

Making a Place for Christ



Praying the O Antiphons

*My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her
lowliness;
henceforth all ages will call me
blessed.*

*The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!*

*His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.*

*He puts forth his arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.*

*He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.*

*He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.*

*He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his sons for ever.*



The 'O Antiphons'

As Advent comes towards a close the Church provides an opportunity for intensifying our spiritual preparation for the celebration of Jesus' birth with the beautiful and ancient tradition of praying the 'O Antiphons' from the 17 to the 23 of December. The 'O Antiphons' highlight different titles for the Lord as referenced in the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah by Isaiah. These prophecies were written around six centuries before the birth of the Saviour, Christ, whom God had promised. By meditating on each title we can reflect on who Jesus is, and how he fulfils the promises of God.

O Sapientia (Wisdom)

O Adonai (Lord)

O Radix Jesse (Root of Jesse)

O Clavis David (Key of David)

O Oriens (Dayspring)

O Rex Gentium (King of the Nations)

O Emmanuel (God is with us)

The order of the O Antiphons is not accidental, the first letter of each title of Christ, read from last to first, forms the Latin phrase "Ero Cras," which translates to "Tomorrow, I will be there."

Praying the 'O Antiphons'

The 'O Antiphons' appear in the Evening Prayer of the Church in her Liturgy of the Hours. One can either recite the whole of Evening Prayer, joining the whole Church in her daily prayer; or alternatively use this simplified format.

Let us sit quietly before our crib or advent wreath and be still for a moment. We make the sign of the cross as we say:

O God, come to our aid. O Lord, make haste to help us. Glory be ...

Listen to, sing, or read the hymn O come, O Come, Emmanuel.

After the hymn we recite the antiphon, reflect on it, then recite the Magnificat. We then repeat the antiphon and turn to God in prayer with our own petitions, before praying the Our Father.

Text compiled by Canon Jonathan Mitchell

17 December: O Sapientia

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 truth.

Isaiah prophesied that "Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and understanding. A spirit of counsel and strength a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord, and his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord"; and "wonderful is his counsel and great his wisdom [cf. Isaiah 11:2-3; 28:29]

Let us pray that the Lord will come and make us friends of God.

18 December: O Adonai

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

Isaiah prophesied, "but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins" and "But there the Lord in majesty will be for us...For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler, the Lord is our king; he will save us." [cf. Isaiah 11:4-5; 33:21-22].

Let us pray that the Lord will come and save with his mighty arm.

19 December: O Radix 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.

Isaiah prophesied that "there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots". And "In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious." [cf. Isaiah 11:4-5; 10]

Let us pray that the Lord will come and save us, making no delay.

20 December: O Clavis 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.

Isaiah prophesied, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called

Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." And "I will place on his

shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." [cf. Isaiah 9:6; 22:22].

Let us pray that the Lord will come and proclaim liberty to captives and set prisoners free.

21 December: O Oriens

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 prophesied, "But there will be no gloom for her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naph'tali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined" [Isaiah 9:1-2]

Let us pray that the Lord will come and shine on all who walk in darkness and in the shadow of death.

22 December: O Rex Gentium

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.

Isaiah prophesied that For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." [cf. Isaiah 9:6-7]

Let us pray that the Lord will come and save those he fashioned from the dust of the earth.

23 December: O Emmanuel

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

Isaiah prophesied, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Imman'u-el" [cf. Isaiah 7:14]

Let us pray that the Lord will come as God-with-us and set us free.