

Creating a Jesse Tree for your home this Advent

The Story of the Jesse Tree:

Jesse was the father of the great King David. When we trace the ancestors of Jesus of Nazareth, we trace from Abraham to Jesse, and from Jesse's son David to Jesus. (*Mthw 1:1-17*)



Over time, Christians began to paint pictures of this ancestry using the design of a branched tree, with Jesse at the base, (*'from the stump of Jesse... a root will spring forth' – Isaiah 11:1*); and at the top of the tree, images of Mary and Jesus were painted. For example, the Cathedral of Chartres in France (built 1260) has a stained glass window in this style.

At the same time scripture plays were developing, which told the story of saints. These were performed in churches and one famous one was based on the story of Adam and Eve. The "Tree of Life" used during the play was decorated with apples.

It seems that, these two ideas were the seeds of our own Jesse tree.

Making a Jesse tree in your home:

'Jesse tree' is not just a tree! It is the name of an Advent project. Its purpose is to tell the story of Jesus family, as they waited for the Messiah. This mirrors our own waiting for Jesus in Advent time. Each day a short piece of scripture is read and the appropriate ornament is added to the tree.

- Depending on your own circumstances, a Jesse tree in your home might consist of a real tree, some branches in a bucket of sand, or a wall hanging with pictures of a tree. Ornaments added to each.
- Jesse Tree ornaments can be made in advance, or one can be made each day. To make the Jesse Tree ornaments you will need cardboard backgrounds (e.g. blank cardboard circles or holly shapes), some string to hang the ornaments and art materials to decorate
- In order to participate fully in this activity your family will also need daily access to a family Bible. (Bibles can be purchased from local bookshops or on-line)



Jesse Tree ornaments

There are 24 Jesse tree symbols. They can be made in advance, weekly or made each day.

- First read the Scripture verses for the day. Pick out one or two short verses that give the main idea. Copy these verses on the back of the cardboard blank that will be the base of today's ornament.
- You can use the suggestions offered below to decorate the ornament. You could also discuss with your children what symbols best represent the person we are thinking of today. Be creative, take your time, make connections between your own lives and theirs.

Jesse tree scripture reflections for each day

December 1	<i>Creation:</i> Gen. 1:1-31; 2:1-4	<i>Symbols:</i> sun, moon, stars, animals, earth
December 2	<i>Adam and Eve:</i> Gen. 2:7-9, 18-24	<i>Symbols:</i> tree, man, woman
December 3	<i>Fall of Man:</i> Gen. 3:1-7 and 23-24	<i>Symbols:</i> tree, serpent, apple with bite
December 4	<i>Noah:</i> Gen. 6:5-8, 13-22; 7:17, 23, 24; 8:1, 6-22	<i>Symbols:</i> ark, animals, dove, rainbow
December 5	<i>Abraham:</i> Gen. 12:1-3	<i>Symbols:</i> torch, sword, mountain
December 6	<i>Isaac:</i> Gen. 22:1-14	<i>Symbols:</i> bundle of wood, altar, ram in bush
December 7	<i>Jacob:</i> Gen. 25:1-34; 28:10-15	<i>Symbols:</i> kettle, ladder
December 8	<i>Joseph:</i> Gen. 37:23-28; 45:3-15	<i>Symbols:</i> bucket, well, silver coins, tunic
December 9	<i>Moses:</i> Ex. 2:1-10	<i>Symbols:</i> baby in basket, river and rushes
December 10	<i>Samuel:</i> 1 Sam. 3:1-18	<i>Symbols:</i> lamp, temple
December 11	<i>Jesse:</i> 1 Sam. 16:1-13	<i>Symbols:</i> crimson robe, shepherd's staff
December 12	<i>David:</i> 1 Sam. 17:12-51	<i>Symbols:</i> slingshot, 6-pointed star
December 13	<i>Solomon:</i> 1 Kings 3:5-14, 16-28	<i>Symbols:</i> scales of justice, temple, two babies and sword
December 14	<i>Joseph:</i> Matt. 1:18-25	<i>Symbols:</i> hammer, saw, chisel, angle
December 15	<i>Mary:</i> Matt. 1:18-25; Lk 1:26-38	<i>Symbols:</i> lily, crown of stars, pierced heart
December 16	<i>John the Baptist:</i> Mark 1:1-8	<i>Symbols:</i> shell with water, river

On December 17, the Church begins to intensify its preparation for Christmas with the use of the "O" Antiphons during the Liturgy of the Hours. The symbols for the Jesse Tree from December 17 to 23 are based on the "O" Antiphons.

December 17	<i>Jesus is Wisdom:</i> Srch24:2; Wisdom 8:1	<i>Symbols:</i> oil lamp, open book
December 18	<i>Jesus is Lord:</i> Ex. 3:2; 20:1	<i>Symbols:</i> burning bush, stone tablets
December 19	<i>Jesus is Flower of Jesse:</i> Ish 11:1-3	<i>Symbols:</i> flower, plant with flower
December 20	<i>Jesus is Key of David:</i> Ish 22:22	<i>Symbols:</i> key, broken chains
December 21	<i>Jesus is the Radiant Dawn:</i> Psm 19:6-7	<i>Symbols:</i> sun rising/high in sky
December 22	<i>Jesus is King of the Gentiles:</i> Pm 2:7-8; Eph 2:14-20	<i>Symbols:</i> crown, sceptere
December 23	<i>Jesus is Emmanuel:</i> Ish 7:14; 33:22	<i>Symbols:</i> tablets of stone, chalice and host
December 24	<i>Jesus is Light of the World:</i> Jn 1:1-14	<i>Symbols:</i> candle, flame, sun

**Activity Source: *Jesse Tree Kit*, A
by Betsy Walter,
Pauline Books and Media, Boston,
MA, 1983**

