

O, the heavenly rhythm of liturgy...

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**Rejoice, O heavens, and exalt, O earth, for our Lord
will come to show mercy to his poor. - Isaiah 49:13**



On December 17th, the **Church's Advent liturgy** begins to focus in a more particular way on the Nativity of the Lord. The prayers, readings, preface at Mass, as well as the readings, antiphons for the Gospel canticles, intercessions, and prayers at the Liturgy of the Hours concentrate more resolutely than during the preceding days of Advent on the coming feast of the Nativity of the Lord. Our attention is fixed on the messianic promises proclaimed by the ancient prophets of Israel.

The seven great "**O Antiphons**" have a particular role in these days. Each antiphon, always sung in a very similar melody, begins with 'O' and addresses Christ with a unique title from the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah. Each is followed by a petition for God's people relevant to the title by which He is addressed, and **the cry for Jesus to COME to us (veni) and act on our behalf:**

December 17: **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. (Isaiah 11:2-3; Wisdom 8:1; Proverbs 9:1)

December 18: **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. (Exodus 3:1-8; 20:1-20; Deuteronomy 26:5-9).

December 19: **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. (Isaiah 11:1-4; 45:23; 52:13; Luke 1:32-33)

December 20: **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. (Isaiah 22:22; 42:6-7; Luke 4:16-19)

December 21: **O Radiant Dawn**, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death. (Malachi 3:20; Isaiah 9:1; Psalm 107:14)

December 22: **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. (Isaiah 28:16; Genesis 2:7; Matthew 21:42; 1 Peter 2:4-5)

December 23: **O Emmanuel**, King and Lawgiver, Desire of the Nations, Savior of all People, come and set us free, Lord our God. (Isaiah 7:14; Malachi 3:1; Matt 1:21-23).

- **December 17: O Sapientia (O Wisdom)**
- **December 18: O Adonai (O Lord)**
- **December 19: O Radix Jesse (O Root of Jesse)**
- **December 20: O Clavis David (O Key of David)**
- **December 21: O Oriens (O Daystar) (after this date, days get longer)**
- **December 22: O Rex Gentium (O King of the Nations)**
- **December 23: O Emmanuel (O God-with-Us)**

When taken together from the last title to the first,
the first letters of each title form a wonderful Latin acrostic:

This is the Lord's response
to the Church's ardent petition that He COME (*veni*):
Ero cras (I will be there tomorrow)!

The "O Antiphons" not only bring holy intensity to our Advent preparation, but bring it to a joyful conclusion.

NOTE: Some have used the O Antiphons as the basis of a rich Novena up to and including Christmas Day. Perhaps this "last lap" of Advent could also include daily Mass and/or daily Adoration.

O come, O come, Emmanuel!



The song "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" is simply a reworking of the *O Antiphons*. When you sing it, you are joining a vast throng of Christians stretching back across centuries and spanning the whole of the earth who prayed as all Christians do, "**Come, Lord Jesus!**" (Rev 22:20)

Expectation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
More on the 'O Antiphons':

<http://fisheaters.com/customsadvent10.html>

