

**The Catholic Parish  
of  
Our Lady, Star of the Sea**



**1st Week of Christmas, Year A**  
*Sunday Cycle A, Weekday Cycle I, Psalter Week I*

“While they were there  
the time came for her to have her child,  
and she gave birth to a son...”

Luke 2:6

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R.C. Diocese of East Anglia:  
A Registered Charity (Charity Commission No. 278742)

There are four Masses that are celebrated for the feast of Christmas, and each is given its own set of readings to help us contemplate Christ's birth. The Gospel for the Vigil Mass on Christmas Eve is taken from the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, the genealogy of Jesus and the angel's announcement of the birth to Joseph. The Mass during the night proclaims the birth of Jesus through the angels' announcement to the shepherds in the Gospel of Luke. Luke 2:15-20 is the reading for the Mass at dawn on Christmas morning. It continues the story of the birth of Jesus as found in Luke's Gospel with the shepherds' visit to the infant Jesus. Finally, the Gospel for Christmas Mass during the day is taken from the beginning of John's Gospel. It is not an Infancy Narrative like those found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Instead, John's Gospel starts at the very beginning of time and presents Creation as the framework for announcing the Incarnation. John's opening words echo the first verse in the Book of Genesis, "In the beginning was the Word." **The Vigil Mass of the Nativity:** "If we read the longer form, we hear Matthew recount the ancestry of Jesus. This genealogy sets Jesus' birth within the context of the history of Israel, highlighting two of Jesus' ancestors—Abraham, the father of the Hebrew people, and David, the most important king of Israel. Jesus' ancestral lineage reinforces a central theme of Matthew's Gospel: Jesus is the fulfilment of the prophecies made to the people of Israel. The Gospel of Matthew tells the story of the birth of Jesus from Joseph's perspective. During his betrothal to Mary, Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant. Betrothal in first-century Jewish culture was more than an engagement period; it was part of the marriage contract. A breach of this contract was considered adultery. If adultery was proved, the punishment might be death. Joseph had rights under Mosaic Law, but he chose to act discreetly in his plans to break the marriage contract so as to protect Mary. The way that Joseph and Mary faced these extraordinary circumstances tells us much about these holy people and their faith in God. The message the angel gave to Joseph in a dream reveals many important theological details about the child Mary will bear and about the child's role in God's plan. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. His name will be Jesus, which in the Hebrew means "God saves." He will be the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. He will be Emmanuel, "God with us." This is the mystery we celebrate at Christmas, the Incarnation. God chose to become a human being in the person of Jesus. Joseph did as the angel of the Lord directed. He took Mary to be his wife and accepted the child in her womb as his own. When Jesus was born, Joseph followed the directions of the angel and gave the child the name Jesus. We often recall Mary's cooperation in God's plan for our salvation. Today's Gospel reminds us of Joseph's important role, which was also crucial to God's plan for Jesus' birth. **Mass During the Night:** "During the Christmas season, our liturgy invites us to consider the birth of the Lord from many vantage points. As we begin this season, it is useful to remember that the stories of Jesus' birth and childhood are found in only two of our Gospels, Matthew and Luke. Throughout this season, we will hear stories from both Gospels. Those Gospels tell different but complementary stories about Jesus' birth, highlighting items of theological importance about the Incarnation and the salvation that Jesus brings. On this day, the Feast of Christmas, we are given the details of Christ's birth as found in the Gospel of Luke. Here we learn about the census that brings Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where Jesus is born. We also hear about the angel's announcement of this good news to the shepherds. In these details, we find two of Luke's particular concerns: (1) to locate the coming of Christ in the wider framework of salvation history as good news for all people, Gentiles and Jews, and (2) to show the Lord's favour upon the poor and lowly. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is born as one of the poor. Laid in a manger in a stable, because there was no room at the inn, he comes into the world through obscure and surprising means. Yet, as the angel proclaims this good news to the shepherds, this infant is

announced as the Messiah and Lord. In the song of the angels, all are invited to give glory to God for this miraculous birth, in which God comes to share our humanity. The angels sing that Jesus' coming brings peace. Yet there is little in the details of this Gospel that gives evidence of peace. Jesus is born as a traveller away from home, born in a stable in a crowded city under the occupation of foreigners. The appearance of the angel to the shepherds frightens them. When the angels proclaim Jesus' birth as the harbinger of "peace on earth," the evangelist Luke clearly wants us to take the long view. The shepherds are invited to claim a faith that will enable them to see this infant as a sign God's promise of a messiah. It is through such faith that one finds the peace of which the angels sing. **Mass of the Dawn:** The story of Jesus' birth, which begins with a reference to Caesar Augustus, concludes with the shepherds, people looked down on by most of society, visiting the infant. As the angels return to heaven, the shepherds decide to go see "this thing" that has happened in Bethlehem. Their visit confirms everything the angels had told them about the birth of the Saviour and Messiah. They then spoke publicly about all they had seen, to the great astonishment of all who heard. Mary ponders all this in her heart, and the shepherds return to their fields praising God. What had been told to them really happened. This account does not tell us very much about the infant Jesus because Luke's concern is that God's action of sending a saviour be publicly proclaimed. As Paul says before King Agrippa in Acts of the Apostles 26:26, "None of this was done in a corner." The picture is simple, two parents and an infant in a stable. But the reality is great, God's salvation offered to all. **Mass of the Day:** The Gospel for the Christmas Mass during the day is taken from the beginning of John's Gospel, but this part of John's Gospel is not an infancy narrative like those found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Instead, John's Gospel starts at the very beginning and presents the Creation story as the framework for announcing the Incarnation. John's opening words echo the first verse in the Book of Genesis. This framework invites us to view Jesus' birth from God's perspective. Each of the Gospels makes clear that Jesus' birth was the result of God's initiative. John's Gospel, however, emphasizes that Jesus' birth was the divine intention from the moment of Creation. As we observe in today's reading, the Gospel of John includes highly philosophical and theological language. One example that particularly stands out in this Gospel is John's repeated references to "the Word" in the opening verse. This expression (logos in the Greek) borrows from a concept found in both Jewish and Greek thought. Jews used this phrase to describe God's action in the Creation story, for example, and in the Wisdom literature. In Greek thought, the logos was understood as an intermediary between God and humanity. John and others in the early Church adopted this language to describe God's incarnation in Jesus. As the term was used to express the Trinitarian faith of Christians, the Word came to be equated with the Second Person of the Trinity. In this prologue to the Gospel of John, we also hear the main themes that will be developed in his Gospel. These are often presented as dualities: light and dark, truth and falsehood, life and death, and belief and unbelief. We also hear in this prologue a unique aspect of John's Gospel, the theme of testimony. John the Baptist was sent by God to testify to Jesus, the light. Others in this Gospel will also offer testimony about Jesus. The reader is invited to accept this testimony, which bears witnesses to Jesus, the Son of God. But even more directly, Jesus' action and words will testify to Jesus' identity as God's Incarnate Word. Thinking about Jesus' birth in these theological and cosmological terms is particularly appropriate as we celebrate the Feast of Christmas in the darkness of winter. At this time, nature itself seems to remind us of the darkness of sin. Into this darkness, in the midst of our sinfulness, God comes to dwell among us. John's Gospel reminds us that through the Incarnation, God saves us from the darkness of sin and makes us his children."

**Mass & Service Times for the Coming Week: December 25<sup>th</sup> – December 31<sup>st</sup>**

- Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> - 17:00 - Our Lady's** *(Christmas Eve, Year A)*  
Offered for: People of the Parish
- Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> - 21:00 - Our Lady's** *(Christmas Eve, Year A)*  
Offered for: A Private Intention
- Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> - 09:00 - St Nicholas'** *(Christmas Day, Year A)*  
Offered for: James & Edna McNamee (RIP)
- Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> - 11:00 - Our Lady's** *(Christmas Day, Year A)*  
Offered for: A Private Intention
- Monday 26<sup>th</sup> - 10:00 – Our Lady's** *(Feast, St Stephen, Proto-Martyr)*  
Offered for: Rita & Chibuzor's Intention
- Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> - 10:00 – Our Lady's** *(Feast, St John the Evangelist)*  
Offered for: Rita & Chibuzor's Intention
- Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> - 10:00 - Our Lady's** *(Feast, The Holy Innocents)*  
Offered for: Rita & Chibuzor's Intention
- Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> - 10:00 - Our Lady's** *(Feast, St Thomas Becket)*  
Offered for: Rita & Chibuzor's Intention
- Friday 30<sup>th</sup> - 10:00 - Our Lady's** *(Feast, The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph)*  
Offered for: Betty & Peter Leavey (RIP)
- Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> - 10:00 - Our Lady's** *(Seventh Day of Christmas)*  
Offered for: Mick Frost (RIP)
- Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> - 17:00 - Our Lady's** *(2nd Sunday of Christmas, Year A)*  
Offered for: Thinking of & Praying for us All (MS)
- Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> - 09:00 - St Nicholas'** *(2nd Sunday of Christmas, Year A)*  
Offered for: A Private Intention
- Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> - 11:00 - Our Lady's** *(2nd Sunday of Christmas, Year A)*  
Offered for: People of the Parish

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**Confessions:** The Sacrament of Reconciliation will take place every week during Adoration and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament (from 9:30 to c.10am) following the 9am Mass on Saturday Morning. One may also make an appointment with Fr Pádraig for confession at another suitable time.

**Mass Intentions:** If you would like to have a Mass offered for someone, living or deceased, or for a particular intention (exams, interview, etc.), please collect a pre-printed envelope from the back of the church. Details of your request, including the preferred date, can then be entered on the front of the envelope (legibly please) and then your offering may be placed inside before being given to Fr Pádraig.

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