

The Great “O”s of Advent

Everything gets frenetic as we get closer to Christmas. It’s timely then to step up our spiritual preparation to make sure the feast is a real welcoming of Christ and not just a secular celebration.

The last days of Advent (from 17th – 24th December) have been marked since at least the eighth century by special antiphons before and after the Magnificat at Evening Prayer. Each antiphon begins with the exclamation “O”, introducing various titles of the Christ who is to come: *Wisdom, Adonai (Lord), Root of Jesse, Key of David, Morning Star, King of the Nations, and Emmanuel*. They are familiar from the way they are paraphrased in the hymn “*O come, O come, Emmanuel*”.

However busy you are, it would only take a moment to pray the appropriate antiphon each day, reflecting on the wonders of God’s gift to us at Christmas.

17 December – O 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.

cf Ecclesiasticus 24.3; Wisdom 8.1

18 December – 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.

cf Exodus 3.2; 24.12

19 December – 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.

cf Isaiah 11.10; 45.14; 52.15; Romans 15.12

20 December – O Clavis David

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.

cf Isaiah 22.22; 42.7

21 December – O Oriens

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

cf Malachi 4.2

22 December – O Rex Gentium

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

cf Isaiah 28.16; Ephesians 2.14

23 December – 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.

cf Isaiah 7.14