

## THE JESSE TREE

***“...and Jesse was the father of King David, David was the father of Solomon...Asa of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat of Joram...Josiah was the father of Jechoniah...Eliakim of Azor. Azor of Zadok...Matthan of Jacob, Jacob of Joseph, the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus called Messiah.” Matthew 1: 5-16***

The Jesse Tree is Jesus' family tree; it is an ancient Catholic symbol of the descent of Jesus. Since Jesse is one of the first ancestors of Jesus, it is called the Jesse Tree. The Jesse Tree dates back to the middle ages and came from Europe.

Jesse was the father of King David and God promised David that his Kingdom would last forever. Two centuries after the death of King David, God spoke through the prophet Isaiah and said:

*“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.” (Isaiah 11:1-2)*

It is not too much of a stretch to imagine that the transformation of the Jesse Tree into a gift giving tree came about from the linking of giving to giving. The line of Jesse gave mankind the Greatest Gift, while, in the new interpretation, parishioners give gifts to those in need. A small imitation of the Divine Gift, a powerful reminder of that Gift.

