

Interfaith Insider

FEBRUARY 2024



The Significance of Lunar New Year

By Keegan McLean - Software Development

Lunar New Year, also known as the Spring Festival or Chinese New Year, marks the beginning of the lunar calendar and is celebrated by millions around the world. This vibrant and culturally rich festival holds deep significance for many Asian communities, symbolizing a time of renewal, family reunions, and the ushering in of good fortune.

The festival typically falls between mid January and mid February, depending on the lunar calendar. The date is determined by the phases of the moon, it starts on the first new moon and ends on the first full moon. This is why there is such a significant alteration of the date each year.

Preparations for Lunar New Year begin well in advance. Homes are adorned with red decorations symbolising good luck and prosperity. This is also a tradition explained by the story of "Nian" a beast that was scared off by the colour red as well as loud noises. The eve of Lunar New Year is marked by a festive reunion dinner, where loved ones gather to share a meal and exchange well-wishes.

The iconic lion and dragon dances, along with vibrant parades featuring traditional costumes and firecrackers, fill the streets during the celebration. Red envelopes containing money are given as tokens of good fortune, especially to the younger members of the family. These gestures are believed to bring luck and happiness for the upcoming year.

Each Lunar New Year is associated with one of the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac, rotating in a twelve-year cycle. 2024, for instance, is the Year of the Dragon. People born in this year are believed to be charismatic, ambitious, and blessed with good fortune.

As the world embraces cultural diversity, Lunar New Year has become a global celebration, uniting people from various backgrounds to partake in the festivities. It serves as a beautiful reminder of the importance of tradition, family, and the optimism that comes with the start of a new lunar cycle. Whether through colourful parades, delicious feasts, or heartfelt reunions, Lunar New Year is a time for joy, reflection, and the hope for a prosperous year ahead.

Interfaith Interface Dates

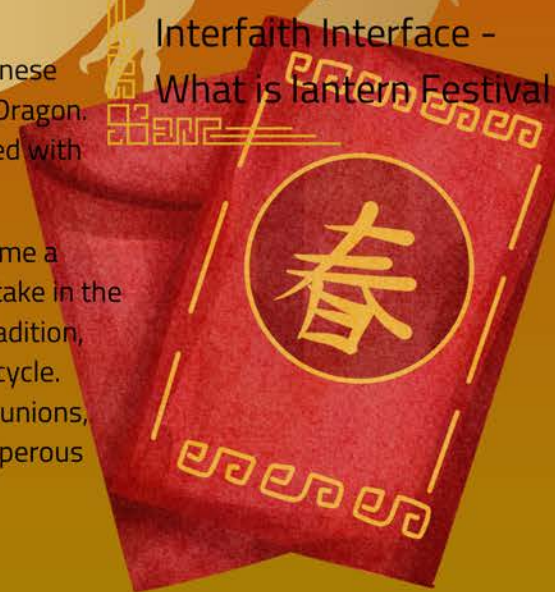
MB305 from 11 to 12

February 2nd
Interfaith Interface -
Lunar New Year

February 9th
SAIT Lunar New Year

February 16th
Interfaith Interface -
What is Lent

February 23rd
Interfaith Interface -
What is lantern Festival



SAIT Lunar New Year Celebration!



What Are You Giving Up For Lent?

FR. CRISTINO BOUVETTE

What are you giving up for Lent? That is a very common question you may have been asked yourself or that you will hear Christians whom you may know discussing among themselves at this time of year. On February 14 (the date changes year by year according to the date of Easter), Christians enter into a season of their faith tradition known as 'Lent'. This word stems from a middle-English word for 'springtime', given the time of year when Lent typically begins.

So what is this concept of "giving something up?" In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus indicates some necessary elements for conversion of heart are required of His followers. He specifically references three: prayer, fasting and almsgiving (i.e. performing charitable acts). These have developed in the Christian tradition as being identified as acts of penance. Penance is another way of speaking of the sacrifices required from Christians to be able to follow Jesus Christ. During this season of Lent, when we are especially focused on trying to follow Him better, it is for this reason that we also try and ramp up our penitential practices. Hence the concept of "giving something up for Lent."

Traditionally, different days within that season are set aside to abstain from eating meat or eating full meals altogether. On an individual basis, people are encouraged to consider something which they would notice cutting out from their lives; something they particularly enjoy or have become overly dependent on. Some classic examples are abstaining from alcohol, sweets or watching things online.

There are, however, some active practices people take up versus cutting out such as only taking cold showers, getting up extra early to pray or committing to going to church daily instead of weekly. Finally, in keeping with Jesus' third requirement of almsgiving, it is also important that Christians, in addition to cutting things out or adding things on personally, become more attentive to the needs of the poor or those around them.

In short, the season of Lent is like spiritual boot camp for Christians- but we all need some improvement in our lives somehow- so, whether Christian or not, consider challenging yourself this February 14 - March 31, you'll only come out stronger!

