WINTER SOLSTICE

The winter solstice is the shortest day and longest night of the year, which marks the start of the winter season in the Northern Hemisphere. The solstice occurs on Tuesday, December 21 this year, and is always experienced between December 20-23 in the Northern Hemisphere, depending on the year. After the winter solstice, days start to become longer and nights shorter as spring approaches.

Because the planet orbits the sun while tilted about 23.5 degrees, the Northern and Southern Hemispheres receive unequal amounts of sunlight, resulting in both the solstices and the seasons. At the solstice, the earth’s poles are tilted farthest away from the Sun.

Humanity has long celebrated the Winter Solstice, at least as far back as the Neolithic period. Famous Neolithic monuments such as Newgrange in Ireland and Stonehenge are believed to mark the Winter Solstice. Even the famed Nazca Lines in Peru feature alignments with the Winter Solstice. The ancient Romans held several celebrations around this time, including Saturnalia and the birthday of Mithra, who later merged with Sol Invictus, the god of the unconquered sun. Mithra celebrations took place on December 25th, and it has long been theorized that the Roman Catholic Church chose to celebrate Christmas on this day to supplant the pagan holiday.

(Excerpt and Observance Info from https://www.nationalgeographic.com and https://www.history.com)