

Did you know . . .

The O Antiphons

Next Sunday, December 17, marks the second part of Advent and the beginning of the “O Antiphons.” The O Antiphons are seven verses counting down the last seven days before Christmas. They are so-called because each antiphon begins with an “O”.

Dating back to the fourth century, these antiphons address Christ with seven magnificent Messianic titles: *O Sapientia* (Wisdom), *O Adonai* (Lord and Ruler), *O Radix Jesse* (Root of Jesse), *O Clavis David* (Key of David), *O Oriens* (Dawn of the East), *O Rex Gentium* (King of the Gentiles), and *O Emmanuel* (God With Us) that are based on the Old Testament prophecies and types of Christ. The antiphons sum up in excellence the longing of our Redeemer, and we echo the prayers of the Old Testament faithful by also begging Him to “Come!”

One of the most familiar hymns we sing at Mass during Advent is “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” which is based on the O Antiphons. When they are gathered together, as they are in this hymn, the titles give voice to the Israelites’ longing for the Messiah, as well as our longing for Jesus to come, both at Christmas and at the Second Coming.

Working backward from December 23 to December 17, the first letter of each Latin title of Jesus spells out a sentence: ERO CRAS. (Emmanuel, Rex, Oriens, Clavis, Radix, Adonai, Sapientia). In Latin, *ero cras* means, “I am coming tomorrow.”...Christmas Eve.

The O Antiphons help us refocus on the two-fold coming of Christ at Christmas, as described in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

524 When the Church celebrates *the liturgy of Advent* each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.

Christmas is in 7 days. The *O Antiphons* beckon us to refocus, relax, and invite Christ to come into our hearts.

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