

## History of the Christmas tree

It is told that Saint Boniface, a monk from Crediton, Devonshire, England who established Christian churches in France and Germany in the 7th Century, one day came upon a group of pagans gathered around a big oak tree about to sacrifice a child to the god Thor. To stop the sacrifice and save the child's life Boniface felled the tree with one mighty blow of his fist. In its place grew a small fir tree. The saint told the pagan worshipers that the tiny fir was the Tree of Life and stood for the eternal life of Christ.



It is also told that Saint Boniface used the triangular shape of the fir tree to describe the Holy Trinity of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. By the 12th Century, Christmas trees were hung from ceilings as a symbol of Christianity. However, in that time, for a reason no one could yet explain, the trees were hung upside down.

### Trees as symbols

Trees were a symbol of life long before Christianity –

Ancient Egyptians brought green palm branches into their homes on the shortest day of the year in December as a symbol of life's triumph over death.

Ancient Finns used sacred groves instead of temples.

Romans adorned their homes with evergreens during Saturnalia, a winter festival in honour of Saturnus, their god of agriculture.

Druid priests decorated oak trees with golden apples for their winter solstice festivities.

During December in the Middle Ages, trees were hung with red apples as a symbol of the feast of Adam and Eve, and called the Paradise Tree.

### The first Christmas trees