

Cultural News

Volume 15, Issue 11
November 2017



World Orphans Day

Tragically, millions of children all over the globe have become orphaned for many reasons: war, famine, displacement, disease or poverty. To make sure that they are not forgotten, once a year there is a special day dedicated just to them: World Orphans Day, which falls on the second Monday of each November. This special day has been put in place in order to draw attention to the plight of the world's orphans, and so on this day, people are encouraged to actively participate in helping raise awareness, support, and funding for motherless and fatherless children worldwide. A noble cause if there ever was one!

The History of World Orphans Day

The first people to officially care for orphaned children were the Romans, who opened the first orphanage in history in around 400 AD. Long before them, however, both Jewish and Athenian law required that orphans be supported until age 18. The great philosopher Plato once said, "Orphans should be placed under the care of public guardians. Men should have a fear of the loneliness of orphans and of the souls of their departed parents. A man should love the unfortunate orphan of whom he is a guardian as if he were his own child. He should be as careful and as diligent in the management of the orphan's property as of his own or even more careful still."

Later, in Medieval Europe, orphans were cared for by churches. By the early 1900s, a number of orphans in England had reached truly alarming proportions, not to mention the conditions in which the orphaned children lived, which were often appalling and abusive. Charles Dickens' most famous novel, "Oliver Twist", depicts perfectly the hardships orphaned children had to endure in orphanages. In modern times, researchers are almost unanimous in their claim that orphanages are the worst possible care option for children, as they do not receive the right amount of attention or physical contact to develop properly.

This has caused many people, usually, Westerners, to decide to adopt children from

impoverished countries to give them a chance at a better life. Sadly, this trend has also led to a large number of scams being perpetrated on unsuspecting parents-to-be, many of whom have paid enormous amounts of money to adopt children who had been bought from their parents for very little. World Orphans Day was created by The Stars Foundation to raise awareness about the number of children in this world who lack something most of us take for granted: parents. The Stars Foundation's wish was for this day to motivate people to do anything they can to help.

How to Celebrate World Orphans Day

As mentioned before, anything you can do to help could make a world of a difference to an impoverished orphan, so take some time to figure out what you can do and get to it! You could, for example, organize an event to raise money. There is also the possibility to sponsor an individual child in an orphanage of your choice in a particularly poor part of the world or to invest in education programs that aim to give orphans a new start in life. There are many ways to help orphans and this annual day aims to bring those ideas to as wide an audience as possible.

In 2017, various dignitaries and activists within the AIDS and ORPHAN communities are making an appeal to the United Nations to officially observe the second Monday in November each year as World Orphans Day. The Initiative will be featured at a ICASA conference of 10,000 world scientists, activists, and governmental representatives from around the world. With a desire to take care of the orphans left behind by AIDS, and a commitment to help bring an end to AIDS by 2030 as declared by the UNAIDS, AMICAALL is an integral part of the ICASA agenda, bringing mayors and municipal leaders from across AFRICA to participate. The Stars Foundation is planning to take influential Ambassadors of Goodwill to the ICASA Conference as part of their Public Awareness and Advocacy work on behalf of orphans.



NOVEMBER 2017 CALENDAR

MILITARY FAMILY APPRECIATION MONTH

VEGAN MONTH

AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

- 1- All Saints Day (Christian)
- 2- All Souls Day (Catholic Christian)
- 4- Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib (Sikh)
- 6- Birth of Baha'u'llah (Baha'i)
- 5-11- National Radiologic Technology Week (US)
- 11- Veteran's Day (US)
- 12-18- World Kindness Week (US)
- 13- World Orphans Day (US)
- 18- National Survivors of Suicide Day (US)
- 19-26- National Bible Week (US)
- 20- African Industrialization Day (US)
- 23- Thanksgiving (Interfaith USA)
- 25- International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (World)
- 26- Day of the Covenant (Baha'i)
- 27- Cyber Monday (US)



Birth of Baha'ullah

Bahá'u'lláh was born on November 12, 1817, two years before the Báb, Whose revelation set the stage for His own. As with the Báb, there are no elaborate traditions surrounding His birth. He was born Husayn Aliy-i-Núrí in Tehran. His father was Mirzá Abbás Núrí, also known as Mirzá Buzurg, a prominent and wealthy man who had been a minister at the court of Fath-'Alí Sháh and subsequently the governor of Burujird and Luristan. When Fath-'Alí Sháh died in 1834, his son Muhammad Sháh executed a government purge in which Mirzá Buzurg was stripped of his title and his government salary but retained the Núrí family estates.

Bahá'u'lláh's early life reflected his well-to-do circumstances. He received the education typical of a child of the minor nobility: riding, calligraphy, and Arabic (so as to be able to read the Qur'án). Yet unlike many privileged children, He developed no attachment to wealth and ease.

As with Jesus and the Báb, a few stories have been handed down regarding Bahá'u'lláh's childhood, stories that indicate He was no ordinary boy. A number of these were compiled by Hand of the Cause of God 'Alí-Akbar Furútan in his book, *Stories of Bahá'u'lláh*. One parallels an old Christian tradition about the infant Jesus:

"The mother of [Bahá'u'lláh] was so enthralled with Him that she could not contain her amazement at His behavior. 'This child never cries,' she would say; 'He is so unlike other babies who cry and scream and are forever restless while in the nursing stage...'"

Another story recalls a dream that Bahá'u'lláh related to His father. In His dream, He was in a garden while huge birds attacked him on all sides. Yet the birds were unable to harm Him. He then went to sea, where He was attacked by birds and fish, but again wasn't harmed. His father summoned a famous seer to interpret the dream, and was told that His son would become the founder of a great Cause and would be attacked by

Birth of Baha'ullah

the leaders and learned men of the world. But they would be unable to harm Him, and He would be victorious over them all.

Bahá'u'lláh developed a fine sense of justice and fairness at a very young age. Throughout His life He would display these qualities, but perhaps one of the most remarkable demonstrations of this came while He was still a child. He witnessed three confrontations between His father and a tax collector who was "in a cruel and unjust manner" demanding payment. Incensed, Bahá'u'lláh rode to Tehran, a journey of two days, and sought the dismissal of the "tyrannical" tax collector. Incredibly, He was successful in His quest.

The youthful Bahá'u'lláh's wisdom and spiritual insight were also often remarked. It was said that He could resolve problems nobody else could, and His deep knowledge of the Qur'án and the Hadíth astounded many learned men. The well-known scholar Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi, once asked a gathering of about a thousand students to explain a particular saying from the Hadíth. None were able to reply until Bahá'u'lláh, who had received no formal education, gave an explanation that left the great man silent. The next day he berated his students, who had had twenty-five years of instruction, for failing to explain what Bahá'u'lláh had elucidated so well.

His generosity was also noted. Indeed, as a young man He became known as "the Father of the Poor" for His extraordinary generosity and regard for the impoverished. It seemed that the trappings of wealth held little importance for Him, even though He had grown up surrounded by them. The things of the spirit were always His main focus in life.

That life, as it turned out, would be very much like his childhood dream. He embraced the Báb's new religion immediately upon reading the Báb's letter to him, relayed by Mullá Husayn. Although He never met the Báb, He became one of His foremost followers and suffered a brief imprisonment and torture as a result. After the Báb's execution in 1850, Bahá'u'lláh Himself was imprisoned on false charges. His property was declared confiscate and His house sacked by a mob. He was released from prison only to be exiled to Baghdád in Iraq. His revelation, born in the prison in Tehran, would be publicly declared ten years later as He was preparing for a second exile to Constantinople. That exile was followed by forced transfers to Adrianople and finally to the distant prison-city of Akká, in the Holy Land near Mt. Carmel. Throughout these 40 years of imprisonment and exile, Bahá'u'lláh would be beset by enemies in the government, the clergy and even within His own family. Several attempts on His life would leave their marks upon Him. Yet through it all, He remained as He had been in His childhood: a person of deep spiritual insight and wisdom, dedicated to justice and integrity, full of goodness and generosity. In short, He was One through whom the light of God illuminated the world.

For Bahá'ís, the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh is a Holy Day celebrating the rebirth of the world through the love of God, just as Christmas is for Christians.

<http://birth-of-baha-u-llah.123holiday.net/>



Day of the Dead Altar- an Important Cultural Tradition

Once a little-known and misunderstood tradition celebrated in Southern Mexico and Latin America, the Day of the Dead is crossing over into mainstream U.S. culture with a whirlwind of exhibitions, parties, educational projects, art classes and parades throughout the country.

In parts of Latin America, Dia de los Muertos is celebrated on November 1-2, with families

remembering the dead with graveside picnics, all-night vigils and prayer gatherings. They decorate the graves of loved ones with marigolds, candles, sugar-coated skulls and the favorite dishes of the departed.

Common Day of the Dead traditions include creating altars to honor the dead, laying out offerings, sharing stories of the deceased, as well as cleaning and decorating gravesites.

Because Day of the Dead is a very festive, creative holiday, current Day of the Dead

customs also include festivals, parades, and the making of Dia de los Muertos crafts.

The key purpose behind these Day of the Dead customs is to make contact with the spirits of the dead, to let them know that they are not forgotten and that their loved ones on earth still care about them. It is a way of keeping the connection between loved ones alive, though they may be physically separated by death.

Day of the Dead traditions can vary from town to town, with each community embracing their own unique blend of rituals, customs, and celebrations. Although the Day of the Dead customs in a small village in Mexico may differ from the Day of the Dead customs in a large American city like San Francisco, there are still several common Day of the Dead traditions that are carried out no matter what the location.

Here are the most common and important Day of the Dead traditions:

- Creating an altar with offerings (known as ofrenda)
- Visiting, cleaning, and decorating gravesites
- Telling stories about the deceased
- Making food for the deceased, to be placed on altars
- Making or buying sugar skulls and pan de muerto.

<http://www.celebrate-day-of-the-dead.com/day-of-the-dead-traditions.html>