

Prayer before the Jesse Tree

Suggestions for use

The Jesse Tree resource can be used as a focus for personal and family prayer online. Families might decide to create their own Jesse Tree at home, making the various decorations and hanging them on a branch or tree, one for each day.

Printed out and either laminated or framed, this resource can also be used for prayer during private visits to the church, as well as a support for those parishes where a Jesse Tree is normally used during Advent.

The resource could also form the basis for online liturgies during Advent with the addition of some of the music suggestions given for each week.

If we can have congregations present in our churches around the end of the Advent season, this resource, could be used as the basis for a prayer service.

Link to Jesse Tree resources

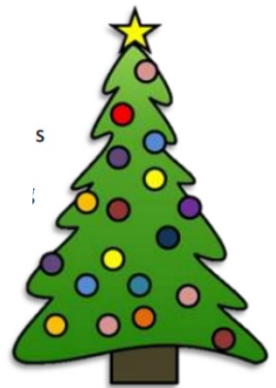
<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/advent/the-jesse-tree/>

The Jesse Tree

Sunday: What is a Jesse Tree?

A Jesse Tree represents the family tree of Jesus Christ. Each ornament represents a story from the Bible that tells about God's people before Jesus was born. Each story shows God's salvation plan and tell how He guided humanity to prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

The tradition of the Jesse Tree dates back to the middle ages. The name "Jesse Tree" comes from Isaiah 11.1, "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit." Jesse is the father of King David. The saviour was to come from David's family line.



Music Suggestions for use with Jesse Tree:

- O'Come, o' come Emmanuel (Veritas Hymnal & 100 Carols for Choirs)
- See How the Rose of Juda (Veritas Hymnal)
- Lo, How a Rose is Blooming (100 Carols for Choirs)
- Much of the music with relevance to the Jesse Tree is aimed at children, and many examples can be found in the Children's Section of Hymns Old and New Liturgical

Monday: Adam and Eve

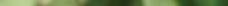


Now the snake was the most cunning-of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He asked the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat from any of the trees in the garden’?”

The woman answered the snake: “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘you shall not eat it or even touch it, or else you will die.’”

But the snake said to the woman: “You certainly will not die!

God knows well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know- good and evil.”

 The woman saw that the tree was good for food and 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. **Genesis 3: 1-7**

Tuesday : Noah and the flood

I will establish my covenant with you. You shall go into the ark, you and your sons, your wife and your sons' wives with you.

Of all living creatures you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, one male and one female, to keep them alive along with you.

Of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal, and of every kind of thing that crawls on the ground, two of each will come to you that you may keep them alive.

Moreover, you are to provide yourself with all the food that is to be eaten, and store it away, that it may serve as provisions for you and for them.



Noah complied; he did just as God had commanded him. **Genesis 6:18-22**

Wednesday : Abraham and the Covenant



Sometime afterward, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: Do not fear, Abram! I am your shield; I will make your reward very great.

But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what can you give me, if I die childless and have only a servant of my household, Eliezer of Damascus?”

Abram continued, “Look, you have given me no offspring, so a servant of my household will be my heir.”

Then the word of the LORD came to him: No, that one will not be your heir; your own offspring will be your heir.

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. **Genesis 15: 1-5**

Thursday: Isaac

Sometime afterward, God put Abraham to the test and said to him: Abraham! “Here I am!” he replied.

Then God said: Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you.

Early the next morning Abraham saddled his donkey, took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac, and after cutting the wood for the burnt offering, set out for the place of which God had told him.

On the third day Abraham caught sight of the place from a distance.

Abraham said to his servants: “Stay here with the donkey, while the boy and I go on over there. We will worship and then come back to you.”

So Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two walked on together,

Isaac spoke to his father Abraham. “Father!” he said. “Here I am,” he replied. Isaac continued, “Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?”

“My son,” Abraham answered, “God will provide the sheep for the burnt offering.” Then the two walked on together. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Next he bound* his son Isaac, and put him on top of the wood on the altar.

Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.

But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, “Abraham, Abraham!” “Here I am,” he answered.

“Do not lay your hand on the boy,” said the angel. “Do not do the least thing to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you did not withhold from me your son, your only one.”

Abraham looked up and saw a single ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. **Genesis 22: 1-13**



Friday: Jacob's Dream



Jacob departed from Beer-Sheba and proceeded toward Haran.

When he came upon a certain place, he stopped there for the night, since the sun had already set. Taking one of the stones at the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place.

Then he had a dream: a stairway^{*} rested on the ground, with its top reaching to the heavens; and God's angels were going up and down on it.

And there was the LORD standing beside him and saying: I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you are lying I will give to you and your descendants.

Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and through them you will spread to the west and the east, to the north and the south. In you and your descendants all the families of the earth will find blessing.

I am with you and 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.

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he said, "Truly, the LORD is in this place and I did not know it!"

He was afraid and said: "How awesome this place is! This is nothing else but the house of God, the gateway to heaven!" Genesis 28: 10-17

Saturday: Joseph and God's providence

When Jacob learned that grain rations were for sale in Egypt, he said to his sons: "Why do you keep looking at one another?" He went on, "I hear that grain is for sale in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, that we may stay alive and not die." So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he thought some disaster might befall him.

And so the sons of Israel were among those who came to buy grain, since there was famine in the land of Canaan. Joseph, as governor of the country, was the one who sold grain to all the people of the land. When Joseph's brothers came, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.

He recognized them as soon as he saw them. But he concealed his own identity from them and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked them. They answered, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food."

When Joseph recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him, he was reminded of the dreams he had about them. He said to them: "You are spies. You have come to see the weak points of the land."

"No, my lord," they replied. "On the contrary, your servants have come to buy food. All of us are sons of the same man. We are honest men; your servants have never been spies." But he answered them: "Not so! It is the weak points of the land that you have come to see."

"We your servants," they said, "are twelve brothers, sons of a certain man in Canaan; but the youngest one is at present with our father, and the other one is no more." "It is just as I said," Joseph persisted; "you are spies. This is how you shall be tested: I swear by the life of Pharaoh that you shall not leave here unless your youngest brother comes here."

So send one of your number to get your brother, while the rest of you stay here under arrest. Thus will your words be tested for their truth; if they are untrue, as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!"

With that, he locked them up in the guardhouse for three days. On the third day Joseph said to them: "Do this, and you shall live; for I am a God-fearing man. If you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in this prison, while the rest of you go and take home grain for your starving families. But you must bring me your youngest brother. Your words will thus be verified, and you will not die." To this they agreed.

To one another, however, they said: "Truly we are being punished because of our brother. We saw the anguish of his heart when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen. That is why this anguish has now come upon us." Then Reuben responded, "Did I not tell you, 'Do no wrong to the boy'? But you would not listen! Now comes the reckoning for his blood."

They did not know, of course, that Joseph understood what they said, since he spoke with them through an interpreter. But turning away from them, he wept. When he was able to speak to them again, he took Simeon from among them and bound him before their eyes.

Then Joseph gave orders to have their containers filled with grain, their money replaced in each one's sack, and provisions given them for their journey. After this had been done for them, they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed. Genesis 42: 1-26



Second week of Advent

Sunday: Moses



Meanwhile Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock beyond the wilderness, he came to the mountain of God, Horeb.

There the angel of the LORD appeared to him as fire flaming out of a bush. 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. **Exodus 3:1-6**

Monday: The Israelites

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt:

This month will stand at the head of your calendar; you will reckon it the first month of the year.

Tell the whole community of Israel: On the tenth of this month every family must procure for itself a lamb, one apiece for each household.

If a household is too small for a lamb, it along with its nearest neighbour will procure one, and apportion the lamb's cost* in proportion to the number of persons, according to what each household consumes.

Your lamb must be a year-old male and without blemish. You may take it from either the sheep or the goats.

You will keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, and then, with the whole community of Israel assembled, it will be slaughtered during the evening twilight.

They will take some of its blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.

They will consume its meat that same night, eating it roasted with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Exodus 12:1-8



Tuesday: Moses and Aaron



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 not have other gods beside me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth;

You shall not bow down before them or serve them. For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their ancestors' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation; but showing love down to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not invoke the name of the LORD, your God, in vain. For the LORD will not leave unpunished anyone who invokes his name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day—keep it holy.

Six days you may labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God. You shall not do any work, either you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your work animal, or the resident alien within your gates.

For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD has blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Honour your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

You shall not kill.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, his male or female slave, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour. **Exodus 20: 1-17**

Wednesday: Joshua

Many years later, after the LORD had given the Israelites rest from all their enemies round about them, and when Joshua was old and advanced in years, he summoned all Israel, including their elders, leaders, judges, and officers, and said to them:

“I am old and advanced in years.

You have seen all that the LORD, your God, has done for you against all these nations; for it has been the LORD, your God, who fought for you.

See, I have apportioned among your tribes as their heritage the nations that survive, as well as those I destroyed, between the Jordan and the Great Sea in the west. The LORD, your God, will drive them out and dispossess them at your approach, so that you will take possession of their land as the LORD, your God, promised you.

Therefore be strong and be careful to observe all that is written in the book of the Law of Moses, never turning from it right or left, or mingling with these nations that survive among you. You must not invoke their gods by name, or swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them, but you must hold fast to the LORD, your God, as you have done up to this day.

At your approach the LORD has dispossessed great and strong nations; not one has withstood you up to this day. One of you puts to flight a thousand, because it is the LORD, your God, himself who fights for you, as he promised you.

As for you, take great care to love the LORD, your God. For if you ever turn away from him and join with the remnant of these nations that survive among you, by intermarrying and intermingling with them, know for certain that the LORD, your God, will no longer dispossess these nations at your approach.

Instead they will be a snare and a trap for you, a scourge for your sides and thorns for your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD, your God, has given you. “Today, as you see, I am going the way of all the earth.* So now acknowledge with your whole heart and soul that not one of all the promises the LORD, your God, made concerning you has failed. Everyone has come true for you; not one has failed. Joshua 23: 1-14



Thursday: Gideon



“My lord,” Gideon said to him, “if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are his wondrous deeds about which our ancestors told us when they said, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ For now the LORD has abandoned us and has delivered us into the power of Midian.”

The LORD turned to him and said: Go with the strength you have, and save Israel from the power of Midian. Is it not I who send you?

But he answered him, “Please, my Lord, how can I save Israel? My family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the most insignificant in my father’s house.”

The LORD said to him: I will be with you, and you will cut down

Midian to the last man.

He answered him, “If you look on me with favour, give me a sign that you are the one speaking with me.

Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my offering and set it before you.” He answered: I will await your return.

So Gideon went off and prepared a young goat and an ephah of flour in the form of unleavened cakes. Putting the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, he brought them out to him under the terebinth and presented them.

The messenger of God said to him: Take the meat and unleavened cakes and lay them on this rock; then pour out the broth. When he had done so,

the messenger of the LORD stretched out the tip of the staff he held. When he touched the meat and unleavened cakes, a fire came up from the rock and consumed the meat and unleavened cakes. Then the messenger of the LORD disappeared from sight.

Gideon, now aware that it had been the messenger of the LORD, said, “Alas, Lord GOD that I have seen the messenger of the LORD face to face!”

The LORD answered him: You are safe. Do not fear. You shall not die.

So Gideon built there an altar to the LORD and called it Yahweh-shalom. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. Judges 6: 13-24

Friday: Ruth



Naomi said to her daughters-in-law, “Go back, each of you to your mother’s house. May the LORD show you the same kindness as you have shown to the deceased and to me.

May the LORD guide each of you to find a husband and a home in which you will be at rest.” She kissed them good-bye, but they wept aloud, crying, “No! We will go back with you, to your people.”

Naomi replied, “Go back, my daughters. Why come with me? Have I other sons in my womb who could become your husbands?

Go, my daughters, for I am too old to marry again. Even if I had any such hope, or if tonight I had a husband and were to bear sons, would you wait for them and deprive yourselves of husbands until those sons grew up? No, my daughters, my lot is too bitter for you, because the LORD has extended his hand against me.”

Again they wept aloud; then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her.

“See now,” she said, “your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her god. Go back after your sister-in-law!”

But Ruth said, “Do not press me to go back and abandon you!

Wherever you go I will go, wherever you lodge I will lodge.

Your people shall be my people and your God, my God.
Where you die I will die, and there be buried.

May the LORD do thus to me, and more, if even death separates me from you!”
Naomi then ceased to urge her, for she saw she was determined to go with her.

Ruth 1: 8-18

Saturday: Samuel



During the time young Samuel was minister to the LORD under Eli, the word of the LORD was scarce and vision infrequent.

One day Eli was asleep in his usual place. His eyes had lately grown so weak that he could not see. The lamp of God was not yet extinguished, and Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was. The LORD called to Samuel, who answered, "Here I am." He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am. You called me." "I did not call you," Eli answered. "Go back to sleep." So he went back to sleep.

Again the LORD called Samuel, who rose and went to Eli. "Here I am," he said. "You called me." But he answered, "I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep." Samuel did not yet recognize the LORD, since the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

The LORD called Samuel again, for the third time. Getting up and going to Eli, he said, "Here I am. You called me." Then Eli understood that the LORD was calling the youth.

So he said to Samuel, "Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" When Samuel went to sleep in his place, the LORD came and stood there, calling out as before: Samuel, Samuel! Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

The LORD said to Samuel: I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears it ring. On that day I will carry out against Eli everything I have said about his house, beginning to end. I announce to him that I am condemning his house once and for all, because of this crime: though he knew his sons were blaspheming God, he did not reprove them. Therefore, I swear to Eli's house: No sacrifice or offering will ever expiate its crime.

Samuel then slept until morning, when he got up early and opened the doors of the temple of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, but Eli called to him, "Samuel, my son!" He replied, "Here I am." Then Eli asked, "What did he say to you? Hide nothing from me! May God do thus to you, and more, if you hide from me a single thing he told you."

So Samuel told him everything, and held nothing back. Eli answered, "It is the LORD. What is pleasing in the LORD's sight, the LORD will do."**1 Samuel 3: 1-17**

Sunday: David



Samuel did as the LORD had commanded him. When he entered Bethlehem, the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and asked, “Is your visit peaceful, O seer?”

He replied: “Yes! I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. So purify yourselves and celebrate with me today.” He also had Jesse and his sons purify themselves and invited them to the sacrifice.

As they came, he looked at Eliab and thought, “Surely the anointed is here before the LORD.”

But the LORD said to Samuel: Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The LORD looks into the heart.

Then Jesse called Abinadab and presented him before Samuel, who said, “The LORD has not chosen him.”

Next Jesse presented Shammah, but Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.”

In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any one of these.”

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. Then Samuel set out for Ramah. 1 Samuel 16: 4-13

Monday: Elijah

Now the famine in Samaria was severe, and Ahab had summoned Obadiah, master of his palace, who greatly revered the LORD.

When Jezebel was slaughtering the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets, hid them away by fifties in caves, and supplied them with food and water.

Ahab said to Obadiah, “Go through the land to all sources of water and to all the wadies. We may find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, so that we shall not have to slaughter any of the beasts.”

Dividing the land to explore between them, Ahab went one way by himself, Obadiah another way by himself.

As Obadiah was on his way, Elijah met him. Recognizing him, Obadiah fell prostrate and asked, “Is it you, my lord Elijah?”

He said to him, “Yes. Go tell your lord, ‘Elijah is here!’”

But Obadiah said, “What sin has your servant committed, that you are handing me over to Ahab to be killed?

As the LORD, your God, lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent in search of you. When they replied, ‘He is not here,’ he made each kingdom and nation swear they could not find you.

And now you say, ‘Go tell your lord: Elijah is here!’

After I leave you, the spirit of the LORD will carry you to some place I do not know, and when I go to inform Ahab and he does not find you, he will kill me—though your servant has revered the LORD from his youth!

Have you not been told, my lord, what I did when Jezebel was murdering the prophets of the LORD—that I hid a hundred of the prophets of the LORD, fifty each in caves, and supplied them with food and water?

And now you say, ‘go tell your lord: Elijah is here!’ He will kill me!”

Elijah answered, “As the LORD of hosts lives, whom I serve, I will present myself to him today.” **1 Kings 18: 3-15**



Tuesday: Hezekiah



In the third year of Hoshea, son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, king of Judah, became king.

He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi, daughter of Zechariah.

He did what was right in the LORD's sight, just as David his father had done.

It was he who removed the high places, shattered the pillars, cut down the asherah, and smashed the bronze serpent Moses had made, because up to that time the

Israelites were burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.)

He put his trust in the LORD, the God of Israel; and neither before nor after him was there anyone like him among all the kings of Judah.

Hezekiah held fast to the LORD and never turned away from following him, but observed the commandments the LORD had given Moses.

The LORD was with him, and he succeeded in all he set out to do. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.

It was he who struck the Philistines as far as Gaza, and all its territory from guard post to garrisoned town.

In the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea, son of Elah, king of Israel, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, attacked Samaria and laid siege to it,

and after three years they captured it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, the ninth year of Hoshea, king of Israel, Samaria was taken.

The king of Assyria then deported the Israelites to Assyria and led them off to Halah, and the Habor, a river of Gozan, and the cities of the Medes.

This happened because they did not obey the LORD, their God, but violated his covenant; they did not obey nor do all that Moses, the servant of the LORD, commanded. 2 Kings 18: 1-12

Wednesday: Isaiah



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This happened because they did not obey the LORD, their God, but violated his covenant; they did not obey nor do all that Moses, the servant of the LORD, commanded. **Isaiah 9: 1-6**

Thursday: Jeremiah



The word came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

Stand at the gate of the house of the LORD and proclaim this message there: Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD!

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Reform your ways and your deeds so that I may dwell with you in this place.

Do not put your trust in these deceptive words: “The temple of the LORD! The temple of the LORD! The temple of the LORD!”

Only if you thoroughly reform your ways and your deeds; if each of you deals justly with your neighbour; if you no longer oppress the alien,* the orphan, and the widow; if you no longer shed innocent blood in this place or follow after other gods to your own harm, only then will I let you continue to dwell in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors long ago and forever.

But look at you! You put your trust in deceptive words to your own loss!

Do you think you can steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, sacrifice to Baal, follow other gods that you do not know, and then come and stand in my presence in this house, which bears my name, and say: “We are safe! We can commit all these abominations again!”?

Has this house which bears my name become in your eyes a den of thieves? I have seen it for myself—oracle of the LORD.

Go to my place at Shiloh,* where I made my name dwell in the beginning. See what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel.

And now, because you have committed all these deeds—oracle of the LORD—because you did not listen, though I spoke to you untiringly, and because you did not answer, though I called you, I will do to this house, which bears my name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your ancestors, exactly what I did to Shiloh.

I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast away all your kindred, all the offspring of Ephraim. **Jeremiah 7:1-15**

Friday: Habakkuk

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.

Then the LORD answered me and said:

Write down the vision;
Make it plain upon tablets,

so that the one who reads it may run.

For the vision is a witness for the appointed time,
a testimony to the end; it will not disappoint.

If it delays, wait for it,

it will surely come, it will not be late.

See, the rash have no integrity;

but the just one who is righteous because of faith shall live.

Habakkuk 2: 1-4



Saturday: Nehemiah

Ezra opened the scroll so that all the people might see it, for he was standing higher than any of the people. When he opened it, all the people stood.

Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people, their hands raised high, answered, “Amen, amen!” Then they knelt down and bowed before the LORD, their faces to the ground.

The Levites Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah explained the law to the people, who remained in their places.

Ezra read clearly from the book of the law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand what was read.

Then Nehemiah, that is, the governor, and Ezra the priest-scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to all the people: “Today is holy to the LORD your God. Do not lament, do not weep!”—for all the people were weeping as they heard the words of the law.

He continued: “Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to our LORD. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the LORD is your strength!”

And the Levites quieted all the people, saying, “Silence! Today is holy, do not be saddened.”

Then all the people began to eat and drink, to distribute portions, and to celebrate with great joy, for they understood the words that had been explained to them. **Nehemiah 8: 5-12**



Sunday: John the Baptist



Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah.

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.

His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

Now Herod the tetrarch, who had been censured by him because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and because of all the evil deeds Herod had committed,

added still another to these by also putting John in prison.

After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove.

And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Luke 3: 16-22

Monday: Mary

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,

to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favoured one! The Lord is with you."

But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour 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."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?"

And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived - a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God."

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her. **Luke 1: 26-38**



Tuesday: Elizabeth



During those days Mary set out and travelled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and 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. And how does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Luke 1: 39-45

Wednesday: Zechariah

When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son.

Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her.

When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said in reply, “No. He will be called John.”

But they answered her, “There is no one among your relatives who has this name.”

So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called.

He asked for a tablet and wrote, “John is his name,” and all were amazed.

Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God.

Then fear came upon all their neighbours, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea.

All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, “What, then, will this child be?” For surely the hand of the Lord was with him. **Luke 1:57-66**



Thursday: Joseph

Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit.

Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly.

Such was his intention when, 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.”

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet:

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means “God is with us.”

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

He had no relations with her until she bore a son, - and he named him Jesus.

Matthew 2: 18-25



Friday: Jesus

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled.

This was the first enrolment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town.

And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.



Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock.

The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear.

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 saviour 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.”

And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.”

When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger.

When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child.

All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds.

And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. **Luke 2: 1-20**

Saturday: Christ

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.
All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.

What came to be through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race;
the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not
overcome it.

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might
believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came
to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him.

But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his
name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of
God.

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the
Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

John testified to him and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after
me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'"

From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through
Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1: 1-17

