

*But a shoot shall sprout from the
stump of Jesse, and from his roots
a bud shall blossom.*

Isaiah 11:1

The Jesse Tree



The tree of Jesse was a common subject in medieval and early Renaissance art, representing the royal genealogy of Christ from Jesse, father of David (Matthew 1:1-17). The image of the tree was taken from Isaiah 11:1: "But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom." The shoot has been interpreted as the Blessed Virgin Mary and the blossom as Jesus Christ, her son. In the 11th century, the Jesse Tree began to appear in German miniature painting, after it appeared throughout Europe in manuscripts, stained glass and sculpture.

Its Advent theme makes it a fitting Christmas subject, and today the Jesse Tree - or Christ Tree - is used in many forms to emphasize the true meaning of Christmas and the application it has in our lives as Christians - that the first coming of Christ in the past occurred for the sake of His second coming in the future.

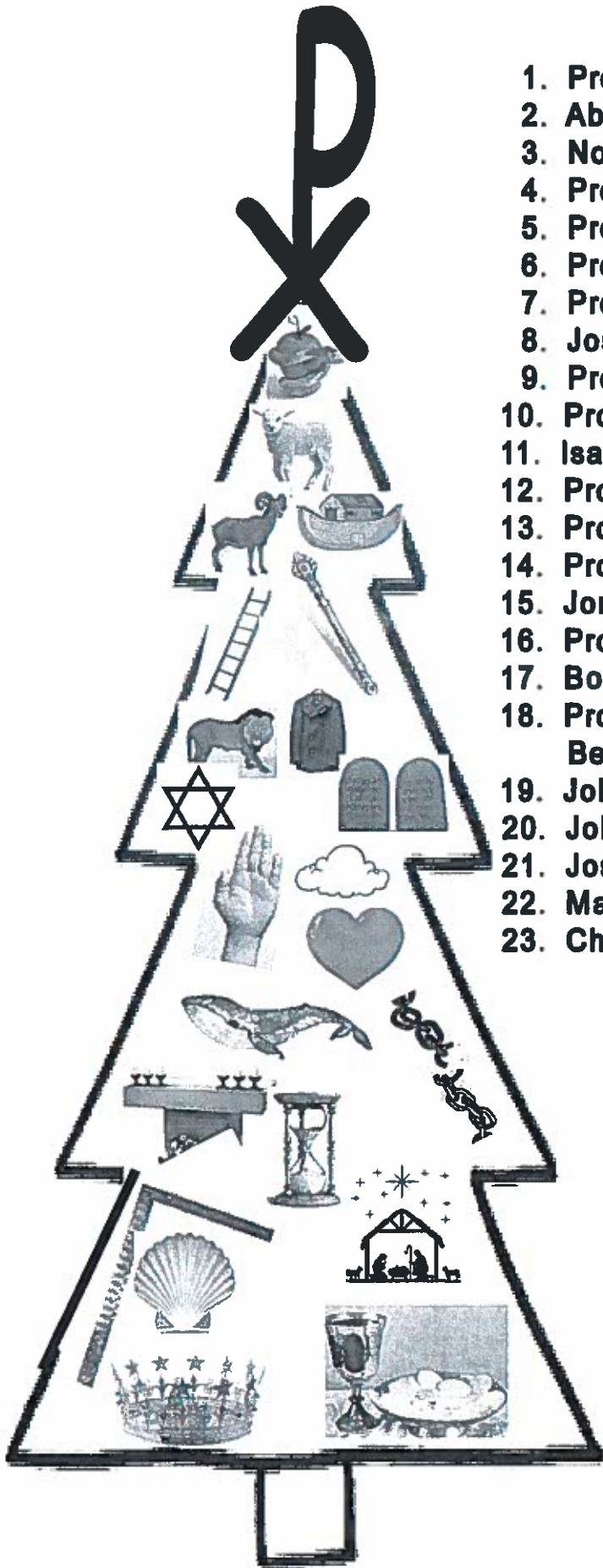
Your Jesse Tree can be very elaborate and detailed or it can be a simple construction-paper project for small school children. The tree itself can be the familiar evergreen, maple, oak or any common tree. It may even be made of construction paper or felt cut into the shape of a tree, and attached to a wall or a bulletin board. The ornaments and symbols may be made of paper, cardboard, covered plywood, or styrofoam. They can be decorated with sequins, plastic flowers, beads, fringe, ribbon and glitter.

It is suggested that each symbol be ceremoniously added to the tree each day during Advent. What is most important is to stress the meaning of each symbol, rather than just "decorating the tree" with the children.

The symbols review Christ in prophecy. However, other designs may be developed from symbols of the early Church, symbols used in the Bible, and new interpretations which have some relationship to the life of Christ. If you use more durable materials for your Jesse Tree symbols, they may be kept from year to year, adding one or two each year, thus developing a meaningful tradition and providing the opportunity to express in new ways God's love for us in sending his son as our Redeemer.

Transforming the traditional Christmas tree into a Jesse tree that faithfully represents the meaning and birth of Christ is one of the most effective ways that we can truly live the liturgy. It is the sign of a Christian family when He comes.

JESSE TREE AND SUGGESTED SYMBOLS



1. Promise Given to Adam and Eve...Serpent and Fruit
2. Abel - Type of Christ Slain Lamb
3. Noah.....Ark
4. Promise Given to Abraham.....Ram
5. Promise Given to Jacob.....Ladder, Star
6. Promise Given to Judah I..... Scepter
7. Promise Given to Judah IILion
8. Joseph - Type of Christ Coat
9. Promise Given to Moses Tables of Law
10. Prophecy of David Star of David
11. Isaiah Hand
12. Prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah Cloud
13. Prophecies of Jeremiah New Heart
14. Prophecy of Ezekiel Broken Chain
15. Jonah - Figure of Christ Whale
16. Prophecy of Malachi Altar
17. Book of Daniel Hour Glass
18. Prophecy of Micah Circumscribed Silhouette of Bethlehem
19. John the Baptist I Shell
20. John the Baptist II Lamb of God
21. Joseph, Foster Father of Jesus .. Carpenter's Square
22. Mary, the Mother of Jesus Crown of 12 Stars
23. Christ Our Savior Chi-Rho