

The “O” Antiphons: The Biblical Antiphons of Advent

The “O” Antiphons, prayers recited during *Vespers* (Evening Prayer) from December 17-23, focus the Church’s attention to the coming Messiah by drawing on Scriptural prophecies. The Church celebrates the Messiah’s coming on the eve of December 25th, or Christmas Eve. Each “O” Antiphon contains a title for the Messiah which is drawn, in part, from a prophecy of Isaiah about the coming of the Messiah.

December 17 *O Sapientia* (O Wisdom):

“O Wisdom, O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care. Come and show your people the way to salvation.”

“The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord, and his delight shall be the fear of the Lord.” (Is 11:2-3)

“Wonderful is His counsel and great is His wisdom.” (Is 28:29)

December 18 *O Adonai* (O Lord):

“O sacred Lord of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain: come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.”

“But He shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land’s afflicted. He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.” (Is 11:4-5)

“Indeed the Lord will be there with us, majestic; yes the Lord our judge, the Lord our lawgiver, the Lord our king, he it is who will save us.” (Is 33:22)

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

“O Flower of Jesse’s stem, you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples; kings stand silent in your presence; the nations bow down in worship before you. Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid.”

“But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.” (Is 11:1)

“On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious.” (Is 11:10)

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

“O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel controlling at your will the gate of Heaven: Come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death; and lead your captive people into freedom.”

“I will place the Key of the House of David on His shoulder; when he opens, no one will shut, when he shuts, no one will open.” (Is 22:22)

“His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, from David’s throne, and over His kingdom, which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever.” (Is 9:6)

December 21 O Oriens (O Rising Sun):

“O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.”

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shown.” (Is 9:1)

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

“O King of all the nations, the only joy of every human heart; O Keystone of the mighty arch of man, come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust.”

“For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.” (Is 9:5)

“He shall judge between the nations, and impose terms on many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.” (Is 2:4)

December 23 O Emmanuel (O “God is with us”):

“O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Savior of all people, come and set us free, Lord our God.”

“The Lord himself will give you this sign: the Virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel.” (Is 7:14)

O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

*Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
Who orderest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go. *Refrain*

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan’s tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave. *Refrain*

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death’s dark shadows put to flight. *Refrain*

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery. *Refrain*

O come, O come, great Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai’s height
In ancient times once gave the law
In cloud and majesty and awe. *Refrain*

O come, Thou Root of Jesse’s tree,
An ensign of Thy people be;
Before Thee rulers silent fall;
All peoples on Thy mercy call. *Refrain*

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace. *Refrain*