



## **O Antiphons Devotional Series**

**By Carrie Dameron**

Merry Christmas from NCFI.

This year we want to give you a special gift centered on the identities of Christ. Enjoy!

I enjoy learning how our Christian ancestors worshipped the Lord. Depending on your denomination, you may be familiar with the O Antiphons or chants sung from December 17 to the 23. They were first written in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century and cover the 7 titles of Christ mentioned in Scripture. Each title is in Latin and creates the acrostic *ero cras* which translated means "Tomorrow, I will be there" mirroring the theme of the antiphons: Emmanuel, Rex, Oriens, Clavis, Radix, Adonai, & Sapienta. The order begins with Sapienta (Wisdom) and leads to the final antiphon, Emmanuel.

What surprised me most in my research was one of my favorite Christmas hymns "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" is the combination of all 7 antiphons in 1 song. So amazing!

Each antiphon has the following structure:

- a Messianic title preceded by "O". Example: "O Wisdom"
- elaboration of the title: "coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other, mightily and sweetly ordering all things"
- the verb "come"
- elaboration of the request to come: "and teach us the way of prudence."

This holiday season, I invite you to join me praying and meditating on the beautiful ancient prayers of the O Antiphons. There are many ways to engage with the devotions: Follow the ancient tradition by beginning December 17 and completing the series by December 23; or, start earlier and take a couple days to meditate on a single antiphon; or dive deeper and link scriptures with the antiphon discovering wealth of grace and love the Lord has for you. One website suggested singing the corresponding verse from "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" which I have included.

During this beautiful time of Advent, let us not only pray for ourselves and our loved ones to receive a fresh Christmas spirit, but may we also pray for our world to find Christ during this holy season. Come O Lord Jesus, come.

### **December 17: O Wisdom (Sapientia)**

“O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other, mightily and sweetly, ordering all things. Come and teach us the way of prudence.”

*Isaiah 11:2-3: And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear.*

Additional Scriptures: Isaiah 28:2; Proverbs 8:1-36; John 1:1-5; 1 Corinthians 1:24

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, verse 2: O Come, Thou Wisdom, from on high, and order all things far and nigh; to us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

### **December 18: O Sacred Lord (O Adonai)**

“O Adonai and leader of the House of Israel who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai. Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.”

*Isaiah 63:11-12: Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name,*

Additional Scriptures: Isaiah 33:22; Exodus 3:2; 24:12; Micah 6:4; Acts 7:30-31

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, verse 3: O Come, O Come, Thou Lord of might, who to thy tribes on Sinai's height in ancient times didst give the law, in cloud, and majesty, and awe. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

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

“O Root of Jesse standing as a sign among the peoples, before you kings will shut their mouths, to you the nations will make their prayer. Come and deliver us, and delay no longer.”

Isaiah 11:1, 10: There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit....In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples— of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

Additional Scriptures: Isaiah 52:15; Romans 15:12

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, verse 4: O Come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free thine own from Satan's tyranny. From depth of Hell they people save and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

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

“O Key of David and sceptre of the House of Israel, you open and no one can shut, you shut and no one can open. Come and lead the prisoners from the prison house, those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.”

Isaiah 22:22 *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.*

Additional Scriptures: Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:16; 16:19 Luke 1:79 Revelation 3:7

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, verse 5: O Come, Thou Key of David, come, and open wide our heav'nly home, make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

### **December 21: O Morning Star (O Oriens)**

O Morning Star, splendor of light eternal and sun of righteousness. Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

Isaiah 9:2: *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.*

Additional Scriptures: Isaiah 58:8; 60:18-20 Malachi 4:2 Luke 1:78-79 John 8:12 Revelation 21:23-25; 22:16

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel verse 6: O Come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine Advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night and death's dark shadows put to flight. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

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

O King of Nations and their desire, the cornerstone making both one. Come and save the human race which you fashioned from clay.

Daniel 7:14 *And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.*

Additional Scriptures: Isaiah 2:4; 11:10; Romans 15:12; Ephesians 2:14, 19-20

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, verse 7: O Come, Desire of the nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind; bid every strife and quarrel cease and fill the world with heaven's peace. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

## December 23: O Emmanuel

O Emmanuel our King and our Lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Saviour. Come and save us, O Lord our God.

Isaiah 7:14 *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

Additional Scriptures: Matthew 1:23

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, verse 1: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

## Conclusion:

Enjoy the beautiful O Antiphons Plainsong with accompaniment. It includes the additional O Antiphon sung on Christmas eve.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhK\\_SjfMDX4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhK_SjfMDX4)

## References:

Wikipedia "O Antiphons"

<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/worship-music/services-times/advent-and-christmas/the-great-o-antiphons#i25178>

<https://www.esquareinch.com/advent-through-the-ages-the-o-antiphons/>