



Preparing to welcome Jesus at Christmas



Reflecting with the “O Antiphons” 17th-23rd December



In the days leading up to Christmas the Church offers us a series of beautiful antiphons or ancient chants. From 17th December to 23rd December these antiphons are sung and read in Evening Prayer (Vespers) framing the Magnificat and as Gospel acclamations during Mass. These texts most probably originated in Rome before the 6th century. Each text in Latin begins with “O” hence they are known as ‘The O Antiphons’. Each antiphon is a name of Christ, taken from one of his attributes such as root, light and key mentioned in Scripture and refers to the prophecy of Isaiah of the coming of the Messiah.

In these antiphons we are reminded that we live between the two comings that give Advent its central theme: Jesus' birth and his Second Coming. Since the expulsion from Eden, we have cried out for salvation and justice. A way has opened up for us through Jesus' birth, his ministry on earth, and beyond death and resurrection, of his promise of a new kingdom.

These beautiful antiphons are Advent's brightest jewels shining in the darkness of our night. They lead us to the light of Christ just as the Star led the wise men from the East to Bethlehem.

They are:

17 December: O Sapientia – (O Wisdom)

18 December: O Adonai – (O Lord)

19 December: O Radix Jesse – (O Root of Jesse)

20 December: O Clavis David – (O Key of David)

21 December: O Oriens – (O Dayspring)

22 December: O Rex Gentium – (O King of the Nations)

23 December: O Emmanuel – (O God is with us)

Each title for Christ focuses on one aspect of his identity and is followed by further qualities flowing from that title. Each antiphon ends with a petition asking for a specific request from Christ appropriate to the title by which He was just invoked.

(Extract from the God Who Speaks website: [The God Who Speaks](#)). The website also offers some Scripture passages to help us reflect on the antiphons.

Why not use these during your prayer time as a way of encountering Jesus anew this Advent.

Begin by quietening yourself. Become still and then say the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be to begin.

Read the antiphon followed by the suggested passages of Scripture and then listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit.

3rd Sunday of Advent – 17th December – O Sapientia (O Wisdom)

O Wisdom, you come forth from the mouth of the Most high.

You fill the universe and hold all things together in a strong yet gentle manner.

O come to teach us the way of the truth.

Wisdom 7:7-14

Luke 10:21-24

18th December – O Adonai (O Lord)

O Adonai and leader of Israel, you appeared to Moses in a burning bush and you gave him the Law of Sinai. O come and save us with your mighty power.

Exodus 3:1-15

Luke 16:13-20

19th December – O Radix Jesse (O Root of Jesse)

O stock of Jesse, you stand as a signal for the nations; kings fall silent before you whom the peoples acclaim. O come to deliver us, and do not delay.

Exodus 3:1-15
Matthew 16:13-20

20th December – O Clavis David (O Key of David)

O key of David and sceptre of Israel, what you open no one else can close again; what you close, no one can open. O come and lead the captive from prison; free those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Psalm 23:1-6 & Isaiah 22
Matthew 25:31-40

21st December – O Oriens (O Dayspring)

O Rising Sun, you are the splendour of eternal light and the sun of justice. O come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Isaiah 60
Luke 1:67-79

22nd December – O Rex Gentium (O King of Nations)

O King whom all the peoples desire, you are the cornerstone which makes all one. O come and save man, whom you made from clay.

Jeremiah 18:1-6
Matthew 21:42

23rd December – O Emmanuel (O God is with us)

O Immanuel, you are our king and judge, the one whom the peoples await and their saviour. O come and save us, Lord our God.

Isaiah 7:14
Luke 2:1-19

The antiphons are taken from Evening Prayer of the Church and are said at the beginning and end of the Magnificat during the above days.

A Thought for Christmas

By Thomas Merton

Into this world,
this demented inn,
in which there is no room
for him at all,
Christ has come uninvited.

But because he cannot
be at home in it,
because he is
out of place in it...
His place is with those
who do not belong,
who are rejected
by power because
they are regarded as weak,
those who are discredited,
who are denied
the status of persons,
tortured and exterminated.
With those for whom
there is no room,
Christ is present in this world.
He is mysteriously present
in those for whom
there seems to be nothing
but the world at its worst.



“Today a light will shine upon us,
for the Lord is born for us and he
will be called Wondrous God,
Prince of peace, Father of future
ages: and his reign will be without
end”.

Entrance Antiphon of Dawn Mass on Christmas Day

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Christi (1990)

*A blessed and peaceful
Christmas to you and
all those you love!*