

Memorial of Andrew Dun Lac – Monday 24th November 2025:

Fr Andrew Dung-Lac and his 117 Vietnamese companions were martyred for their faith. The Vatican estimates that 130 to 300 thousand Christians were martyred in Vietnam during the 18th Century, many who are now unknown and have no distinctive feast day. Vietnamese Christians were branded on the face with the words '*sinister religion*' and villages that subscribed to Christianity were obliterated. Andrew had received a good Christian education from the missionaries, the catechists giving him food and shelter, showing the importance of both the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Investment into Andrew's education paid off; he became a catechist and later a priest. He was tireless in his preaching despite the peril of announcing the gospel.

St Catherine of Alexandria, Secondary Parish Patron – 25th Nov. 2025:

St Catherine was one of St Joan of Arc's '*voices*' who counselled her and prepared her for her mission. She was martyred in AD 305, ten years before Constantine's '*Edit of Milan*' which ended Christian persecution. Alexandria was a fine city, a place of learning and culture, with a huge library, and its lighthouse an ancient wonder of the world. Catherine, then, was a great scholar, but at the age of 14 she receives a vision of Mary and the child Jesus, leading to her conversion as a Christian. When the Emperor persecuted the Christians, she denounced his cruelty. Rather than executing her, he ordered scholars to debate her, but they were swept away by her eloquence and many converted. This led to her execution, but first, the emperor offered her his hand in marriage to save her, but she refused, dedicated only to Christ. She is often pictured with a wheel to which she was attached - think of her and ask for her intercession, when at a Bonfire Night, someone gleefully lights a '*Catherine Wheel!*'

Wednesday in the Last Week in OT (I) – 26th November 2025:

'*Mene, Mene, Tekel and Parsin*' says Daniel to King Belshazzar in interpreting the '*writing on the wall*', to indicate that his reign is about to come to an end. We might (very) loosely translate this phrase as '*you have been weighed, measured and found wanting*'. It should be taken as a lasting lesson that irreverence toward God and ethical complacency carry dire consequences and will count against us when the Lord comes to judge the living and the dead and that no-one – not even kings – will escape the scrutiny of the creator who will demand an account of our stewardship on earth. The phrase underscores the biblical principle that human pride yields to divine judgment.

Thursday in Last Week of OT (I) - 27th November 2025:

Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans, fulfilling Jesus' prophecy. These concrete realities that we cling to, are but a shadow of the reality to which we are destined. The Church Triumphant in heaven is the true and lasting Jerusalem to which all nations are called to approach and make their home. And we are promised that the gates of the underworld can never hold out against Christ's ultimate victory over sin and death. We, the Church Militant, share in this divine guarantee, but this does not mean there is no persecution and may be called upon to give glory to God. How can we possibly have the courage to endure this, because again, we believe that this is not our final reality! As *'pilgrims of hope'*, we are waiting the *'Return of the King'*, and when Christ comes again, we will see the powers of heaven shake, and the whole universe tremble at the Lord's Advent, when he comes to judge the living and the dead.

Friday in the Last Week in Ordinary Time (I): 28th November 2025:

November is a month where the Church and the Secular world have, in part, been on the same page, wanting to reflect on the past and not repeat the mistakes of history. As Christians, though, we have taken a different appreciation of remembrance, literally wanting the joy of *'participating again'* with Christ in his sacrifice that takes away the sins of the world and asking that the merits of his Passion, Death and Resurrection be applied for the benefit of the faithful departed. We know that in the celebration of the Holy Mass, heaven and earth are connected, and so, we are never closer (in this life) to those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. And one day, we pray, these Easter Mysteries will gather us together again in the peace of God's Kingdom.

Saturday in the Last Week of OT (I) – 29th November 2025:

As the Liturgical Year comes to an end, we have the same feeling at the conclusion of a good book, what shall I read next? For the Church, we read the gospels again because we cannot exhaust the wisdom of Holy Scripture and can always go deeper into the paschal mystery. There is always something more we can learn from the incarnation, death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God is always close at hand, so, we should be alert and attentive to the opportunities that help make the Kingdom manifest. We pray: *'thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'*. We renew our hunger for God's Word, these words of eternal life, which feed our spiritual life, enabling us to sing, *'glory and eternal praise to him!'*