

## [Happy Roman New Year](#)

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# Happy Roman New Year

Hail to Janus, the God of January!

Today's worldwide civil calendar was actually the making of the Roman Emperor, Julius Caesar, derived from Egyptian, Greek and Roman culture and calculations in 46 bce. Under the advice of an Egyptian astronomer, Caesar reengineered the calendar, instigated the leap year and added 90 days to bring the year back in step with the seasons. In addition, he ordered the New Year moved from March to the first day of Januarius. The new first month was named after the Roman God Janus, whose two faces look both backward and forward in time. As God of beginnings, gates and doorways, He is strikingly similar to Lord Ganesha. Just like Ganesha, Janus is listed first in prayers and invoked when beginning new activities. His blessings were sought at the beginning of every day, month and year. The main temple of Janus at the Forum in Rome has two doors, one facing the rising sun, the other the setting sun. Inside, the statue of Janus has one face looking out each door. When the Sabines captured Rome, they were kept out of the Forum by fountains of boiling water that miraculously gushed from the temple's statue of Janus.

The following month, Februarius, came from Februa-the period of purification, and a time to make offerings to the dead. The original first month of the year, Martius (March), was dedicated to Mars, the God of war, also identified with the Hindu God, Muruga. The following month, Aprilis, was in celebration of the

Goddess Venus, or Aphrodite, Goddess of love and beauty. Next was Maius, from Maia, "the great one," Goddess of spring. Then came Junius from the principle Goddess of the Pantheon, Juno, Goddess of marriage and the well-being of women. The remaining months kept their Latin numbers from the fifth to tenth: Quintilis, Sextilis, Septembris, Octobris, Novembris and Decembris. The count began with the original first month: March. Hence Decembris means the tenth month. After Caesar's assassination, the fifth month was renamed Julius; the sixth month was renamed after his grandnephew and heir, Augustus.

Christian nations would not accept the New Year change from March to January until 1582, when Pope Gregory XIII declared it official and made a few minor adjustments in the leap-year calculations to compensate for an error of 12 seconds per year. This error had caused the calendar to gradually fall 10 days behind the seasons again, so Pope Gregory simply deleted the extra days. Thereafter, the Julian Calendar became known as the Gregorian. But apart from that, the calendar was and is Roman-Pagan, not Christian. While most of Europe adopted the changes, Protestant nations rejected them and kept to March 25th as their New Year for some time. Great Britain and her colonies held out until 1752. By then they were 11 days behind the rest of Europe. When the American colonies finally made the switch from Julian to Gregorian, Ben Franklin wrote: "It is pleasant for an old man to be able to go to bed on September 2, and not have to get up until September 14."

It is interesting to reflect that since our present civil calendar began with Caesar, 1997 is really the year 2041!