

LITURGY BYTES

The O Antiphons



Among the traditions of Advent, like the Advent wreath, the Church has been singing or reciting the O Antiphons dating back to the early monastery prayers of the Benedictines. The importance of the O Antiphons is twofold: each one highlights a title for the Messiah, and each one refers to the prophecy of Isaiah about the coming of the Messiah.

For those who pray Evening Prayer, these antiphons accompany Mary's Magnificat canticle on the days December 17th through December 23rd. They use ancient biblical imagery drawn from the hopes of a Messiah from the Old Testament to proclaiming Christ as the fulfillment not only of the Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well.

December 17:

O Wisdom of our God Most High,
Guiding creation with power and love:
Come teach us the path of knowledge!

December 18:

O Leader of the House of Israel,
Giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:
Come rescue us with your mighty power!

December 19:

O Root of Jesse's stem,
Sign of God's love for all his people:
Come to save us without delay!

December 20:

O Key of David,
Opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom:
Come and free the prisoners of darkness!

December 21:

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of
Eternal light, sun of justice:
Come and shine on those who dwell
In the darkness and in the shadow of death.

December 22:

O King of all nations and keystone of the Church:
Come and save man,
Whom you formed from the dust!

December 23:

O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law:
Come to save us, Lord our God!

We can bring the above responses into our own prayers this Advent as we await the coming of Christ! Have a blessed, safe, and healthy week!

~~*Michele Hahn*