

The "O" Antiphons

<http://www.catholic.org/advent/advent.php?id=7>

There are seven short verses sung before the Magnificat during Evening Prayer of the Church on the seven days before the vigil of Christmas. They each begin with the exclamation "O". Each of them ends with a plea for the Messiah to come. As Christmas approaches the cry becomes more urgent.

The antiphons were composed in the seventh or eighth century when monks put together texts from the Old Testament which looked forward to the coming of our salvation. They form a rich mosaic of scriptural images. These seven verses, or antiphons as they are called, appear to be the originals although from time to time other texts were used. They became very popular in the Middle Ages. While the monastic choirs sang the antiphons the great bells of the church were rung.

A curious feature of these antiphons is that the first letter of each invocation may be taken from the Latin to form an acrostic in reverse.

So the first letters of Sapientia, Adonai, Radix, Clavis, Oriens, Rex, and Emmanuel, provide the Latin words: ERO CRAS. The phrase spells out the response of Christ himself to the heartfelt prayer of his people: "Tomorrow I will be there".

Why not join with the Prayer of the Church each evening and reflect on these words preparing for Christmas day by day:



O Sapientia - December 17th

O Wisdom, you come forth from the mouth of the Most High. You fill the universe and hold all things together in a strong yet gentle manner. O come to teach us the way of truth. [Read More...](#)



O Adonai - December 18th

O Adonai and leader of Israel, you appeared to Moses in a burning bush and you gave him the Law on Sinai. O come and save us with your mighty power. [Read More...](#)



O Radix Jesse - December 19th

O stock of Jesse, you stand as a signal for the nations; kings fall silent before you whom the peoples acclaim. O come to deliver us, and do not delay. [Read More...](#)

O Clavis David - December 20th



O key of David and scepter of Israel, what you open no one else can close again; what you close no one can open. O come to lead the captive from prison; free those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. [Read More...](#)



O Oriens - December 21st

O Rising Sun, you are the splendor of eternal light and the sun of justice. O come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. [Read More...](#)



O Rex Gentium - December 22nd

O King whom all the people's desire, you are the cornerstone which makes all one. O come and save man whom you made from clay. [Read More...](#)



O Emmanuel - December 23rd

O Emmanuel, you are our king and judge, the One whom the peoples await and their Savior. O come and save us, Lord, our God. [Read More...](#)