

Faith magazine of the Diocese of Erie presents
2023 Advent Reflections for the Jesse Tree
A history of salvation as told through
Scripture readings and ornaments

Sunday, December 3 (First Sunday in Advent)

*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.

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Monday, December 4

The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and the tree was 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 knew that 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.

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Tuesday, December 5

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 crawling things that crawl on the earth—and let them abound on the earth and be fertile and multiply 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.

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Wednesday, December 6 (Feast of St. Nicholas)

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.



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Thursday, December 7



...When he looked, although the bush was on fire, it was not being consumed. So, Moses decided, "I must turn aside to look at this remarkable sight. Why does the bush not burn up?" When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to look, God called out to him from the bush: Moses! Moses! He answered, "Here I am." God said: "Do not come near! Remove your 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, and the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

But the LORD said: "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry against their taskmasters, so I know well what they are suffering...Now, go! I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring 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.

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Friday, December 8 (Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary)

This is how you are to eat it: with your loins girt, sandals on your feet and your staff in hand, you will eat it in a hurry. It is the LORD's Passover.

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.

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He took him outside and said: Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so, he added, will your descendants be. Abram put his faith in the LORD, who attributed 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.



Saturday, December 9

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.

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Sunday, December 10 (Second Sunday in Advent)

“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.

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Monday, December 11

“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.

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

As the horns blew, the people began to shout. When they heard the sound of the horn, they raised a tremendous shout. The wall collapsed, and the people attacked the city straight ahead and took it.

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.

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Wednesday, December 13

Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" Jesse replied, "There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep." Samuel said to Jesse, "Send for him; we will not sit down to eat until he arrives here." Jesse had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth with beautiful eyes, and good looking. The LORD said: There — anoint him, for this is the one! Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in 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, 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.

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Thursday, December 14

I will shield and save this city for my own sake and for the sake of David my servant. 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.

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Friday, December 15

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
Upon those who dwelt in a land of gloom
a light has shone.*

Isaiah 9:1

The prophet Isaiah is called to holiness, but he is afraid 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.

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Saturday, December 16

*“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 from 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 because his people have returned to worshipping idols. Read more about Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:4-10, 2:4-13, 7:1-15 and 8:22-9:1-11.

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Sunday, December 17 (Third Sunday in Advent)

*I will stand at my guard post,
and station myself upon the rampart;
I will 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.

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Monday, December 18

But remember the admonition which you addressed to Moses, your servant, when you said: If you prove faithless, I will scatter you among the peoples; but if 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.

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Tuesday, December 19



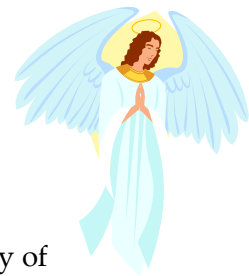
John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire." Luke 3:16

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.

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Wednesday, December 20

"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.

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Thursday, December 21

...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.

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Friday, December 22

He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. 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 was able to speak again, and proclaimed anticipation of the coming of the LORD. You can read the whole story in Luke 1:57-80.

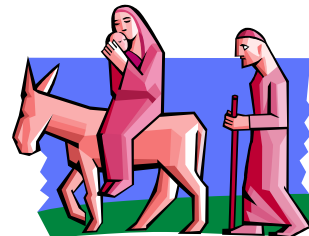
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Saturday, December 23

...behold, 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 name 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.

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Sunday, December 24 (Fourth Sunday in Advent)

"...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 reminds us of the halo of light that signifies his divinity and power. You will find the story in Matthew 2:1-12.

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And for the Vigil Mass

Sunday, December 24 (Christmas Day, Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord)



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.

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Monday, December 25

"...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.

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