

## *Tree of Jesse*

**“A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.”**

Isaiah 11:1

Here is one of the promises of the Messiah found in the book of Isaiah. The theme has been taken often in iconography and in the liturgy. One of the ‘O’ antiphons, sung between 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> December, says : **O Root of Jesse’s stem, sign of God’s love for all his people: come to save us without delay!** It is also the theme of the old German carol : **Lo, how a rose e’er blooming...**

Jesus is the long expected Messiah, the anointed one, the King, son of David. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. He is also one of us.

The genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke, names fathers and sons – and sometime mothers – in the long line of Jesus’ ancestors. In the Gospels of Matthew and of Luke, we read : **“Jesse was the father of King David, and David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam...”**

and many generations after :

**“...Matthan was the father of Jacob,  
and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary,  
of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.”**

The names are such shortcuts that we may forget the full extent of Jesus’ family story, most of it forgotten.

Pictures, (paintings, stained glass windows, church ornaments...) representing Jesse’s tree, the genealogy of Jesus, are a theological interpretation of the incarnation. Jesse is often shown lying down with a vine sprouting from his side. Branches are carrying sons and fathers, and often too, the main characters of the Old Testament, i.e. Moses, kings and prophets,

In the centre of Jesse’s tree you may find a picture of the nativity, or Mary holding the child. Christ enthroned in majesty above, blessing the whole universe, creator and saviour encompassing all places and times. God the Father, and even the Holy Spirit often find their place at the top of the picture.

What does it mean for us to be grafted, by faith, into this family tree as Children of God and co-heirs with Christ?

You may like to explore further the tree of Jesse online.

Today, I offer you the picture of an old sweet chestnut from Greenwich park. Looking at it may be enough for your meditation.