

The Jesse Tree

INTRODUCTION

The Jesse Tree is a popular tradition that traces the ancestry of Jesus through the Old and New Testaments. It celebrates the women and men who, like John the Baptist, prepared the way for the coming of the Lord. The Jesse Tree is named for Jesse, the father of King David. Its scriptural base is Isaiah 11:1: "A root shall sprout from the stump of Jesse and a branch shall grow out of its roots."

A Jesse Tree can be made using a large tree branch containing several smaller branches or it can be made out of cardboard, burlap, or artificial branches arranged to form a tree. The symbols placed on the tree represent key figures in Salvation History.



SYMBOLS

It is practice to place one symbol on the tree each day, reading the Scripture relating to the person(s) chosen. Popular stories and symbols used on the Jesse Tree include:

Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-6; a serpent, a tree, or an apple)

Noah (Genesis 6:13-22; 9:12-17; an ark or a rainbow)

Abraham (Genesis 15: 1-6; stars in the sky)

Sarah (Genesis 18: 9-15; a woman laughing)

Jacob (Genesis 28: 10-22; a stone, a ladder)

Joseph (Genesis 37: 2-4; a coat)

Moses (Exodus 20: 1-17; the tablets containing the Commandments)

Ruth (Ruth 2:2-7; ears of corn)

David (1 Samuel 16: 22, 23; lyre)

Joseph of Nazareth (Luke 2: 1-7; Joseph, Mary, and Jesus in the manger)

Mary, the Mother of Jesus (Luke 1: 26-38; the angel)

John the Baptist (Matthew 3: 1-11; a pair of sandals)

IN THE CLASSROOM

Here are three ways to make use of the Jesse Tree in your classroom this year:

1. Highlight the first four ancestors and the related Scripture stories listed here. Use the first four ornaments that accompany these stories. Then, use the ornament templates to design ornaments for the remainder of the Scripture stories you choose to tell during Advent.
2. Invite the children and youth to do a search of their religion books for other ancestors in the faith. Tell the stories of these women and men, one each day, and invite the children and youth to design ornaments that symbolize the person or the story.
3. Prepare a Jesse Tree ancestor, Scripture story, and ornament pack for each student to take home. Encourage families to create their own Jesse Trees, to tell the Scripture stories, and to create the ornaments in their homes. As an alternative, you could have the children and youth prepare each day's ornament in class, write the Scripture citation on the back, and take the "ornament of the day" home for use in family prayer time that evening.



