

### **Feast of the Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas) – Mon. 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 2026:**

The candles we bless today are perfect sacrifices, their reason for being to burn themselves out for the glory and praise of God, continuing our prayers long after we have left the Church. We cannot stay in the Church, for we must go and be messengers of the covenant; *'going'* from here to announce the gospel. We must prepare a way for Christ, so when he visits others in the community, he finds that they are ready to receive him in the temple of their hearts. Sharing in the temple of his body, means we not only share his passion but are made ready to share in the glory of his resurrection. Today's Feast is also the feast of Our Lady's purification, although being Immaculately Conceived and perfect in her Virginity, she has no need of a purification, but with a great respect for the Mosaic Law, she comes to make the prescribed ritual offering. Today, is a further *'epiphany'* as what she offers, is Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the culmination of all the sacrifices that have ever been offered to God the Father.

### **The opt. mem of St Blaise, Bishop & Martyr – Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026:**

Saint Blaise was the bishop of Sebastes and a doctor. The medical writings of Aëtius Amidenus says he specialised in helping patients with objects stuck in their throat. In time, he offered himself for the priesthood becoming a "physician of souls." Retiring to a cave to pray, he continued to help people who turned to him for healing. In 316 A.D., Agricola, governor of Cappadocia & Lesser Armenia, arrested Bishop Blaise for being a Christian. Legend says, that on his way to the jail, he helped a child who was choking to death on a fish bone. Blaise, we are told, cured the child, and though Agricola was amazed, he could not get Blaise to renounce his faith. Therefore, Agricola beat Blaise with a stick and tore at his flesh with iron combs before beheading him.

### **Wednesday in 4<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time – 4<sup>th</sup> February 2026:**

For a King or government, the point of a census is to take stock of the human resources at your disposal. In David's time, those counted had to pay a ransom similar to what was paid when a first-born was redeemed, indicating that they were passing over into the domain of the King. However, the People of Israel belong only to the Lord and are subject only to him, as such, God is angry with King David for taking a census because it was a sign that the King was *'lording it over'* his people, taking advantage of them – by way of taxes, or by conscripting them into his army or even making them like slaves by putting them to hard labour, for his benefit. This was, thus, a great sin.

### **The memorial of St Agatha, virgin and martyr – Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2026:**

Agatha was attractive and wealthy but had taken a vow of virginity. A rich man named Quintain, knowing she was a Christian arrested her and brought before a judge – himself. He thought that she would give herself to him to avoid torture, but she affirmed her belief in God. Quintain imprisoned her in a brothel to assault and humiliate her – still she resisted him. Next, he imprisoned her, but still she professed her faith in Christ. Agatha bore her torture with great fortitude and cheer. Supposedly during one torture, the guards cut off her breasts, making her the patron saint of those suffering with breast cancer and as well as for those who have suffered a sexual assault.

### **St Paul Miki and his Companions, Martyrs – Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026:**

Paul Miki, and his twenty-five companions were martyred in Nagasaki, crucified on a hill (*now known as 'Holy Mountain'*). Their sides were pierced by a lance, in imitation of Christ. Their executioners were astonished at their joy in being associated with Christ's Passion. Brother Paul, while hanging of the cross, said, *'the only reason for my being killed is that I have taught the doctrine of Christ'*. In removing the leaders of the Catholic community, the persecutors thought they were eradicating the faith. And at first glance this policy seemed to have worked, for when missionaries returned to Japan in 1860, they initially found no trace of Catholicism. Shortly after establishing themselves, however, they realized that the people – (the domestic Church) - had secretly preserved the faith in their homes for the next and subsequent generation.

### **Saturday in 4<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2026:**

The splendour of Solomon's reign is remembered fondly in Israel's memory. We are shown his great desire for wisdom, with the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Book of Wisdom and the Song of Songs. Solomon instituted a public works programme, especially the building of the Temple, as the centre of the people's religious life. By desiring wisdom above all things, his reign is rewarded with a period of booming commerce which gives Solomon great prestige and untold wealth. Unfortunately, his one weakness lies in his unfaithfulness to God, for, to please his foreign wives, he introduces the worship of other gods into the country. There are political weaknesses, too: cracks are appearing in the union of the tribes and enemies exist inside and outside the state, meaning that after his death there would be a split of the kingdom, ten tribes walking away, leaving just Judah as the faithful remnant.