

# *Spiritual Riches*

Bidding prayers for religions on their major festivals

A photograph of a Buddhist monk in orange robes standing in a long, narrow stone corridor. The monk is seen from behind, looking out a window at the end of the hallway. The corridor is made of large, weathered stone blocks and has a high, vaulted ceiling. The lighting is warm and natural, coming from the window. The overall atmosphere is serene and contemplative.

# Vesakh

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## Buddhism

The Buddhist festival of Vesakh is usually celebrated on the May full moon, though this varies in different traditions.

### *Bidding Prayer*

At the end of the period in which Buddhists around the world and in our neighbourhoods celebrate Vesakh, the festival that remembers the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha, we pray for the Buddhist community in our country and worldwide.

### *For Newsletters*

Buddhists believe that the Four Noble Truths can help everyone attain enlightenment, like Buddha did, ending the constant cycle of rebirths. These Truths are: there is suffering in the world; suffering is caused by greed and desire; suffering can be ended; and there is a path to follow, a compassionate life of morality, meditation and wisdom. There are around 150,000 Buddhists in Great Britain.

### *Background*

Due to the use of different calendars, Buddhists around the world celebrate Vesakh at different dates. Vesakh is commonly known as the Buddha's birthday, even though it celebrates

all three important stages of the Buddha's life – his birth, enlightenment and passing away, all said to have taken place at the full moon of the fifth month. There are many ways of celebrating Vesakh in different Buddhist traditions and cultures.

These include visiting temples, making offerings to the monastic community, lighting lanterns, bathing statues of the baby Buddha, and abstaining from eating meat or fish (to avoid harming living beings).

Buddhists try and follow The Five Precepts. They are 'training rules' which encourage the avoidance of taking life, of stealing, of sexual misconduct, of lying and of taking intoxicants, and the development, instead, of the qualities of compassion, generosity, faithfulness and self-restraint, truthfulness and mindfulness. Monks and nuns have further rules involving celibacy and renunciation.

The roughly 150,000 Buddhists in Britain form part of a total of about 400 million Buddhists worldwide. As Buddhism is often practised alongside other religions, however, this number is hard to determine.



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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.*