

Faith magazine presents
2011 Advent Reflections
for the Jesse Tree

Sunday, November 27

“But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.”
Isaiah 11:1



The first Jesse Tree symbol is a dove, reminding us of the peace and harmony of creation as God intended. You can read the full story of Jesse in Isaiah 11:1-10 and David in 1 Samuel 16:1-13. Jesse is the father of David, beginning a line of descendants that will lead to Jesus, the Messiah.

Monday, November 28

“The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.”

Genesis 3:6-7

The Jesse Tree symbol for this reading is an apple, representing original sin. Christ is called the “second” or “new” Adam because he ushered in a new creation, forgiving sin and restoring humanity to God’s grace. The whole story of Adam and Eve can be found in Genesis 2:4-3:24.

Tuesday, November 29

“Then God said to Noah: ‘Go out of the ark, together with your wife and sons and your sons’ wives. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you—all bodily creatures, be they birds or animals or creeping things of the earth—and let them abound on the earth, breeding and multiplying on it.’”

Genesis 8:15-17

The Jesse Tree symbol of the ark reminds us that although God was displeased with the wickedness of the men and women he had created, he also sees the best in us and renews his covenant with us through forgiveness and mercy.



You can read the full story of Noah and the ark in Genesis 6:11-22, 7:1-8:22.

Wednesday, Nov. 30

"He took him outside and said, 'Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so,' he added, 'shall your descendants be.' Abram put his faith in the Lord, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness."

Genesis 15: 5-6

The symbol for today's reading is a field of stars, representing God's promise to Abraham, the father of our faith, whose descendants became the chosen people of God. You can learn more about Abraham's great faith in God in Genesis 12:1-7 and 15:1-6.



Thursday, December 1

"But the Lord's messenger called to him from heaven, 'Abraham, Abraham!' 'Yes, Lord,' he answered. 'Do not lay your hand on the boy,' said the messenger. 'Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son.'"

Genesis 22: 11-12

The ram depicted on today's ornament is the sacrifice God provided Abraham when he saw Abraham was willing to give up his only son, if that is what God required of him. Read about Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22:1-19.

Friday, December 2

"Then he had a dream: a stairway (sometimes translated as a ladder) rested on the ground, with its top reaching to the heavens; and God's messengers were going up and down on it. And there was the Lord standing beside him and saying, 'I, the Lord, am the God of your forefather Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you are lying I will give to you and your descendants. These shall be as plentiful as the dust of the earth, and through them you shall spread out east and west, north and south. In you and your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing. Know that I am with you; I will protect you wherever you go, and bring you back to this land. I will never leave you until I have done what I promised you.'"

Genesis 28: 12-15

After his dream, Jacob awoke and exclaimed, "Truly, the Lord is in this spot, although I did not know it!" The miraculous ladder in his dream reunited the earth to the divine. You can read the dramatic story of Jacob's life and faith in Genesis 27:41-28:22.

Saturday, December 3

During the seven years of plenty, when the land produced abundant crops, he husbanded all the food of these years of plenty that the land of Egypt was enjoying and stored it in the towns, placing in each town the crops of the fields around it. Joseph garnered grain in quantities like the sands of the sea, so vast that at last he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure.

Genesis 41: 47-49

Today's symbol is a sack of grain. Joseph, the son of Jacob, is cast out by his brothers. But through his faith in God's providence, he has enough food to feed all who are hungry in times of famine, with sacks of grain bursting at the seams. Read the story of Joseph's life in Genesis Chapters 37 to 50.



Sunday, December 4



"As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed...God called out to him from the bush, 'Moses! Moses!' He answered, 'Here I am.' God said, 'Come nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father,' he continued, 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.' Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. But the Lord said,...'Come, now! I will send you to Pharaoh to

lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.'"

Exodus 3:2-10

Moses, raised as an Egyptian by the pharaoh's daughter, is witness to God's word when an angel appears to him as a burning bush, depicted in today's symbol, and instructs him to lead the people of Israel to the Promised Land. Read Moses' story in Exodus 2:1-4:20.

Monday, December 5

"This is how you are to eat it, with your loins girt, sandals on your feet and your staff in hand, you shall eat like those who are in flight. It is the Passover of the Lord."

Exodus 12: 11

Today's ornament has a lamb on it. God instructs Moses and Aaron to slaughter a year-old male lamb for each member of Israel, smearing the blood to mark every doorpost, thus beginning the tradition of Passover and marking the exodus of the Israelites out of slavery. You can read the whole Passover story in Exodus 12:1-14:31.

Tuesday, December 6
(Feast of St. Nicholas)

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Thus shall you speak to the Israelites: You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven. Do not make anything to rank with me; neither gods of silver nor gods of gold shall you make for yourselves.’”

Exodus 20: 22-23

God delivered the commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai and Moses brought the resulting tablets—and the commandments—back to his people. The ornament depicts the tablets on which the commandments were written. You will find the story of Moses and the Ten Commandments in Exodus 19:1-20:26.

Wednesday, December 7

“As the horns blew, the people began to shout. When they heard the signal horn, they raised a tremendous shout. The wall collapsed, and the people stormed the city.”

Joshua 6:20

Today we hang a trumpet on the Jesse Tree. According to God’s instructions to Joshua, the walls around the besieged city of Jericho crumbled at the trumpets of ram horns blown by holy men and the spoils were left for the Israelites. Read the story of Joshua and the fall of Jericho in Joshua 1:1-11, 6:1-20.



Thursday, December 8
(Feast of the Immaculate Conception)

“They held the torches in their left hands, and in their right the horns they were blowing, and they cried out, ‘A sword for the Lord and Gideon!’ They all remained standing in place around the camp while the whole camp fell to running and shouting and fleeing.”

Judges 7: 20-21

God chose to reveal his power to Gideon, who came from a poor family, by letting his army of 300 men defeat more than 100,000 at Midian. Gideon followed the Lord’s instruction to have his men approach the town with their torches hidden under pitchers. The people of Midian were so startled when the pitchers were broken and the soldiers made themselves known, that many began fighting among themselves. The pitcher ornament reminds us of how Gideon became an unlikely leader and judge, helping his people cast aside false gods and obey God’s true laws. Read Judges 7 for more details.

Friday, December 9

“Samuel grew up, and the Lord was with him, not permitting any word of his to be without effect.”

1 Samuel 3:19

Samuel, son of Eli, was repeatedly called by God. When at last he recognized the Lord’s call, he adhered to it without fail, and proclaimed the coming of Christ the King who would have dominion over all earthly kings. The symbol of the Jesse Tree to illustrate Samuel’s story is a crown. Read about Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:1-21, 7:1-8:22, 9:15-10:9.

Saturday, December 10

“Then Samuel asked Jesse, ‘Are these all the sons you have?’ Jesse replied, ‘There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep.’...Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance. The Lord said, ‘There — anoint him, for this is he!’ Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in his hand, anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David.”

1 Samuel 16: 11-13

David was first a shepherd of livestock, but when God called him to lead the nation of Israel, he became a shepherd of people to help them become what God wanted them to be. The shepherd’s crook on today’s ornament symbolizes Jesus as the Good Shepherd who will lay down his life for others. Read 1 Samuel 16, 17 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17.



Sunday, December 11

“At the time for offering sacrifice, the prophet Elijah came forward and said, ‘Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things by your command. Answer me, Lord! Answer me, that this people may know that you, Lord, are God and that you have brought them back to their senses.’ The Lord’s fire came down and consumed the holocaust, wood, stones, and dust and it lapped up the water in the trench. Seeing this, all the people fell prostrate and said, ‘The Lord is God! The Lord is God!’”

1 Kings 18:36-39

The prophet Elijah is called by God to dispel the myths of false gods increasingly worshipped by the people. On today’s ornament we see a representation of the stone altar Elijah built, consecrated by the Lord with fire, showing people the true light of God. To read the full story, turn to 1 Kings 17:1-16, 18:17-46.



Monday, December 12
(Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe)

"I will shield and save this city for my own sake, and for the sake of my servant David.' That night the angel of the Lord went forth and struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp."

2 Kings 19:34-35

King Hezekiah put his trust in the Lord. Through his faithfulness his people were saved and his enemies destroyed, leaving their tents—like the one on today's ornament—empty on the battlefield. The story of Hezekiah can be found in 2 Kings 18:1-18; 19:32-37.

Tuesday, December 13

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone." Isaiah 9:1

The prophet Isaiah is called to holiness, but fears he is not worthy of revealing the living God. Isaiah sees angels around the throne of the Lord and one of them takes a hot ember—like the one on today's ornament—from a fire with tongs and touches it against Isaiah's lips. He is able to go forth, forgiven of his sins, to deliver the Word of God. Read about Isaiah and some of his prophecies about the Messiah in Isaiah 1:10-20; 6:1-13, 9:1-7.

Wednesday, December 14

"Oh, that my head were a spring of water, my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night over the slain of the daughter of my people!"

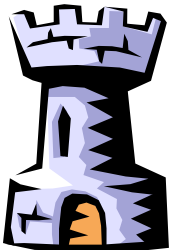
Jeremiah 8:23

The Lord speaks to Jeremiah while he is in exile, describing his grief as an endless fountain of tears regarding the return of his people to worshipping idols. Read more about Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:4-10, 2:4-13, 7:1-15 and 8:22-9:1-11.

Thursday, December 15

"I will stand at my guard post, and station myself upon the rampart, and keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what answer he will give to my complaint."

Habakkuk 2:1



The ornament today shows a watchtower, reminding us that the prophet Habakkuk stood upon an allegorical watchtower, waiting for the anointed one the Lord would send to end violence and wickedness. Find details that help us understand the church's desire for us to experience *waiting* during Advent in Habakkuk 1:1-2:1; 3:16-19.

Friday, December 16

"But remember, I pray, the promise which you gave through Moses, your servant, when you said: 'Should you prove faithless, I will scatter you among the nations; but should you return to me and carefully keep my commandments, even though your outcasts have been driven to the farthest corner of the world, I will gather them from there, and bring them back to the place I have chosen as the dwelling place for my name.'"

Nehemiah 1: 8-9

The prophet Nehemiah urges the chosen people to change their ways and return to the true faith. On the ornament for today, we see a wall reminding us of the wall that was rebuilt around Jerusalem in order to keep the Sabbath Day a holy day of rest. Read more about it in Nehemiah 1:1-2:8; 6:15-16; 13:10-22.

Saturday, December 17

"John answered them all saying, 'I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'"

Luke 3:16



John the Baptist proclaims the coming of a new savior and renewed life for all through the repentance of sins. The ornament today features a scallop shell, a traditional symbol of baptism in addition to pilgrimages and spreading the word of the Gospel. Read more about John the Baptist in Luke 1:57-80, 3:1-20; 7:18-30.

Sunday, December 18

"Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'"

Luke 1: 30-33



The angel Gabriel tells Mary she will be the handmaiden of the Lord, mother of our savior, Jesus. The white lily on today's ornament symbolizes new life and resurrection—hope for the future. Read about Gabriel's visit with Mary and her response in the Gospel of Luke 1:26-38.

Monday, December 19

"Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, 'Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.'" Luke 1:41-42

Mary travels to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who has conceived a child in old age through a miracle. The child in her womb, John the Baptist, leaps with joy when Mary, pregnant with Jesus, arrives. Our ornament today celebrates the motherhood shared by these women. The story can be found in Luke 1:39-56.

Tuesday, December 20

"John is his name."

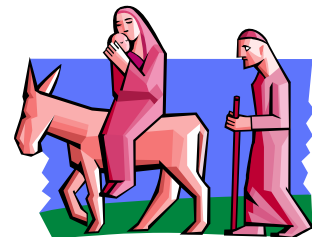
Luke 1: 63

When Elizabeth gave birth to a son, family and friends expected him to be named after his father, Zechariah. But Zechariah, unable to speak, wrote on a tablet, as seen on today's ornament, that the child should be named John. Because of his obedience, Zechariah regained his voice, and proclaimed anticipation of the coming of the Lord. You can read the whole story in Luke 1:57-80.

Wednesday, December 21

"...the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.'" Matthew 1: 20-22

Joseph trusted God that Mary had conceived a child through the Holy Spirit and would bear the Savior who would bring salvation to all. The carpenter's hammer on today's ornament represents Joseph's profession and his unique role in the story of our salvation. Read more in Matthew 1:19-25.



Thursday, December 22

"Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." *Matthew 2:2*

The three magi look for Jesus, guided by the light of a star, shining brightly above his birthplace. They prostrate themselves before the manger and do not turn the child and his parents over to King Herod. The white candle on today's ornament symbolizes Christ; the glow recalls the halo of light signifying divinity and power. You will find the story in Matthew 2:1-12.

Friday, December 23



"The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.'" *Luke 2: 10-12*

Christ Jesus is born and laid in a lowly manger, depicted on our ornament today. Shepherds are instructed by angels to witness the miracle of this child's birth, to show homage and spread the good news. Read the story of Jesus' birth in Luke 2:1-15.

Saturday, December 24

"Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God." *John 1:34*

Merry Christmas! The apostle John bears witness to the coming of the Light of the World, the only Son of God, briefly retelling some of the history we have learned through the Jesse Tree. The Chi-Rho monogram is a combination of the first two letters for the Greek word of Christos, Christ. The introduction of St. John's Gospel, verses 1-34, will take you through John's testimony.

