

### **Christmastide – Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2026:**

Now, perhaps, that the family celebrations have ended, Christmastide continues with a consideration of its significance, turning our attention to Jesus' pastoral ministry and the call of the disciples to follow him. Christians are called to listen to him and to imitate his lifestyle – that being a commitment to the Truth and living a life of grace. While following him does not mean '*upping sticks*' and moving to Galilee or Jerusalem, it does mean walking '*the way of the cross*', a pilgrimage of service and sacrifice that helps us pass-over with him from death into life. So moved by his encounter with Jesus, Nathanael (Bartholomew) is compelled to tell his friend that he has found the Messiah. This is our apostolate, to invite our family to '*come and see*' and invite them to accompany us to the Church. This begs a question – when we had family and friends to stay this Christmas (or when we visited them), did we come to Mass, or did we skip it because we did not want awkward conversations and keep the peace?

### **The Epiphany of the Lord – Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2026 (Holy Day of Obligation):**

What brings the Magi to Bethlehem? Yes, following a star or other celestial object plays its part, but above all, these wise men, follow an ardent disposition to know the truth, something that God sees and could work with. The gifts they bring show they understood, in part, the significance of the who they expected to find: Gold for a king, myrrh for one who is mortal, and frankincense for a God. This visit signals that the cosmic order, disturbed by the sin of humanity and the fall of angels, is healed, restored and forgiven in the birth, life, passion, death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. (Anniversary of the Parish of St Joan of Arc, Farnham:**

92 years ago, the Bishop of Southwark established St Joan of Arc, Farnham as a new parish, marking a new stage in the Catholic Mission in these parts, building on what had gone before in the Town Centre and Frensham. Our anniversary Mass is celebrated in the wider context of the new '*Catholic Parish of Guildford*', with the proclamation of the gospel in what is termed a '*change of era*', one in which we no longer take for granted an underlying religious literacy. This does not mean there are no ground for hope and worldwide, Catholic numbers continue to grow, now at 1.5 billion, with significant growth in Africa, The Americas and Asia. However, Church statisticians are also reporting '*green shoots*' in Western Europe for the first time in years, the evidence suggesting that young people are hungry for sound teaching.

### **Christmastide – Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026:**

Having heard that God loves us, we should consider its significance. Yes, ‘*God is love*’ and nothing we can do ever separates us from God’s love, but we are also called to manifest God’s love to the world, and we are hampered in our mission when we are conscious of being in serious sin. Love is a mark of our Christian discipleship, and we discover it is not reduced to how we feel but an imitation of the love of God ‘*who so loved the world that he sent his only son to be our saviour and redeemer*’. Love involves sacrifice, the giving of our lives for the sake of the gospel. God’s love is sublimely seen in forgiveness, a choice to love even though it hurts. A Christian does not allow betrayal to dominate our life. We believe in justice and mercy, punishment and rehabilitation go hand in hand. This is the life of the cross imparted to us in Baptism, a redemptive journey enabling us to have life in abundance, freed from the tyranny of sin and death, a life that profoundly marks out the kingdom that is to come.

### **Christmastide – Friday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2026:**

The deepest desire of the human heart is to love and be loved. This is fulfilled in our hope of seeing and possessing God, a seemingly impossible task, except that it was God Himself who is the author and instigator of this very desire. As the old penny catechism of the Church taught us, ‘*God made us to know him, to love and serve him, and to be happy with him in this world and in the next*’. Human love is imperfect, being infected with concupiscence, that wound of original sin which continues to taint our desires and passions, so that we, often, chose good things in the wrong measure or even disordered things in a way that prevent us from loving without ulterior motive. The gifts of the Holy Spirit help us to be what a Christian is supposed to be, another Christ for the world, a perfect image of God’s love and mercy to people of ‘*good will*’.

### **Christmastide – Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2026:**

The first words of Jesus’ pastoral ministry in Matthew and Mark are repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand. Luke records a more hopeful tone: the announcement of the ‘*good news*’ to those caught in the tyranny and oppression by their sins and the sins of others. The Messiah comes to free His people of their afflictions, that God has pity on his people and sends them a shepherd to guide them home. Anointed by the same Spirit, the Church continues Jesus’ special concern for those afflicted by human misery and in the sacraments provides captives with the spiritual grace of freedom.