

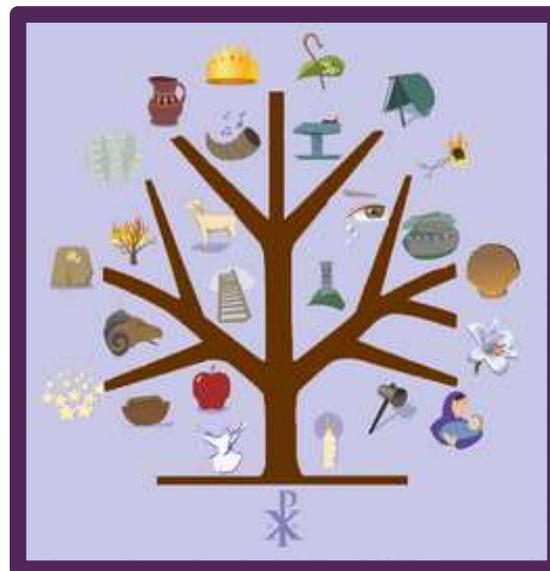
ADVENT

2018



The Jesse

Tree



December 2, 2018

The 1st Sunday of Advent

The Candle of Hope



*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.*
- Isaiah 11:1

That single verse provides the roots of our exploration this Advent season. As we wait to celebrate the birth of Christ, we'll take the time to learn more about His ancestors. Many of the people we'll meet in this booklet are directly in Jesus' lineage. Others, although not direct relatives, are important parts of our Faith Story. They can help remind us of the pillars of the Advent Season – Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Similarly, our own families can be sources of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. Each day as we reflect upon a person from our Biblical family, let us also take time to think about, remember, and/or pray for a member of our own family.

Consider creating your own Jesse & Family tree. Use the symbols for each day and write the name or add a picture of your own family member for the back of each ornament.



Prayer: Lord, you have provided us with Sacred Scripture that show us lives of Hope – of knowing that You will do what You say You will do. You filled our ancestors with visions of Your promise. Help us prepare our hearts – filling them with the love, joy, and peace of the season and with the hope of the Second Coming. We ask this in Your Holy Name. Amen.

December 3 - Adam:



So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. – Genesis 3:6-7

Where else could we start our Jesse tree than with the father of humanity – Adam. As with all humans he was susceptible to sin. This Original Sin distanced us from God. This is why Christ is sometimes referred to as the New Adam. He marked the beginning of a new creation, forgiving sin and restoring humanity to God's grace. For more about Adam (and Eve) read Genesis 2:4-3:24.

December 4 - Noah:



Then God said to Noah, "Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." - Genesis 8:15-17

Noah's story gives us much hope. We recognize our own sinfulness and that around us. Yet because of God's faithfulness to His children, He also sees the best in us. Through Noah, He renewed His covenant with us through forgiveness and mercy. Read Genesis 6:11-22, 7:1-8:22 for the full story of Noah.

From God's Family to Yours: As we reach back to the VERY beginning of Jesus' (and all humanity's) roots, who do you recall from earliest of your family tree? Are there special stories to share with young family members?

December 5 – Abraham:

He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness. - Genesis 15:5-6



These words were more than Abraham could hope for – being advanced in years and childless to this point. How could he have descendants as numerous as the stars? Because of his faith in the words of the Lord, he maintained that hope. And, as always, God was true to His word. To learn more about Abraham’s (and Sarah’s) hopes and Faith in God, read Genesis 12:1-7, 15:1-6

December 6 – Abraham and Isaac:



But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” - Genesis 22:11-12

After having been blessed with a son when God kept his promise, Abraham was still willing to give him up if that’s what God wanted. The story of Abraham’s love of and commitment to God can be found in Abraham Genesis 22:1-19.

From God’s Family to Yours: WOW! Abraham trusted God when He said, “Go!” when He said he would have a son, when He told him to sacrifice that special son. Have you seen anyone in your family display great trust in God? Share stories of family members who have shown their trust in God.

December 7 - Jacob:

And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” - Genesis 28:12-15



At the time of his dream, Jacob was running from the anger of his brother. His fear subsided when he woke from the dream and exclaimed, “Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!” He recognized the ladder as the vehicle that reunited the earth to the divine. He was comforted knowing that God was with him and in the land that would someday be his. God’s promise and the rest of Jacob’s story (including why his brother, Esau was angry) can be found in Genesis 27:41-28:22.

December 8 – Joseph:

During the seven plenteous years the earth produced abundantly. He gathered up all the food of the seven years when there was plenty in the land of Egypt, and stored up food in the cities; he stored up in every city the food from the fields around it. So Joseph stored up grain in such abundance—like the sand of the sea—that he stopped measuring it; it was beyond measure. - Genesis 41:47-49



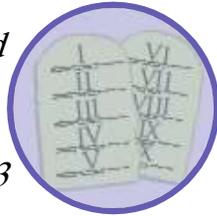
Like Jacob, his son Joseph also had brothers who were angry with him. They cast him out – sold him into slavery. But while enslaved and even while imprisoned, he never lost his faith in God. And the ever faithful God not only kept him safe, but used him to save the lives of many others, including his brothers, from a long famine. Read Genesis 37-50 for details.

December 9, 2018

The 2nd Sunday of Advent

The Candle of Peace and Preparation

Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. – Exodus 20:2-3



And so starts God's deliverance of the Ten Commandments to Moses. Before this, Moses had led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and kept them safe as they started life in the desert. Now God gave Moses the rules to live by. The rules that can bring us peace and prepare us for eternal life with our Lord.

When we take a moment to step away from the preparations of our homes, we can take time to prepare our hearts to celebrate the First Coming of Jesus, and our souls to be ready for the Second Coming. By spending time in this form of preparation, we can find the peace that comes from growing in our faith, the peace that Jesus provided for us by coming to earth to take away our sins, the peace in knowing that we are loved by God!



Prayer: Lord God, help us to make time to look beyond the chaos of the season so we can see You. Keep our eyes fixed on the reason for the season and our hearts open to the peace that lies in knowing You and knowing You are coming back. We ask this in Your Holy Name. Amen.

December 10 – Aaron & Moses:

This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the Lord. – Exodus 12:11



This passage certainly was not a time of peace. Moses and his brother were working hard to escape their enslavement in Egypt. Although the time in Egypt, and for many years which followed, were not easy or peaceful, God kept them safe and, eventually, fulfilled His promise of bringing the Israelites to the promised land. To discover more about their enslavement and escape read Exodus 2:1-4:20

December 11 - Joshua:

So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it. – Joshua 6:20

As God demonstrated with the birth of Isaac in Abraham's old age and through many other miraculous stories, all things are possible with God – even bringing down a great wall with the sounds of trumpets! Read the whole story of this triumphant entrance into the Promised Land in Joshua 1:1-11, 6:1-20



December 12 - Gideon:

So the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the jars, holding in their left hands the torches, and in their right hands the trumpets to blow; and they cried, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" Every man stood in his place all around the camp, and all the men in camp ran; they cried out and fled. – Judges 7:20-21



Gideon felt inadequate to carry out God's he was an unimportant person from a weak an unimportant family. Yet God chose him to lead the attack. God helped Gideon's 300 men defeat more than 100,000 Midianites. The sneak attack that God orchestrated can be found in chapter 7 of Judges.

December 13 - Samuel:

As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. – 1 Samuel 3:19



Samuel, son of Elkanah and Hannah, was repeatedly called by God. Once priest Eli helped him recognize the Lord's call, Samuel adhered to God's instruction without fail. He became a powerful prophet and Judge. Sadly, Samuel's sons did not follow God or Samuel's ways. Because they led for personal gain and without justice, Israel asked for an earthly king. Despite Samuel's warning of the dangers of having a king, he complied and at God's prompting anointed Saul. The details of Samuel's reign and the beginning of the reign of kings can be found in 1 Samuel 3:1-21, 7:1-8:22, 9:15-10:9.

December 14 - David:

Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah. – 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. As Jesus came from the line of Jesse and David, he too became a shepherd of the people – laying down his life for others. Read 1 Samuel 16, 17 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17 for more.

December 15 - Elijah:



At the time of the offering of the oblation, the prophet Elijah came near and said, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God." – 1 Kings 18:36-39

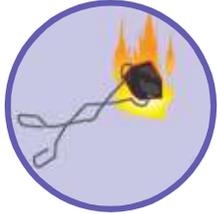
The prophet Elijah is called by God to dispel the myths of false gods increasingly worshipped by the people. He built a stone altar and called on God to consecrate it with fire. This demonstrated for the people to true light of God. This amazing demonstration of God's power is in 1 Kings 17:1-16, 18:17-46.

From God's Family to Yours: Many of the people we're meeting this week lived during tumultuous times. Yet God used them to bring peace and a better understanding of Him. Who in your family has brought peace during difficult times? Who needs your prayers for peace in their lives now?

December 16, 2018

The 3rd Sunday of Advent

The Candle of Joy



*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
Upon those who lived in a land of gloom
a light has shone – Isaiah 9:1*

What a great verse to reflect upon on the day we light the Candle of Joy! This verse is promising a light – a very special light – which is Jesus. Jesus refers to Himself as the Light of the World (John 8:12) – promising to all who follow him that they will never walk in darkness. But He recognizes that light is necessary even when He is not walking among us. Therefore, He also reminds us that we are to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). He wants us to bring His light to others.

Although the Advent and Christmas seasons often bring much happiness, the true Joy of the season can only come to us through faith in Jesus. By taking time to read through the Book of Isaiah, we may be able to grow in our faith as we see SO many examples of God keeping the promises He made through His prophets. The fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies are recorded in the Gospels as they reveal the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The more we grow in our own faith, the easier it is to be the light that grows the faith in others.

Prayer: Lord God, as we continue our journey towards our celebration of the birth of Jesus, help us continue our journey of faith as well. Help us become closer to You so that we can truly experience the Joy of the season. We ask this in Your Holy Name. Amen.



December 17 - Jeremiah:

*O that my head were a spring of water,
and my eyes a fountain of tears,
so that I might weep day and night
for the slain of my poor people! – Jeremiah 9:1*



Jeremiah was not experiencing any happiness, let alone joy, at this time when Judah had been exiled. He saw no way out for his people and wept for them – knowing he did not have enough tears to express his sorrows. The prophet tried to explain the exile as a response to the people's continued worship of idols. However, through this he also told them of God's promise of restoration of His people.

December 18 - Habakkuk :



*Yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will exult in the God of my salvation
God, the Lord is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
and makes me tread upon the heights
– Habakkuk 3:18-19*

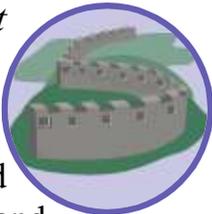
There is a lot to reflect on in the very short book of Habakkuk! He questions God's lack of punishment for the wicked things his people do. He questions the type of punishment God plans. Yet in the end, even though he still doesn't understand everything, he accepts that God knows what He is doing and praises him with joy and puts all his trust in Him. Accepting that God is in control of our lives and He knows what He's doing is a great way for us to find Joy this season and always. Read the book of Habakkuk to see him standing in the watchtower for God's answers.

From God's Family to Yours: In a perfect world, all of our relatives would be joyful and bring us joy. Sadly, we don't live in a perfect world. Who can you pray for that needs to find the kind of peace only God can bring? Who can you bring happiness to so they are open to God's joy?

December 19 - Nehemiah:

Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are under the farthest skies, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place at which I have chosen to establish my name.'

– Nehemiah 1:8-9



Nehemiah used these words in a prayer to God as he asked forgiveness for the bad things he and the Israelites had done. He also asked for His support as he approached the King to permission and aid to rebuild the wall in Judah. His prayer was answered and the wall quickly rebuild. Eventually, this wall was also used to help the Israelites keep the Sabbath holy. To learn more about how he built the wall and protected the city from their enemies, read Nehemiah 1:1-2:8, 6:15-16, 13:10-22

December 20 - Elizabeth:

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the unborn baby inside her jumped, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she said to Mary, "God has blessed you more than any other woman. And God has blessed the baby you will have."

– Luke 1:41-42



With less than a week to go in Advent, we have made it to the New Testament where we'll meet some closer relatives of Jesus – starting with His mother's cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth was with child at the same time as Mary. She had been blessed with the miracle of a son in her old age. Elizabeth's story can be found in Luke 1:39-56

From God's Family to Yours: Which aunts, uncles, cousins or other extended family members could use your prayers this week? Can they use a phone call from you, too?

December 21 - Zechariah:

He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. – Luke 1:63

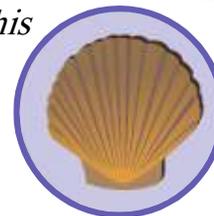


When Elizabeth gave birth to a son, family and friends expected him to be named after his father, Zechariah. But Zechariah, unable to speak, wrote on a tablet that the child should be named John as God had instructed. Because of his obedience, Zechariah regained his voice and proclaimed anticipation of the coming of the Lord. This miracle is written in Luke 1:57-80

December 22 - John:

John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

This miracle baby of Elizabeth and Zechariah grew up to be known as John the Baptist. John proclaimed the coming of a new savior and renewed life for all through the repentance of sins. Pieces of John's life are recorded in Luke 1:57-80, 3:1-20, 7:18-30



December 23, 2018

The 4th Sunday of Advent

The Candle of Love



The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”... Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.” – Luke 1:30-33, 38

In so many ways Mary is the embodiment of Love. Her love of God enabled her to say, “Yes” when she was approached by Gabriel. She provided a mother’s love to Jesus throughout His life on earth. She provides us with a role model to emulate and a mother to all of us who is always available to listen to us.

The lighting of this candle draws attention to another Love. The Incarnation of Love itself. The greatest love – the love of a wonderful Father giving us His only Son so that we may have Eternal Life with Him. This week, as we celebrate the first coming of Christ as an infant – let us also take a moment to remind ourselves of the time yet unknown when Christ will return and again shed His light over us.

Prayer: Lord God, You gave us your only Son to teach us of Your love for us. Help us spread that love through word and action to all those we meet this week and throughout the year. We ask this in Your Holy Name. Amen.



From God’s Family to Yours: These final days of Advent we celebrate the Holy Family, but let us also remember (and pray for!) our own families: mothers and fathers and all those who are like mothers and fathers to each of us. Of course as we celebrate the Christ Child, let’s also celebrate (and pray for!) all the children in our own lives.

December 24 - Joseph:



But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet. – 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. Not much is written about Joseph, but his love of God and devotion to the safety of Jesus can be found in Matthew 1:19-25, 2:13-15, 19-23

December 25 - Jesus:

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” – Luke 2:10-12



Christ Jesus is born and laid in a lowly manger! Shepherds are instructed by angels to witness the miracle of this child’s birth to show homage and spread the good news! This Christmas read the story of Jesus’ birth in Luke 2:1-15

May the love of your family
help you enjoy the celebration
of Jesus' birth and the entire
Christmas season.

May the stories of Jesus' family
lead you through a life of faith
focused on Jesus Christ.



Merry Christmas!

Many online resources were referenced to create this booklet. The most important of these was <https://www.eriescd.org/Jesse-Tree-Ornaments-1.html>

Illustrations by Carolyn Pikoulas and the foundation of this text came from Anne-Marie Welsh of Faith magazine, published by the Diocese of Erie. Biblical verses came from the New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition as found on <https://www.biblegateway.com>