

ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
OF CHARLESTON
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

December 1, 2025

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This month in Via Fidelis, we focus on sharing and enjoying the rich symbolism of our faith, especially during the Advent season leading to the birth of our savior king, Jesus Christ. I wanted to reflect on some of these symbols, and I invite you to share this information with those who are not very familiar with the Catholic faith. They are outward signs of a spiritual reality that can escape the human eye.

There are two colors that we use as we enter each Advent season: purple, the traditional color of royalty, and pink or rose, a color of joy.

Purple reminds us that the Messiah foretold to the Israelites in the Old Testament is soon to take his throne. The ancient Hebrews believed that the savior would be a powerful politician or military leader who would lead them from the Roman occupation, but we know in hindsight that Christ came as a little baby to save the chosen people, us included. Wow!

Purple also represents penitence: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Just as we observe during Lent, we are meant to prepare ourselves spiritually in this season. Advent, from the Latin word *adventus*, literally means “arrival.” Like the parable of the wedding guests, we should always be ready for Christ’s return.

Pink or rose, the other color in Advent, we see for one week during the season. We call this Gaudete Sunday, which means “rejoice.” This color represents joy, that gift of the Holy Spirit that raises our hearts to praise God with our intellect, will and emotions.

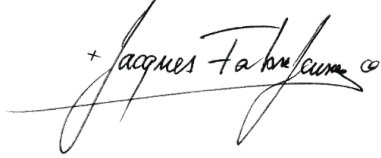
The wreaths that we see in Church (and hopefully in our homes) date back to the Middle Ages. Its round shape symbolizes the eternity of God’s promise, and the evergreen leaves, like the tree, remind us of God’s never-failing, never-ending love for each of us. I encourage you to take some time to read the story of St. Boniface’s origins of the Christmas tree.

Candles remind us of the light of faith. Christ taught us not to hide our light under a bushel basket (Mt 5:15). The bold yet reassuring word of the Gospel reminds us of that moment when the angels shared the news of Jesus’s coming to the shepherds in the fields.

When you look at the manger scene, look at each animal and think about that place where Jesus was born. Laying in a feeding trough, he foreshadowed the gift of his body and blood that he would shed for us on the cross.

This Advent, open your eyes to the beautiful and ancient symbols of our Catholic, universal faith. May the peace and joy of the Lord fill you with the resolve to prepare for the coming of Jesus.

In Christ's love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jacques Fabre-Jeune" with a small cross at the beginning and a flourish at the end.

Most Rev. Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS
Bishop of Charleston