The Feast of St Andrew, Apostle – Monday 30th November 2026:

Andrew is the *'Protokeltus'*, the *'first called'*, although the gospel accounts differ. In John's gospel, we learn that he is a disciple of St John the Baptist who points out to him that he should follow the Lamb of God. Jesus turns to Andrew asking, *'what do you seek?'*, and Andrew and the other disciple ask, *'teacher, where do you live?'* Like Andrew, we're invited to *'Come and see'*. After staying with the Lord for the day, he and the *'other disciple'* were so convinced by that encounter that they went and found Peter and declared, *'we have found the Messiah'*. In the synoptic gospels, the initiative is with Jesus; he calls them to leave their fishing nets and become *'fishers of men'*. Either way, the gospels show the quickness of their response, telling us something of the authenticity of Jesus, that he is worthy of our trust and that we should follow him. Andrew believed Jesus was the Messiah, but it took the Resurrection and Pentecost for that belief to manifest itself in his heart so he could truly become an Apostle.

Tuesday in 1st Week of Advent – 1st December 2026:

Parishes and communities across the diocese have just begun their Confirmation programmes. And while many of our teenagers are hoping for the latest electronic gadgets at Christmas, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are so profoundly necessary for life, that they should illicit greater joy. Isaiah says these gifts are a *'spirit of wisdom & understanding, a spirit of counsel & might, a spirit of knowledge & fear of the Lord'*. These gifts are given so we may play our part in furthering the salvation of God's people, which is often a dangerous and difficult mission; and to be frank, these are often the only missions worth undertaking! This mission is a restoration of the harmony that existed between God and humanity at the dawn of creation, broken by sin.

Wednesday in 1st Week of Advent – 2nd December 2026:

Isaiah equates heaven with a banquet, one surpassing anything we could imagine - the Christmas Turkey and all the trimmings doesn't even come close! We do, however, receive a forestate of it in the Eucharist and receive in Holy Communion the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ, the nourishment needed to complete our pilgrimage into eternal life. We need to be in a state of grace to receive Holy Communion, for although Christ often ate with sinners, the Eucharist is a meal with the redeemed and reconciled. This heavenly banquet is a victory celebration of Christ's conquering of sin and death and the Eucharist his pledge of eternal life for his faithful people.

The Memorial of St Francis Xavier – Tuesday 3rd December 2026:

Francis was hopeless at foreign languages, quite a barrier in his missionary endeavours to places such as Goa, India, China and Japan, very different to Catholic Spain from where he grew up. And yet, in recognising the people's needs, he effectively brought a new hope to the sailors and settlers in Goa who has been pressed ganged into service and found hope in the gospel message of freedom. Francis often used art – paintings of the Madonna and child to communicate the gospel. He found Christianity is often mistrusted and persecuted. Atheistic and / or oppressive regimes are frightened of the gospel message which promises good news to the poor, to give liberty to captives, new sight to the blind and set the downtrodden free. Those living comfortable lives, often at the expense of their neighbour, are troubled by a call to personal holiness and conversion. And so, announcing the gospel is an exhausting and daunting task, so we pray for our own bishops and promise to work with them.

Friday in 1st Week of Advent – 4th December 2026:

Purple / violet is the colour of Advent, showing us that this is a season of preparation and patience. We spend this time in prayerful reflection; a retreat from *'busyness'*, often a vice which prevents us from doing what is truly necessary. It has been suggested that the shade of purple for Advent is subtly different to that for Lent, which is a season of penitence and participation in the cross; as such, has a redder tinge; whereas, in Advent, a blueish tinge, a share in Our Lady's waiting for the birth of Jesus. Yes, we are waiting, but not just for Christmas but especially for Christ's Second Coming. Our waiting is not one of impatience for a celebration, but one of anticipation that Christ will come again. The Rose candle and vestments mark the shift in Advent, bringing the joy of the Lord's closeness to us, for even though Our Lord is in heaven, he promises to be with us always, yes, even to the end of the age. Yes, *'Jesus is the reason for the season'* and so, we use Advent to ensure our priorities are properly set.

Saturday in 1st Week of Advent – 5th December 2026:

Jesus tours all the towns and villages, teaching the people and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, curing all kinds of diseases and sickness. This good news must be shared. *Ite Missa Est: Go you are sent!* Announcing the gospel remains an urgent duty and the responsibility of the whole Church. Through the ministry of the lay apostolate and the ordained ministry, the body of Christ brings healing to souls in need.