



The Story of the Jesse Tree

The Jesse Tree was created to help people link the custom of decorating Christmas trees to the events leading up to Jesus' birth. The tradition of decorating Christmas tree actually predates the arrival of Christianity in western Europe and was adopted by the early Church. In order to associate the custom more clearly with Christianity, people made Jesse trees—Christmas trees with decorations related to the events of Jesus' birth and the prophecies about him in the Old Testament. Many parishes and families make Jesse trees during **Advent** to remind them of these events as they prepare for Christmas. Over the next four weeks of **Advent** children and teens in our Religious Education program will be decorating the Jesse tree with ornaments that correspond to the story of the Jesse Tree.

The story of God in the Old Testament can be told either in terms of the main characters of the story, or of pivotal events that helped shape and define the people's journey of Faith through the Old Testament. The Jesse Tree is named from Isaiah 11:1: "A shoot will spring forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots." The branch is a biblical sign of newness out of discouragement, which became a way to talk about the expected messiah (for example, Jer 23:5). It is therefore an appropriate symbol of Jesus the Christ, who is the revelation of the grace and faithfulness of God.

First Week of Advent Jesse Tree scripture readings and symbols:

Introduction of the Jesse Tree—1 Sam 16:1-13, Isa 11:1-10--The Tree

God—Creation—Gen 1:1:2-3—Dove

Adam and Eve—The First Sin—Gen 2:4-3:24—Tree with Fruit or Apple

Noah—The Flood—Gen 6:11-22, 7:17-8:12,20-9:17—Rainbow or Ark

Abraham—The Promise—Gen 12:1-7, 15:1-6—Field of Stars

Isaac—Offering of Isaac—Gen 22:1-19—Ram

Jacob—Assurance of the Promise—Gen 27:41-28:22—Ladder

To learn more, go to www.loyolapress.com to watch a beautiful slide show about the Jesse Tree.

Thank you to our families, catechists and volunteers that are making this program possible.

Amazing Peace,

Joni Scott, Director of Faith Formation