

Advent 2019 – The Year of the Jesse Tree

Fourth Week

Most of the information is excerpted from *The Stories of the Old Testament: A Catholic's Guide* by Jim Campbell. Learn more at www.loyolapress.com

Credit: Loyola Press

THE JESSE TREE



Ornament

Pencil and Tablet

ZECHARIAH

His Name Is John

When the angel revealed to aged Zechariah that he would have a son, Zechariah asked for proof. As a result, he was silenced. Zechariah's wife Elizabeth conceived their first child. Elizabeth was grateful to God, "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people." (Luke 1:25) When their son was born, Elizabeth said that he would be called John ("the Lord is gracious"). Elizabeth's relatives objected, as no other family members had the name. Zechariah asked for a tablet and wrote "His name is John." (Luke 1:63) Then Zechariah immediately spoke, blessing and praising God. The relatives were filled with awesome reverence over God's wonderful deeds. Zechariah then proclaimed the prayer which we know from its Latin name the *Benedictus*. Every morning the Church blesses the Lord, the God of Israel, who has visited and set the people free. In this prayer—found in Luke 1:68–79—are the perfect words to prepare us to welcome the celebration of the coming of Jesus.

- The Birth of John *Luke 1:57–66*
- The Cantic of Zechariah *Luke 1:68–79*

THE JESSE TREE



Ornament

Carpenter's Square or Hammer

JOSEPH

Joseph, Do Not Be Afraid

What a wonderful father Joseph was for Jesus. We first meet Joseph in Matthew 1:18–25 as he contemplates how to deal with Mary's pregnancy. Joseph is an honest, caring man who does not want to embarrass Mary, so he intends to divorce her quietly. Imagine his wonderment and joy as he heard from the angel the good news and true identity of Jesus. Joseph continued his caring in times of danger as they escaped to Egypt. Luke speaks of his concern for Jesus when they finally found him in the Temple (Luke 2:41–52). Along the way it is Joseph who had primary responsibility for Jesus' religious education. He would also be the one to teach Jesus the fundamentals of carpentry. In his faithful listening and open heart, Joseph is a model for all to understand and love Jesus whose birth we prepare to celebrate.

- An Angel Appears to Joseph *Matthew 1:18–25*
- The Finding of Jesus in the Temple *Luke 2:41–52*

THE JESSE TREE



Ornament

Manger

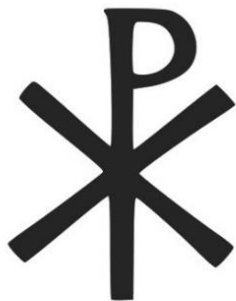
JESUS

Born in Humble Circumstances

Luke connects Jesus' birth to the world-wide stage. The Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus (63 B.C.–14 A.D.) was praised as savior and bringer of peace, which he accomplished by defeating his enemies. Luke contrasts Augustus's accomplishments with Jesus the Savior. While the world looks to the political center for peace, Luke tells us to look at the outskirts of the empire. Jesus is born in humble circumstances. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes as a sign of his humanity. Jesus is laid in a manger, a feeding trough for animals, as a sign that Jesus is to be food for the world. The Gospel of Luke is especially concerned for the poor and the outcast. This concern is never more apparent than in the proclamation of the Savior to the shepherds. Shepherds lived on the margins and were not well respected, yet they were the first to hear of the Messiah. They were also the first to step out in faith to celebrate his birth. When we celebrate Jesus' birth, we will be following in the footsteps of the shepherds. Like Mary, we will have much to reflect upon in our hearts.

- The Birth of Jesus *Luke 2:1–20*

THE JESSE TREE



Ornament

Chi-Rho

CHRIST

In the Beginning Was the Word

When we celebrate Mass on Christmas, the Gospel readings change depending on the time of the Mass. For the Christmas Vigil Mass, the reading is from the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 1:1–25), beginning with the genealogy tracing Jesus' ancestry in the Old Testament and ending with the revelation to Joseph. For Midnight Mass and the Mass at Dawn, the traditional readings are from the Gospel of Luke (Luke 2:1–20). At the Mass for Christmas Day, the reading is from John 1:1–18. The text from John calls us to meditate on the meaning of the stories we have heard. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1) When we are reflecting on Jesus Christ, we are reflecting on God, and through him has come all life. In Jesus, God has become one of us and made his dwelling among us. When we enter into relationship with Jesus Christ, we enter into the heart of God. When we share the love Jesus has won for us, we share the heart of God with one another. The wonder of Christmas reflects this for us and is the gift we bring for one another.

- The Genealogy and Birth of Jesus *Matthew 1:1–25*
- The Birth of Jesus and the Visit of the Shepherds *Luke 2:1–20*
- In the Beginning Was the Word *John 1:1–18*