

DID YOU KNOW?

**“I am the Light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
John 8:12**

The First Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of a new year in the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church. In contrast to the frenzied commercialization of the season, Advent is a time of waiting and preparing for Christ and the enlightenment His coming brings to our lives. Many families find that an Advent wreath in the home deepens their appreciation of the true meaning of this Holy Season.

Like so many Christian customs, the Advent wreath is an adaptation of an ancient pre-Christian practice. Candles were lighted around a wheel during the winter solstice to celebrate the return of gradually lengthening daylight. This symbolism takes on entirely different spiritual meaning in the Advent wreath as we anticipate receiving and welcoming the eternal Light of Christ into our hearts.

The Advent wreath with four candles retains the circular shape as a reminder that every ending is also a new beginning. Evergreens, a symbol of eternal life, may be added to decorate the wreath. Three purple candles represent penance and longing. One rose-colored candle, lit during the third week of Advent, symbolizes joy in anticipation of the birth of Jesus.

