

# *Spiritual Riches*

Bidding prayers for religions on their major festivals



# Guru Nanak Gurpurab

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## Sikhism

The Sikh festival of Guru Nanak Gurpurab is the day on which Sikhs celebrate the Parkash Divas (birth anniversary) of Guru Nanak, the first Guru and founder of the Sikh faith.

### ***Bidding Prayer***

We pray for the Sikhs in our community who are commemorating the life of their first teacher, Guru Nanak, and celebrating his teachings of justice and equality for all. We also pray that the way our Sikh neighbours practise these ideals, and strive for their realisation in our society, may be an inspiration to all.

### ***For Newsletters***

Guru Nanak (1469 – 1539) is the first in a line of ten gurus who taught the tenets of the Sikh faith. In 1708, the tenth guru passed this status on to the Sikh Holy Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib. It is seen as the perpetual and eternal Guru, and is present and revered in every Gurudwara (Sikh place of worship). It is read aloud from beginning to end in celebration of Guru Nanak's birthday. Guru Nanak promoted equality between men and women, and between adherents of different religions, gaining the friendship and respect of Hindus and Muslims alike throughout his life.

### ***Background***

There are 350,000 Sikhs in Great Britain – many more according to some estimates – and more than 23 million Sikhs worldwide. Guru Nanak, who came into the world as the son of a Hindu family in the Punjab region, first taught the Sikh faith, stating that “higher than truth is truthful conduct”, and instructing Sikhs to earn their livelihoods by hard and honest

work, whilst remembering God and sharing with others. His teachings were expounded on by all Gurus, and the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, created the order of initiated practitioners of the faith, called Khalsa.

Initiated Sikhs wear five markers of identity, popularly known as “the five Ks”, demonstrating their commitment to, and practice of their faith – their uncut hair (kesh), which, in all men and some women, is covered with a turban, a wooden comb (kanga), a metal bracelet (kara), a “sword of mercy” (kirpan), and a kachera, an undergarment secured with drawstrings. On initiation, Sikhs also take on a new surname – Singh (lion) for men, and Kaur (princess) for women. These names are now often combined with other surnames, but were intended as a marker of equality. Gurudwaras (literally, the abode of the Guru) all serve langar, a free vegetarian meal that is given to anyone who comes to the place of worship. It is prepared by volunteers who see this and other selfless service to the community (seva) as an integral part of their faith. The Darbar (Guru's Court/prayer hall) is entered on bare feet, and both men and women cover their heads in the presence of the Guru. Worshippers partake in parshad, sweet dough offered to all entering, which has been blessed in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Holy Scripture, a complete continuous reading of which traditionally takes place to celebrate the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak. The day is also celebrated by the singing of hymns from early morning, and, in some towns, with processions.

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*These leaflets offer suggestions for bidding prayers at the major festivals of non-Christian religions, along with a short text of explanation for use in parish newsletters, and some background information. In acknowledging these festivals, and praying for those who celebrate them, Catholics can express their connectedness to all people of faith, as well as the respect which the Church holds for their spiritual wealth.*