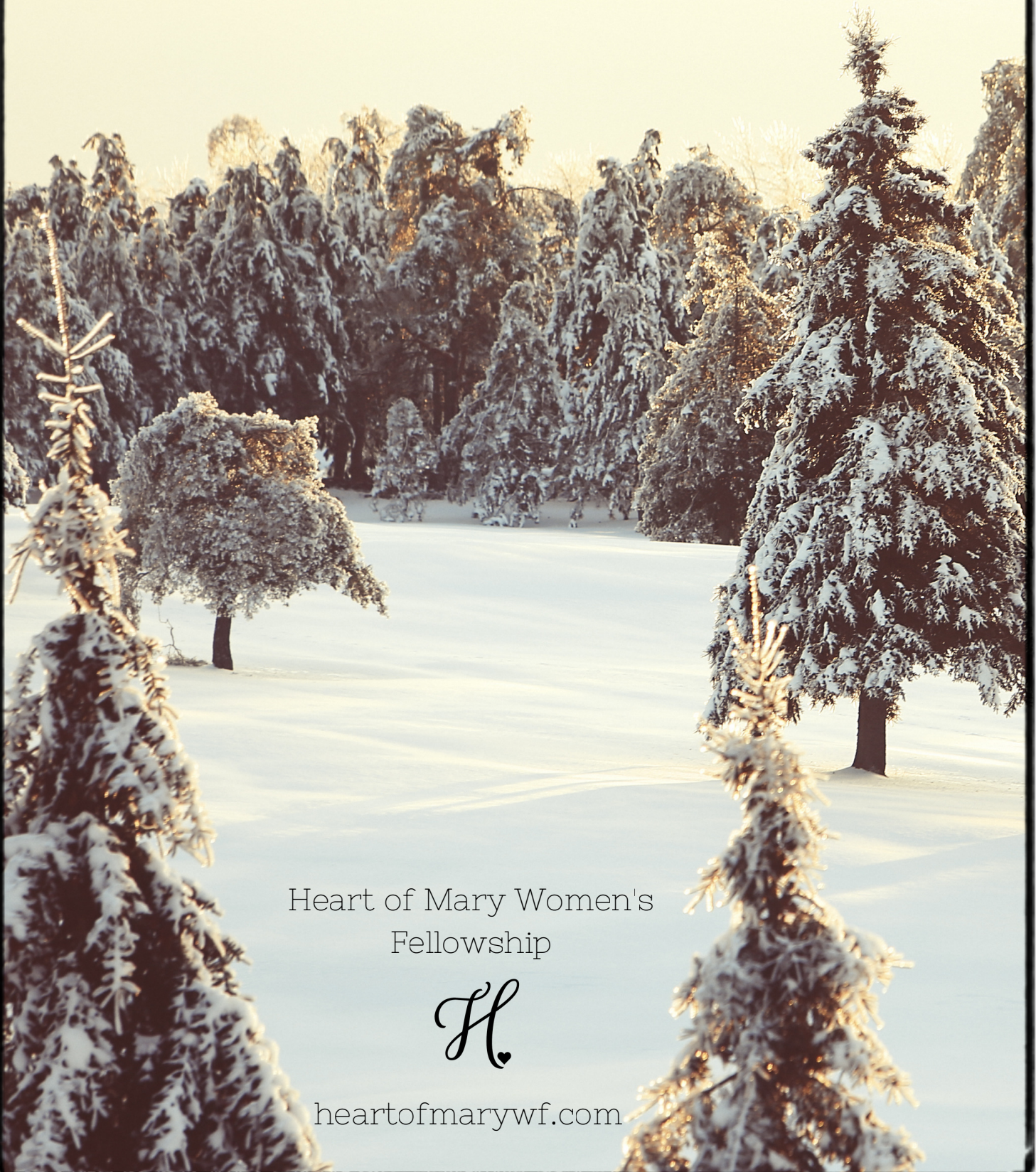


# The Jesse Tree

A day by day journey through Advent



Heart of Mary Women's  
Fellowship



[heartofmarywf.com](http://heartofmarywf.com)

## About this Study

*We hope that you'll dive in, grow in the Lord, and share with others what beauty God reveals to you through it. If you are doing this study independently, know that we at HOM are here for you & that you also have a LARGE community of women through our website and social media that are participating too! You are truly never alone!*

*If you are completing this study in a group setting - we are excited that you have found a local community to grow with, on top of our online sisterhood. Please use this study journal for your reference, resource, and more during your meetings and the personal time leading up to it.*

*Looking for a group? Please visit [www.heartofmarywf.com/groups](http://www.heartofmarywf.com/groups) to find a meet up near you.*

*Are you already in one but not listed on our website? Looking to start one? Please contact us for more information about our "HOM Ambassador" program. We have team members available specifically to help you grow a local group and lead other women through community, prayer, and devotion. Their support is available at all times. We also want to help you grow! We will advertise your group on our website & social media! And we have free resources for you as well. Please email us at [heartofmarywf@aol.com](mailto:heartofmarywf@aol.com)*

*Note: All written content has been reviewed by a Catholic spiritual director to cross check that all statements align with the teachings and tenants of the Roman Catholic Church.*

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## The Jesse Tree Writing Team



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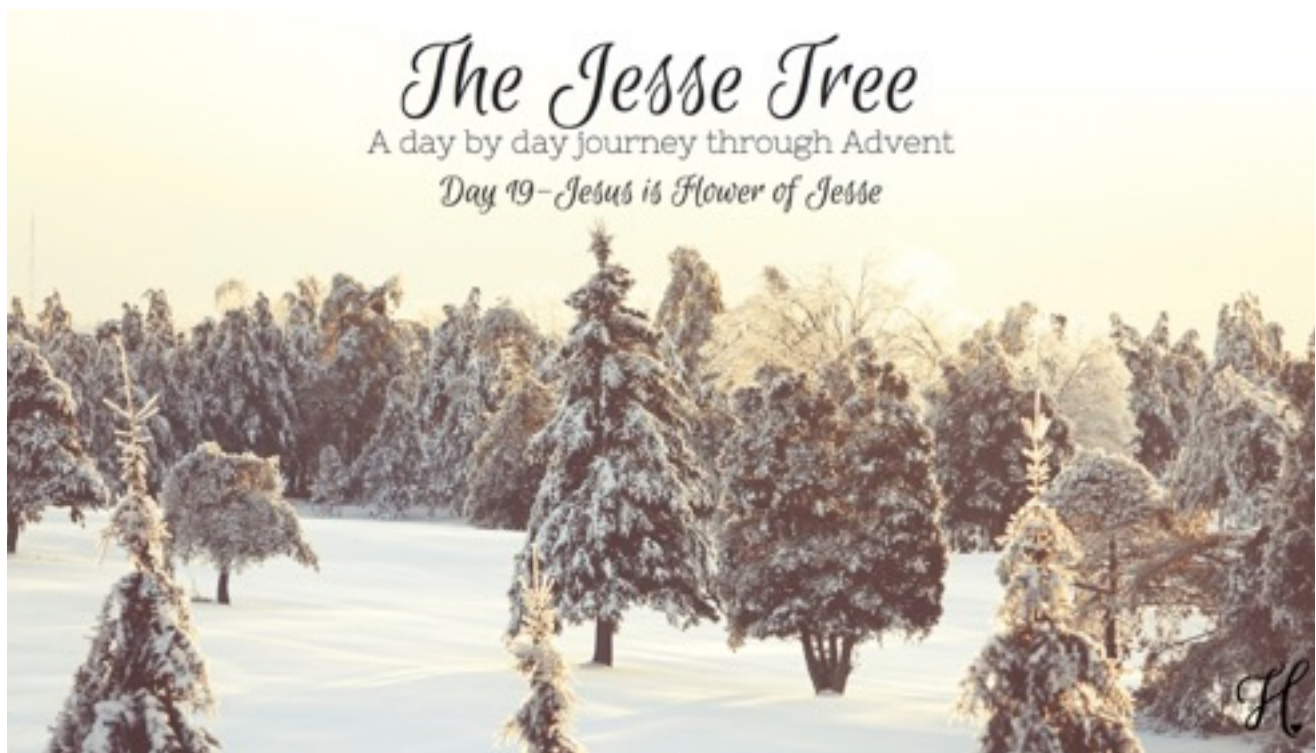
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[Isaiah 11:1-3 Isaiah 52:13](#)

Have you ever looked at the stump of a tree? They are utterly lifeless, and kind of sad. When the tree is first cut down, the stump serves as a kind of shock. Where once stood a mighty oak, now covers a lowly stump. After awhile, the stump grows gray with age, and then it begins to rot.

It would seem, initially, that the stump is the end.

However, any naturalist knows differently. While the stump looks the most lifeless, the most dead, the most rotted, it is actually fostering life. It is not too long before new life sprouts out of the old.

O Root of Jesse, you stand as a sign for the peoples; before you kings shall keep silence and to you all nations shall have recourse. Come, save us, and do not delay.

The O' Antiphon is reminiscent of Isaiah 11:1, *"A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots"*

Our world, like the stump was dead and decaying. When it was most dark - most without hope, our God humbled himself to come to us as a child in a manger. And this child, Jesus, brings with him new life.

Jesus arrived quietly in the dark corners of a stable, born to a poor carpenter and his betrothed. And in this poverty God proclaims his servant *"shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high."* So high that he would be King of Kings and through him we have recourse.

As we approach Christmas, our hearts cry out with the O Antiphon, *"Come, save us and do not delay."*

Christ Jesus, Come. -Christine

Reflect: Is your heart ready for Christmas or are you holding onto the darkness of death? It promised that we have recourse through Christ, do you believe this? Can you avail yourself to the savior?





## [Isaiah 22:22 Matthew 16:19](#)

When I was a kid and thought about Jesus, I always imagined Him as this cuddly and friendly guy with long hair in a white robe. And while it's true that Jesus is our friend, that he cares for us deeply, He is much much more than that. I find that, too often, we want to focus only on the easy comforting parts of Christ and ignore more difficult aspects. One of these aspects is Christ's authority.

In Isaiah 22:22 the prophet writes of the Messiah, *"Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, When he opens no one will shut, When he shuts no one will open."* This may not seem challenging on the

surface, it may seem even a little strange. The key of David represents the authority of Christ. He is a King in the line of David his authority comes before all other authorities in our lives.

I am often comforted by the idea that what Jesus opens no one can shut, but sometimes I don't like to think about the other side of the coin; that what he shuts no one will open. If you are like me, I'm sure there is something that you desperately wanted, a job, a move, a baby, a spouse, and maybe that thing didn't happen. Maybe it wasn't in Christ's will for you. Maybe that was a path that he shut. These things are sometimes hard to accept. If Jesus is our friend, why wouldn't he give us our heart's desires? Maybe it is because he is also our authority. He sees who we are, who we can be, and our lives in a way our earthly friends cannot. He alone knows what we truly need to be made holy, and he will open that path too us.

As Catholics, we are fortunate that Jesus also left us a visible authority on Earth, the Church. In Matthew 16:19 we read that Christ passes on His authority to Peter. *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."* How fortunate we are to not be left to our own guessing game! How loving of our Lord to build us a Church to guide us in our darkest times and to help us interpret some of the most confusing questions of our age.

So as we wait for the arrival of Jesus this Christmas, let us not forget that the cuddly cute baby in a manger is more than just that, He is the one



who we should allow to rule over our lives, for He is kind and just and will never lead us astray. -Sarah

Reflect: What is something that you are holding back from giving Christ authority over? (finances, career, family planning, love life, etc.)  
How is Christ different from the authority figures in our earthly life?

Act: Spend some time in prayer today and give Christ authority over something in your life that you have difficulty giving over to Him.

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## [Psalm 19:1-7](#)

I love watching the sunrise. I remember how I would walk out to the campus on my way to Daily Mass and see the sun rising up in the east. When I was staying at my aunt's lake house one summer, I slept on a sofa bed by a window facing east and I was treated to a beautiful late summer sunrise. And of course, anyone who grew up watching Disney will remember the iconic opening to *The Lion King*, which begins with a sunrise and a Zulu chant that nobody really knows the words to.

If you're a fan of the musical *Les Miserables*, like I am, you may remember this lyric: *"Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise."* I should tell you right now that it takes a lot to make me cry. I can

count the movies that caused me to cry on one hand. *Les Miserables* was one of those movies. The finale of *Les Miserables* ends in a beautiful hopeful reprise of “*Do You Hear the People Sing*,” acting as a metaphorical sunrise to the end of the musical. The last line of the musical “*Tomorrow comes*” reminds me that no matter how bad things get, they will eventually get better. Advent is the perfect season to keep that optimism in mind.

Sometimes we lose hope for humanity when we see news about riots or shootings, or some other kind of violence or natural disaster. As dark and hopeless as it may seem, God is still working through all of it. His fingerprints can be seen in his creation, just like the tiny brushstrokes of a Monet painting. We can see His beauty in the flowers and butterflies, in the tiniest grains of sand and in the stars of the sky. We can see His light in a child’s eyes and hear Him in the laughter of children at play.

My favorite place to find God’s beauty, the Radiant Dawn that is our Lord Jesus Christ, is in the Eucharist. The Eucharist, especially when displayed in a monstrance for Adoration, has always been my “*safe space*.” When I am in the presence of the Eucharist, I lose myself in Him. One of my friends, who suffers from insomnia and restless sleep, says that she sleeps the soundest in His presence.

The Eucharist was once used as a powerful weapon. Way back in 1240, Saint Clare (whom you may remember as being Saint Francis of Assisi’s best friend and founder of the Poor Clares) showed the Sacred Host to a band of soldiers who were trying to raid the city of Assisi.

Jesus said to Saint Clare *"I will always protect you!"*

*"My Lord,"* she added, *"if it is Your wish, protect also this city which is sustained by Your love."*

Christ replied, *"It will have to undergo trials, but it will be defended by My protection."*

Through the power of the Eucharist, Saint Clare sent those soldiers packing!

What's interesting to me is that Christ didn't say it would be easy. He protected the city of Assisi, but said that it will still undergo trials. I think that this applies to all of us, really. If we ask for God's protection, we will have it. However, we will still undergo trials. What's important is that we still stay true to God throughout all of the trials and tribulations. The sacrament of the Eucharist can give us the strength to do that.

*-Monique*

Reflect: Reflect on a terrifying, seemingly hopeless situation in your life. How do you think God helped you out of it or is still helping you now if you're still in this situation? Where do you find God's beauty?

Act: Spend an hour in Adoration, if possible. Be in the presence of God this Advent season.





### [Psalm 2:7,8 Ephesians 2:14-20](#)

Our societies circumstances— the 2016 Presidential Election being only one of them— has left many communities and families feeling unwanted, unloved and sometimes beyond redemption. I have seen many social media posts that say something along the lines of, *“no matter who is in office, Jesus is still on the throne”*. While those words are awesome and true, are we living out that statement, acting as Jesus’ arms and legs to everyone? Yeah, I thought not, and same goes for me if we’re being completely honest. But Paul’s letter to the Ephesians says loud and clear that Jesus Christ came to bring peace, and unite us as one people (2:14).

Maybe you’re reading this and you’re the Gentile in your family...fallen away from the Church, broken important relationships, messed up big in your marriage...or perhaps you’re the Jew...a churchgoer and believer, but unaccepting of others, so much so that you may push them away.

Well, no matter who you are, I can say without hesitation that the Gospel of Jesus is for you! By dying on the cross, our Lord made Himself entirely and eternally available to each and every one of us. Is it through our stellar mass attendance that we are able to boldly approach the throne of Christ? Or our times in the confessional and veils worn? Nope. (Even though all of those things are awesome and can really enhance your relationship with Heavenly Father).

It is through God's perfect Son, Jesus, the whole and complete reason for the season. Paul kindly reminds us that the Good News is within arms-reach, whether we've read the Bible our whole life or are completely new and overwhelmed by it (2:17).

*"...You are now citizens together with God's people, and members of the family of God. You, too, are built upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone being Christ Jesus himself."*

Ephesians 2:19-20 -Jenna

Reflect: There are only two more days until we celebrate the birth of Our Lord. On that day, Jesus gained the whole world (Psalm 2:8) and we gained a Savior. This Savior does not see race, orientation, economic or marital status. He sees our souls. There is someone in your life who is *begging* for you to see their soul. Can you see past their lifestyle or sin to what Jesus knit in their mother's womb?

Act: Are you feeling far from God? Pick up a Bible. Ephesians Chapter 2 is a great place to start.







*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and[c] will call him Immanuel. [Isaiah 7:14](#)*

*For the Lord is our judge,  
the Lord is our lawgiver,  
the Lord is our king;  
it is he who will save us. [Isaiah 33:22](#)*

There are plenty of times when I wonder is God really with me? These thoughts pop up when I sit in the doctor's office discussing infertility, or when my husband gets another email that he didn't get the job after a year of unemployment. It's when a friend is sick. It's when somebody has died. It's when I have a bad day and my phone screen cracks.

*“Emmanuel”* means *“God with us”*. It doesn’t mean *“God gives us whatever we want”* or *“God says everything will be great all the time”*, or even *“God will make sure everything is great if you do what he says”*, but I’m sure by now you know this. I also know that this is hard to remember. The problem in my thinking with *“God with us”* is that I tend to focus an awful lot on the *“us”* or rather *“me”*. That’s right sisters, I tend to think an awful lot about me.

It’s so comforting to think about God is always with me. And God really is always with you and me! Even when it doesn’t seem like it. But today I’d like us to take a step back from the *“us”* of *“God with us”* and focus on the *“God”*. I want to focus on Jesus.

How incredible is it that God humbled himself to literally walk among us? He allowed his Son to perish for our sins so that we can be with Him forever. Emmanuel is more than a name and a nice idea (my name means princess, but it definitely didn’t work out that way for me!) *“God with us”* is a declaration, it is an action, it is a promise.

How often do I pray *“God be with me,”* and then set off to solve all my problems on my own? Isaiah 33:22 tells us that God will save us. Now that doesn’t mean we sit around doing nothing, but it does mean that we should trust in God more than we trust ourselves.

But guess what is the even better part? God already did the saving! He did it about 2,000 years ago when Jesus was born and lived and died and lived again! I know that Advent tends to be the season that we focus

on baby Jesus and His birth, but we must always keep Easter in our minds, for that is when the saving takes place!

I bet a lot of you have asked the question *“Why wasn’t Jesus actually named Emmanuel?”* I’ve asked it myself. How can this prophecy be true if they didn’t name him Emmanuel? Well the idea of *“to call him Emmanuel”* in the scripture doesn’t mean Mary and Joseph would name him Emmanuel. It’s more like how Dwayne Johnson is called The Rock. It’s not his literal name, but it is what he is called! Just take a look at the last verse of Matthew where Jesus says *“Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”*

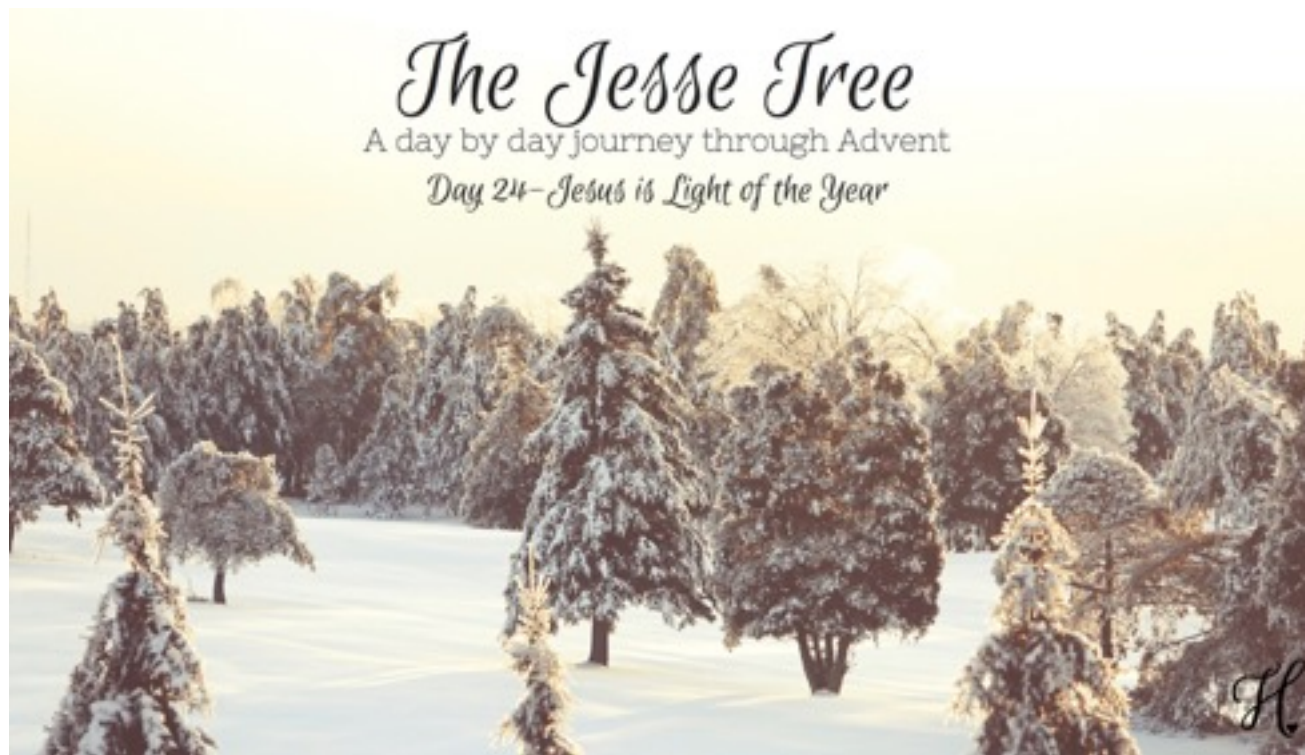
So whatever you are going through today, whether it is a big problem or a small one, I hope you will remember that God really is with you, that Jesus promised to be with you forever. Remember that you cannot save yourself alone. Remember that God is sovereign and in control. If he has your heart, he has everything. -Sarah

Reflect: What is a time when you struggled to remember that God was with you?

What is a time when you knew for sure that God was with you?

Act: Take a moment to write about what *“Emmanuel”* means to you. What might *“God with us”* look like in your life?





[John 1:1-14 | John 2:8](#)

Can you feel it, the anticipation? Is your heart aching for the Savior to arrive this evening?

I am always in awe of the mercy God grants us through his Church, and in turn the Church through the Liturgical Year. She begins each year in a state of hopeful anticipation and contemplation. She allows us four weeks to ponder the Savior's coming. We have, each year, four weeks to clean out the corners of our hearts, sweep away the cobwebs of a stale spiritual life, and make room for the infant God.

For four weeks we have waited on Christ. Four weeks to travel 5,000 years through salvation history, watching it unfold, anticipating the culmination of this one evening. My own heart is nearly exploding with

longing for the incarnation of Christ. I am keenly aware of all the different ways I need him.

It is not any wonder that traditional Jesse Trees use some symbol of light to crown the tree: a candle, a flame, a sun. When, after the long wait, and we think our heart can't take any more, He comes quietly in the midst of a night, *"a light to all people...the true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into this world."*

No doubt your day today is a busy one. There are pies to bake, dinner to prepare, and gifts to wrap. I know mine is. I'll be mashing potatoes and ironing shirts and generally busying myself with the preparations for the holiday itself.

Christmas Eve mass has not quite arrived, and yet the happiness of the day has spilled over into the bustle of all the things needing to be accomplished for the celebrations that ensue. Make sure to steal a few quiet moments, though, and ponder that great light that arrives tonight.

Pause and take wonder of John's words, *"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."* Indeed, *"the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining."* -Christine

Reflect: In today's bustle, save room for the Christ child. Wonder at the incarnation!



It has been lovely sharing Advent with you.

We pray you have a blessed Christmas  
and the New Year brings many new ways grow deeper in  
love with our Lord.

Peace be with you sisters,

With love and In Jesus through Mary  
Heart of Mary Women's Fellowship



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