

Monday in 1st Week of Advent – 1st December 2025:

As the residual memory of faith wains in some Western European Countries, those who come to Holy Mass each Sunday, do so, not because it is the culturally acceptable thing to do, but because they want to be here! They are like the '*faithful remnant*' who cherish the gospel as the '*words of eternal life*' and hunger and thirst for the grace and mercy of God, which is essential nourishment for their spiritual life. A faithful Catholic lives their life in the sure and certain hope that the Lord shelters his people and will, in time, gather them into the peace of God's Kingdom and therefore see God's glory face to face.

Tuesday in 1st Week of Advent – 2nd December 2025:

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not abstract character traits, but the gift of the Holy Spirit himself, helping us to always make the right decision, even though at first glance it may cost us materially. He inspires us to Mission, helping live out our baptismal dignity of being '*priests, prophets and kings*'. Being endowed, then, with the exceptional qualities of Christ's Kingship, helps us lead people into the peace of God's Kingdom. If we are open to the Holy Spirit and are prepared to cooperate with heavenly grace, we receive an inner strength, comparable to the grace Moses received to accomplish a dangerous mission or the ability the '*Judges*' had to manage the needs of a community and a strategist like David, so we know where to place our temporal and spiritual resources.

The Memorial of St Francis Xavier – Wednesday 3rd December 2025:

St Francis Xavier gave up his privileged life to become a priest. Following Portugal's colonisation of India, the King of Portugal asked the Pope to send missionaries to the region. St Francis Xavier, full of missionary zeal, travelled to Goa, India, China and Japan. Although he was hopeless at languages, he used holy images to communicate the gospel. In the same way, we need to find new ways to communicate the gospel to a world that no longer shares a common religious literacy, and the way in which we live out the Christian life will speak volumes and if lived authentically, will convert many to the Catholic Faith.

Thursday in 1st Week of Advent – 4th December 2025:

The '*ministry of welcome*' is an essential service: '*Open the gates*' and let people enter to pray and serve. Our service is a prayer, so welcomers do not take their seats once the '*bell*' has rung for Mass but are present and available in case of any need. And our own spiritual obligations do not end with the final blessing. No, they are just beginning, as we are commissioned to announce the gospel. When '*judgement day*' comes, God will show us all the service and mission he wanted of us. Pray that we will not be weighed, measured and found wanting. As the gospel says, we must build our faith on solid rock and for all the baptised this is made manifest in the corporal & spiritual works of mercy.

Friday in 1st Week of Advent – 5th December 2025:

Waiting is a feature of Advent. Unfortunately, we do not like waiting for things. Either we are restless with anticipation of something wonderful to come or we are impatient because something is tedious, and we just want to get on with it and get it out of the way. The challenge for us, then, in Advent is to be patient. Yes, Christmas is coming but it is not here yet – still 20 days to go and we may be using Advent calendars to count down to Christmas Day which show us that our waiting is that first type of waiting we described – the anticipation of something wonderful to come. But what are we waiting for! The obvious answer is Christmas, but it is not a temporal event because Jesus Christ has already been born. As Emmanuel, Jesus is already '*God with us*', so, we are asking for Christ to be reborn again in our hearts and souls this Christmas.

Optional Memorial of St Nicholas – Saturday 6th December 2025:

Santa Claus (4th C. Bishop St Nicholas) is an ancient tradition. The image of Coca Cola of him wearing a red coat and hat, with a sack of gifts is not as far-fetched as it seems. As Bishop, Nicholas wears a red chasuble when he administers the gifts of the Spirit in Confirmation. His Red Hat (Mitre) is the symbol of authority to teach Catholic and Apostolic faith. He's also well known for punching the heretic Arius on the nose for trying to downplay Christ's divinity.