

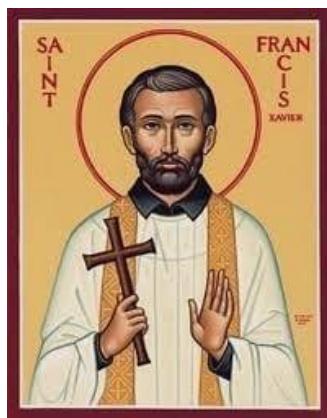
Calendar / Feast Days

December 2025

Date	Feast Days/Liturgical Occasions	Gospel for Sunday
3 December	Saint Francis Xavier, Priest	
6 December	St. Nicholas	
7 December	2 nd Sunday of Advent	Matthew 3:1-12
8 December	The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Luke 1:26-38
12 December	Our Lady of Guadalupe	
12 December	St. Finnian	
13 December	St. Lucy	
14 December	3 rd Sunday of Advent	Matthew 11:2-11
18 December	St. Flannan	
21 December	4 th Sunday of Advent	Matthew 1:18-24
24 December	250th Anniversary of the Founding of the Presentation Congregation	
25 December	The Nativity of the Lord	John 1:1-18
26 December	St. Stephen, First Martyr	
27 December	St. John, Apostle and Evangelist	
28 December	The Holy family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph	Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

3 December: Saint Francis Xavier, Priest

The Jesuit priest, Francis Xavier, was a Spanish missionary priest who preached the Gospel as he travelled to the faraway countries of India, Japan and China, baptising thousands of people. He became known as the Apostle of the Indies and was eventually canonised as a saint.



A characteristic of St. Francis Xavier was his positive personality, his cheerfulness and generosity, greeting others with a smile, winning so many people to Christianity. Pope Francis has frequently commented: "true Christians have cheerful faces and eyes full of joy".

6 December: Saint Nicholas, Bishop



St. Nicholas

When Saint Nicholas was a little boy, he shared all his toys and gifts happily. His parents were wealthy, and they bought wonderful things for him. No matter what he got, he shared with his friends. Saint Nicholas was always looking for ways to help people.

His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God. The feast of St. Nicholas, bishop, falls on December 6, at the beginning of Advent. This day brings much celebrating, especially in Eastern Europe and Germanic countries such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Italy also celebrates this saint's day. St. Nicholas is the patron saint of children, of Russia, of sailors and pawnbrokers.

8 December: The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary



On 8 December 8, the Church celebrates one of the most important feasts of Our Lady, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is the day when we remember and celebrate that God chose Mary to be the Mother of Jesus from the very first moment of her being; the moment of her conception.

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception celebrates the sinless lifespan and Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, celebrated on 8 December, nine months before the feast of the Nativity of Mary, celebrated on 8 September. It is one of the most important Marian feasts in the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church celebrated worldwide.

When we celebrate the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we celebrate the fact that Mary was, from the first instance of her existence (her conception), without sin, and chosen to be the mother of God.

Let us pray:

"O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

Let us pray:

*Loving God,
We thank you for the example of Mary,
Whom you chose to be the mother of your only Son, Jesus.
She lived her life with love for you and for others.
Help us to do the same.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.
Amen*

12 December: Our Lady of Guadalupe



Our Lady of Guadalupe is Patroness of Mexico and the Americas. She is also venerated by Native Americans. Every year up to twenty million pilgrims travel from all over the world to visit the shrine at Guadalupe. The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is celebrated in the United States of America on December 12. In the *Grow in Love* religious education programme for Fourth Class, you will read more about Our Lady of Guadalupe.

13 December: St. Lucy



The Church celebrates Saint Lucy's feast day on the 13 December during the Advent season. She is the patron saint of blindness. She had a very deep faith. The story of St Lucy's blindness reminds us how important light is in our world. In the season of Advent, we wait for the light of Christmas. When we live in the light, we live like Jesus who is the light of the world. Jesus said, 'I am the Light of the world.' (Jn 8:12). In the *Grow in Love* religious education programme for Fourth Class, you will read more about Saint Lucy.

12 December: St. Finnian

St. Finnian studied in Idrone, Co. Carlow, and later in Wales, and on his return he settled in Clonard, Co. Meath, around 520, where he established a famous school. His pupils, among whom were Canice, Colum Cille and Brendan, were the initiator of the great monastic expansion in Ireland. He died in 549 and is remembered as the tutor of the saints of Ireland.

18 December: St. Flannan

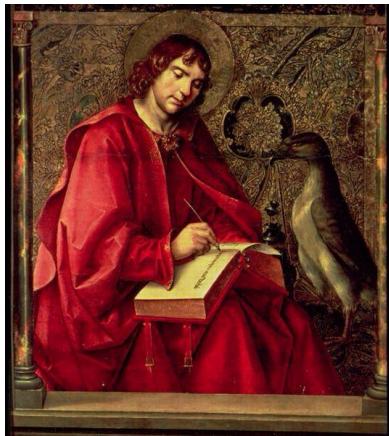
St. Flannan lived in the seventh century and was the son of a king of Thomond. He entered Molua's monastery at Killaloe and became abbot there. He is remembered as a great preacher.

26 December: Saint Stephen



Saint Stephen was one of the first deacons of the Church. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. He distributed food to the poor and he preached the gospel. Some people rejected his teaching. They persecuted Stephen, arrested him and brought him to court. Stephen remembered Jesus words (Mt 10: 19-20). Stephen believed the Holy Spirit would help him. He wasn't afraid. He witnessed to Jesus in the courts. The crowd didn't like what they hear. They killed Stephen. Stephen's last words were, 'Do not hold this sin against them.' (Acts 7:60).

27 December: Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist



The Church celebrates the feast of Saint John the evangelist on 27 December. What we know about Saint John mainly comes from the Gospels. He wrote three letters and the Book of Revelation. While John lived, he walked with Jesus in daily life, he listened to him and he saw Jesus working the miracles. Saint John is known as 'the beloved disciple.' John was Jesus during many significant moments of his life e.g., the Transfiguration, the Garden of Gethsemane and the foot of the Cross.

28 December: The Holy family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

The Holy Family is seen as the model of the human family, the religious community and the Church itself. The celebration of the Incarnation has brought us to see God's acceptance by Mary and Joseph of the marvels of God. In the daily life of family and community we can touch the divine, we can

come close to God. But we have to learn to live centred on God, with respect and love for each other.



*The
250th Anniversary
of the
Presentation Congregation in Ireland
24 December 2025*



The Life of Nano Nagle

1. Early Life (1718 – 1730s)

Honora “Nano” Nagle was born in 1718 at Ballygriffin, near Killavullen, County Cork, Ireland, into a wealthy Catholic family during the era of the Penal Laws - laws that severely restricted education and religious freedom for Catholics. Despite the harsh environment, the Nagle family valued learning and ensured their children were privately educated at home.

As a teenager, Nano was sent to France, where Catholic education for Irish children was secretly arranged. Living abroad opened her eyes not only to academic learning but also to the spiritual and social possibilities that existed outside Ireland.

2. A Pivotal Experience in Paris (Mid 1730s – 1740s)

While living in Paris, Nano encountered the stark poverty of the city. Early one morning, as she returned from a ball, she saw a group of poor people lining up for work. This contrast between her privileged life and their suffering left a deep and lasting impression. This moment became foundational in her later decision to devote her life to the poor.

3. Return to Ireland – A Deepening Sense of Mission (1740s – 1750s)

Nano returned to Ireland after the deaths of her parents. She found the rural poor of Cork suffering from deep poverty, little education, and no opportunities for advancement under the Penal Laws. She felt called, spiritually and morally, to help. At first, Nano considered joining a convent on the continent, but through counsel and reflection she realized that her mission was in Ireland, among her own impoverished people.

4. Founding the Hedge Schools (1754 onward)

In 1754, Nano took a bold step:

She opened her first secret Catholic “hedge school” in Cork. Teaching Catholic children was illegal, punishable by imprisonment or fines. Nano defied these laws, quietly, courageously, and with

absolute determination. Her schools grew rapidly. Soon she was teaching reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing and crafts, Christian doctrine and practical skills to help them earn a livelihood.

Nano funded all of this herself, walking through the streets to solicit donations from wealthy families or using her own inheritance.

5. “The Lady with the Lantern” (1760s)

Nano became a familiar figure walking through the narrow lanes of Cork at night, carrying a small lantern to guide her as she visited the sick, the elderly, and the poor after long days of teaching. This nightly work gave her the title by which she is still remembered: “The Lady with the Lantern.” Her compassion was radical, fearless, and practical.

6. Founding the Presentation Order (1775)

As the demand for her schools grew, Nano realized that her mission needed continuity beyond her own lifetime. She gathered a small group of dedicated women and on **Christmas Eve, 24 December 1775**, she founded what would become the **Presentation Sisters** (Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary). This was the first order of women religious founded in Ireland since the Penal Laws.

Nano shifted some of her work from teaching to establishing the new religious community, forming them in prayer, discipline, and service to the poor.

7. Final Years and Death (1775 – 1784) Nano suffered ill health but continued her relentless work. She oversaw seven schools in Cork, caring for hundreds of children, managing funds, and guiding the new religious community. Nano Nagle died on 26 April 1784, leaving behind:

- 7 schools
- a founding community of Presentation Sisters
- a legacy that would spread worldwide
-

8. Legacy

Nano Nagle is recognized today as:

- **Venerable** by the Catholic Church
- one of the founders of modern Catholic education in Ireland
- an icon of courage under oppression
- a champion of the poor
- the inspiration behind thousands of Presentation Sisters and educators around the world

The lantern remains the symbol of Nano Nagle’s mission:

To bring light where there is darkness.



The 250th Anniversary (2025)

The 250th anniversary of the Presentation Congregation
officially begins on

24 December 2025

marking exactly 250 years since the founding of the congregation.

