set foot on Swedish soil at the close of the final Ice Age, around 8000 BC. Bronze Age inhabitants, from 1500-500 BC, spoke an Indo-European dialect from which Swedish is derived. Numerous tribes and kingdoms populated Sweden for many years, and when one of those tribes, the Suiones, conquered the Goths around 1000, the first Swedish state was born. During the thirteenth century Sweden occupied parts of Finland, and in 1397 Sweden and Norway joined Denmark in the Danish-dominated Kalmar Union, which lasted until 1523.

For the next 200 years Sweden followed an expansionist path, at times occupying Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. Sweden lost its Baltic territories and German provinces early in the 18th century and lost Finland to Russia during the Napoleonic Wars. Sweden's losses during the Napoleonic Wars were so great that it initiated its well-known policy of non-alignment—a policy that kept it out of both 20th century world wars.

The first Swedish settlers in the U.S. arrived in 1638, forming New Sweden in the Delaware Bay in what is now Wilmington, Delaware. In 1846, Swedish immigrants established a commune in Bishop Hill, 160 miles west of Chicago, where for 16 years they farmed 12,000 acres of land manufactured wagons and carriages, lived communally, took their meals together, and shared their profits. In 1862 they disbanded their commune, dividing the land among them.

## **People**

Because of its geographic isolation, Sweden has a homogeneous population. Its primary minority groups include approximately 17,000 Lapps; some Finns; and recent immigrants from eastern and southern Europe—areas affected by recent wars. The predominant language is Swedish, an east Scandinavian branch of the Germanic languages. Lapps and Finns tend to speak their own languages, as well as Swedish.

## **Religion**

The state-controlled Church of Sweden, an Evangelical Lutheran denomination,

numbers 90% of all Swedes among its members. The country's constitution ensures religious freedom, and other major religions include the Roman Catholic Church and several other Protestant denominations, including Pentecostals and the Mission Covenant Church.

## **Selected Celebrations**

### ***Shrove Tuesday***

On the day before Ash Wednesday, Swedes celebrate Shrove Tuesday. In the northern part of the country, they eat a meat stew. In the southern part of the country, they eat "Shrove Tuesday buns" also known as *semlof*.

### ***Easter***

Until very recent times, Easter was a very solemn holiday in Sweden; it was considered inappropriate to hold weddings and christenings during the Easter period and movies were closed on Good Friday. On Palm Sunday, the start of Easter week, Swedes carry branches in processions and lay them before images of Christ; this is a variation of the Catholic tradition of carrying palm fronds.

### ***August Festivals***

In August, Swedes hold special parties to celebrate the crayfish and Baltic herring, decorate the exterior of their homes with lanterns, and serve red crayfish and aquavit to their guests. The crayfish season begins at midnight on the second Wednesday in August; before then, Swedes are legally prohibited from eating crayfish. During the third week of August, especially in northern Sweden, many people eat a type

of Baltic herring known as surstrommingen that has been allowed to ferment. Other activities during August festivals include picking berries and harvesting potatoes and other vegetables. Moose-hunting also is popular during this period.

## **SCOTTISH**

### **Scotland**

Scotland is one of four countries that constitute the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; the other three are England, Northern Ireland, and Wales. Scotland sits on the northern end of the island of Great Britain, with the Atlantic Ocean to its west and north and the North Sea to its east. Off its coast are several islands that are part of Scotland. The name Scotland, which first came into use in the eleventh century, comes from the name of the Celtic tribe, the Scotti, that settled in the western part of the country during the sixth century.

The Romans failed to conquer Scotland and built the well-known Hadrian's Wall to mark the northern border of their empire. At that time, Scotland was occupied by several groups of Celts and a people called the Picts. The Picts and Scots came together in the ninth century to form a kingdom that lasted, in varying forms, until it was united with England around 1600. The two countries were formally united in 1707 when their parliaments were joined.

### **People**

Most Scots are descended from the Celts. In addition, Scandinavians settled in northern and eastern Scotland during the middle ages, and some Irish migrated to western Scotland. A clan structure of society lasted in the Scottish Highlands until the 18th century and still has an emotional appeal to many Scots; clans are communities of people with strong family ties led by powerful chieftains who, in earlier times, protected clan members from invasion. The official language of Scotland is English, although in the mountainous western part of the country, about 2% of the overall population speak Gaelic, a Celt language. The English spoken in Scotland is, in different places, heavily influenced by Gaelic, French, Dutch, and Scandinavian languages, resulting in sounds and words that may not be understood by non-Scots.

### **Religion**

Most Scots belong to the Church of Scotland, a Presbyterian church. About 15% of Scots are Catholic.

### **Selected Celebrations**

#### ***Burns Night***

Scots commemorate their great poet on January 25 of each year with Burns Night. Food is a major part of the celebrations, and among the dishes served on this occasion are Powdowdie, or sheep's head broth; Cabbie-claw—wind-dried cod with horseradish and egg sauce; Finnan Toasties—smoked haddock; and haggis,

Scotland's national dish, which consists of a sheep's stomach stuffed with minced mutton, oatmeal, and spices and then boiled. The highlight of the celebration is a recitation of one of Burns's poems, entitled "Address to a Haggis."

### **Halloween**

Halloween, celebrated on October 31, is a much more important holiday in Scotland than in most other countries; in fact, it is considered one of the country's most important holidays. Trick-or-treaters, known as guisers, go from door to door asking for candy or money, as in other countries, but to receive their treats, they first must perform a song or a poem. Instead of pumpkins carved into jack-o'-lanterns, Scots scoop out rutabagas.

### **St. Andrew's Day**

November 30 is St. Andrew's Day in Scotland. St. Andrew, the first disciple called by Christ, is the patron saint of Scotland. This day is marked with ceilidhs, or piping, and the bringing in of the haggis.

## **TAIWANESE**

### **Taiwan**

Taiwan, which has also been called Formosa (the Portuguese name for "beautiful"), is an island located off the southeast coast of Mainland China. In the 17th century, parts of Taiwan were controlled by the Spanish and Dutch. In 1644, it became a refuge for supporters of China's deposed Ming Dynasty. In 1683 Taiwan became part of

China's Fukien (Fujian) province and remained under Chinese rule until 1895, when it was ceded to Japan. After a period of Japanese colonization, Taiwan was returned to China in 1945, at which point it again became a refuge for the Chinese nationalists fleeing the mainland after the communist takeover.

There has been a history of dispute over Taiwan's claim to being the Republic of China. What amounted to a "civil war" between China and Taiwan existed for four decades. Taiwan was ruled under martial law from 1949 to 1987, when bans on travel and trade with Mainland China were eased. In 1971, Taiwan lost its seat in the United Nations when the U.N. recognized the People's Republic of China. As of 1992, it was no longer a crime to discuss Taiwanese independence or to advocate communism in Taiwan.

Taiwan is heavily influenced by Chinese culture; in fact, the official language of Taiwan is mandarin Chinese.

### **People**

Approximately 84% of Taiwan's population is native Taiwanese—people descended from Chinese immigrants to Taiwan in the 18th and 19th centuries. These Taiwanese people are called Hoklo. Nearly 14% of Taiwan's population is made up of "mainlanders" and their descendants who arrived on Taiwan around 1949. Non-Chinese aboriginals constitute less than 2% of Taiwan's population. The three most culturally active tribes in Taiwan are the Ami, Paiwan, and Saisiat.

## Religions

Most Taiwanese are followers of Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism) and follow the Confucian ethical code. Animism is a common belief among the aboriginal Taiwanese; Christianity is emerging as an important minority religion in Taiwan.

## Selected Celebrations

Although Chinese culture has had considerable influence over Taiwanese culture, so have Japanese and the Western cultures. However, there are some distinctly Taiwanese cultural elements. Local communities in Taiwan have, for example, contributed their own aspects to opera, folk music, and literature. There are, in addition, many aboriginal celebrations in Taiwan.

### *Ilisin, Harvest Festival*

At the end of August or beginning of September, the Ami hold a very colorful and particularly meaningful celebration lasting from two days to one week. This celebratory time includes a rite of passage for young Ami men. The initiation ceremony takes place with the full participation of both the men and women of the Ami community.

### *Malevok*

The Paiwan hold a kind of “harvest festival,” known as the Malevok, which is a major event and takes place at 5-year intervals. Like many Chinese festivals and celebrations, ancestors of the Taiwanese play an important part in Malevok. Spirits are called to participate

as offerings are made with special prayers for supernatural strength.

### *Saisiat Festival*

The Saisiat hold an annual festival according to the lunar calendar. Held on the 15th day of the 10th moon, the Saisiat gather for ceremonies that are meant to solicit forgiveness from a pygmy tribe, which has long since perished. Apparently, more than 500 years ago, the Saisiat were neighbors with an indigenous pygmy tribe. While the pygmies were helpful and peaceful and the Saisiat learned a great deal from them, they quarreled and the Saisiat exterminated them. Fear of retaliation by the spirits of these pygmies has given rise to this unique ceremony, wherein the Saisiat solicit forgiveness from the pygmy spirits. Part of the ceremonies includes an invitation to the pygmy spirits to join in the festivities.

### *Chinese New Year*

Evidence of the influence of Chinese culture in Taiwan can be found in many areas. Aside from local festivals and religious celebrations, the Taiwanese also celebrate the Chinese New Year.

## VIETNAMESE

### *Vietnam*

The country of Vietnam is located along the eastern coast of the mainland of Southeast Asia. Vietnam has had a long history of foreign rule. During the Han Dynasty, China conquered Vietnam and ruled for nearly 1,000 years. In 939 AD,

Vietnam gained its independence and eventually expanded its influence toward the southern areas in Southeast Asia.

Vietnam was conquered again in the 19th century and incorporated into French Indochina until 1954, when it gained its independence at the Geneva Conference. At this Conference, it was decided that Vietnam should be divided into communist-run North Vietnam, and non-communist South Vietnam. As a result of internal political strife, Vietnam was engaged in a civil war for the next twenty years. The Vietnam war, in which French and American armed forces were involved, ended in 1975 when the communist-led North conquered the city of Saigon in South Vietnam.

## People

While there are more than 60 different ethnic groups living in Vietnam, it has a surprisingly homogeneous population. Ethnic Vietnamese make up almost 90% of the population and are in the majority throughout Vietnam, with the exception of the mountain areas.

Montagnards (French for “mountain people”) are a group of tribal people whose members include more than 30 small societies located in the mountainous region of Vietnam. Some of the largest groups of Montagnards include the Jarai, Rhade, and Sedang. Oftentimes the Vietnamese refer to these groups as *Moi*, which is a derogatory name meaning “savage.” The Vietnamese government has determined that the official name for these groups is *Nguoi Thuong* or “upland people.” The Montagnards or *Nguoi Thuong* traditionally live in villages where

they grow rice, gather materials from the forest, and hunt game. In some communities young men live in “bachelor houses” until they are married; in other communities, extended families live together in longhouses.

Two other smaller ethnic groups in Vietnam are the Khmer, who number approximately 500,000, and the Cham, who number approximately 50,000.

The first group of Vietnamese to arrive in the U. S. were refugees who arrived around 1975 and were primarily families who were airlifted to the U.S. after the fall of Saigon. Many of these Vietnamese were educated, urban professionals, many who were already fluent in English. The second group of Vietnamese who came to the U.S. were also refugees and arrived in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These people were known in some areas as “boat people,” because they escaped communist Vietnam in small boats in order to make their way to the U.S. Currently, Vietnamese who wish to come to the United States, and who make the case for their status as political prisoners or Amerasians, (family of Vietnamese-Americans) may enter the country under a more orderly system.

## Religion

The majority of ethnic Vietnamese are Buddhist or Confucianist. There are also about 3 million Roman Catholics in Vietnam, who are found primarily in the south. The Mekong Delta area contains members of two religious sects, the *Cao Dai* (a combination of both Eastern and Western traditions) and the *Hoa Hao* (which is a “radical” form

of Buddhism). Members of these sects number approximately 1 million each.

The traditional religion of the Montagnards or Nguoi Thuong is animism, and they also believe in the many spirits of the deceased who are thought to bring either success or misfortune to the living.

## **Selected Celebrations**

### ***Tet***

Tet is a shortened form of Tet Nguyen Dan, which means “Feast of the First Day.” It is the most important holiday in Vietnam. The celebration of Tet begins on the first day of the first month of the lunar year and continues for several days. During their celebrations, the Vietnamese welcome the new year. With the new year comes the birth of spring and hope for the future. The Vietnamese decorate their homes with red banners and white chrysanthemums. Offices and shop windows are also decorated with a multitude of colors.

Ancestral altars are also decorated with colorful fruits, such as tangerines, grapefruits, oranges, watermelon slices, roasted pig, and rice cakes wrapped in green. People wear brightly colored clothes as they celebrate Tet. Celebrations include the lighting of incense and the preparation of brightly colored foods as well.

Tet is a time for house visits, when families gather and pay their respects to each other. It is expected that if one receives a visit, one will return that visit. Social rules dictate that there is a certain order in which visits must be made, that the youngest child in the family will visit the

home of the oldest member, for example. Great importance is attached to the first visitor of the New Year. The success of the New Year is thought to be connected to this person. For this reason, many Vietnamese families like to pre-arrange who the first visitor will be. They often select a person of great virtue, high social standing, or one who enjoys excellent health and financial success.

Tet is also a time for paying off debts and forgiving enemies. Many Vietnamese believe it is bad luck to begin the New Year with debt. Friends and relatives also exchange gifts at this time of the year.

### ***Giao Thua***

The transitional hour between the old year and the new one is considered to be a very important time. The midnight hour on New Year’s Eve, called Giao Thua, is the time when Vietnamese families usher out the old year and welcome in the new. A ritual called Le Tru Tich is performed, during which the spirit of the New Year is warmly welcomed as the Spirit of the Hearth. The Vietnamese use firecrackers, drums, and gongs to mark the hour.

### ***Le Tao Quan***

Le Tao Quan is the Feast of the Household Gods. This holiday falls on the 23rd day of the 12th month in the lunar year. It is the day on which the guardian spirit of the kitchen returns to report on the family. A new spirit is then assigned to the household and the family pays tribute to the kitchen god. Traditionally, gold papers and offerings of fish are made to the kitchen god for his journey to heaven.

***Xem Boi***

In some areas of Vietnam, families seek out the expertise of local fortune-tellers. This aids the Vietnamese in planning their annual offerings to the gods in order to lessen their possible misfortune.

***Li Xi-Mung Tuoi***

Along with other traditional New Year's celebrations, parents give money to their children. The money is usually given in small denominations, but in generous amounts. It is believed that the luck and money will multiply. This money is also given in red envelopes, the color red being the color of wealth. Friends often toast each other, but do not give money; after being toasted, bosses often give money to employees.



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**ALEXIAN**  
**BROTHERS**

H E A L T H   S Y S T E M