WHO WAS JESSE?

The prophet Isaiah foretold the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah's words helped people know that the One who was promised to them by God would be born into the family of Jesse.

"A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse and from his roots a bud shall blossom." Isaiah 11:1-10

Jesse of Bethlehem had seven sons. Jesse's youngest son, David, watched over the sheep for him. One day the prophet Samuel came to Jesse's house and met David. Samuel anointed David. Many years later, David became King.

It was from Jesse that the family tree branched out to David and his descendants. Jesse and David were ancestors of Jesus. At the time of Jesus' birth all those who belonged to the family of David had to return to the town of Bethlehem because a census was being taken. Since Joseph and Mary were of the House of David, they had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register.

WHAT IS THE JESSE TREE?

The Jesse Tree is a special tree used during the season of Advent. The Jesse Tree represents the family tree of Jesus. It serves as a reminder of the human family of Jesus.

The uniqueness of the Jesse Tree comes from the ornaments that are used to decorate it. They are symbols that depict the ancestors of Jesus or a prophecy fulfilled at His coming. Traditionally, the Jesse Tree ornaments also included representations of Adam, Eve and Creation. These symbolize the promise.
SUGGESTIONS FOR JESSE TREE ORNAMENTS

Directions: The list of names below are suggestions that can be used for Jesse Tree Ornaments. Make a list of people you would like to include on your Jesse Tree. Read about them in the Bible. Select something about each person that can be used to symbolize them. Select one of the suggested symbols or design a decoration of your own.

Adam: Genesis 1, 2 and 4
Hebrew word for “man”; the man in the Garden of Eden in the creation story; the first man.
Symbols: outline of a man; creation symbols; tree of knowledge.

Eve: Genesis 2, 3 and 4
the name of the first woman; the woman in the Garden of Eden in the creation story; mother of Cain, Abel and Seth.
Symbols: outline of a woman; creation symbols; tree of knowledge.

Noah: Genesis 6, 7, 8 and 9
the hero of the story of the flood; father of Shem, Ham and Japheth.
Symbols: ark; dove; rainbow, olive branch.

Abraham: Genesis 12 and 15
father of the Israelites; was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac to God; made a covenant with God; was promised by God that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars.
Symbols: sword, fire, stars.

Sarah: Genesis 15 and 21
wife of Abraham; a free woman whose son is a son of the promise; she gave birth to Isaac in her old age.
Symbols: outline of a woman; crown; stars.

Isaac: Genesis 21
son of Abraham and Sarah; was almost sacrificed by Abraham in obedience to God; had twin sons, Esau and Jacob, with Rebecca.
Symbols: bundle of twigs, knife.

Jacob: Genesis 25 and 35
son of Isaac and Rebecca; the younger twin of Esau; God changed his name to Israel; had twelve sons; ancestor of the twelve tribes of Israel.
Symbols: ladder, a tree with twelve branches.

Joseph: Genesis 37 and 47
youngest son of Jacob and Rachel; sold into slavery by his brothers; slave traders took him into Egypt.
Symbols: coat of many colors, chains of slavery, silver coins, well, bucket.

Moses: Exodus 19 and 20
led the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt; made a covenant with God; received the commandments.
Symbols: stone tablets, Ten Commandments, burning bush.
Ruth: Judges 4 & 5; the Book of Ruth
accompanied her mother-in-law, Naomi to Bethlehem after the death of her first husband; harvested wheat to support herself and Naomi; married Boaz and had a son, Obed, the grandfather of David; the heroine of the Book of Ruth.
Symbols: sheaf of wheat; a book.

Jesse: 1 Samuel 16 and Isaiah 11
a Bethlehemite; had seven sons; father of King David; mentioned in the prophet Isaiah’s writings as the root from which the Messiah would come.
Symbols: stump; family tree.

David: 1 Samuel 16
son of Jesse; shepherd, played a harp; wrote psalms; was anointed by Samuel, the prophet; killed Goliath; succeeded Saul as king of Israel.
Symbols: star of David, harp, sling shot, crown.

Solomon: 1 Kings 3 and 1 Kings 6
succeeded his father, David as king; built the Temple in Jerusalem; brought wealth and splendor into the king’s court.
Symbols: crown; temple; scales of justice; coins.

Zachary: Luke 1
priest; received a message from the Angel Gabriel that his wife Elizabeth would bear a child in her old age; doubted God’s message and was dumb until the birth of his son, John.
Symbols: incense; priest.

Elizabeth: Luke 1
wife of Zachary, the priest; mother of John the Baptist; cousin of Mary; visited by Mary when she was pregnant; the baby in Elizabeth’s womb leaped with joy; sang a song of praise, the “Magnificat.”
Symbols: open arms; a musical note.

John the Baptist: Isaiah 40; Mark 1
son of Elizabeth and Zachary; prepared the way of the Lord; lived in the desert; preached the baptism of repentence; baptized Jesus in the Jordan River.
Symbols: shell with water; sandals; cactus.

Joseph: Luke 1 and Matthew 13
husband of Mary; foster father of Jesus; born of the House of David; a carpenter; went with Mary to Bethlehem for the census; took Jesus and Mary into Egypt to protect Jesus from Herod.
Symbols: carpenter tools, lily.

Mary: Luke 1
chosen by God to be the Mother of the Messiah; wife of Joseph; gave birth to Christ in Bethlehem.
Symbols: the letter M; a lily

Jesus: Matthew 1 and Luke 1
the fulfillment of the promise; the Messiah; Redeemer; Son of God and Son of Mary.
Symbols: chi rho; the word, “Emmanuel” or “Messiah;” a cross or a star.