

Monday 20 December 2021

The 'O antiphons' of Advent



We all love the countdown to Christmas with Advent calendars and so on. Monks in the medieval Church prepared for Christmas by using different antiphons during their many services. These antiphons are sentences and responses to help delineate the different seasons of the year. They are called 'antiphons'—literally, the 'sounds before' a verse or sentence.

Each of the last seven days of Advent has a different antiphon at the beginning and at the end of the Magnificat during the service of Evening Prayer. They are addressed to God, calling for him to come as teacher and deliverer, with a tapestry of scriptural titles and pictures that describe his saving work in Christ. We do not know when and by whom the antiphons were first composed, but they were already in use by the eighth century.

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Liturgy and prayers of intercession © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation. Most of the readings here are those set for Evening Prayer on Monday 20 December, because the 'O antiphons' refer to Evening Prayer.

The liturgy assumes this service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page, <http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 O come, O come Emmanuel (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

When the Lord comes he will bring to light things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.

Therefore, in the light of Christ,

let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments
and to live in love and peace with all.

All **Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.**

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Gloria

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All **Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.**

**Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,**

**Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.**

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for Advent

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

Psalm

¹ Answer me when I call, O God of my right!
You gave me room when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

² How long, you people, shall my honour suffer shame?
How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies?

³ But know that the Lord has set apart the faithful for himself;
the Lord hears when I call to him.

⁴ When you are disturbed, do not sin;
ponder it on your beds, and be silent.

⁵ Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the Lord.

⁶ There are many who say, 'O that we might see some good!
Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord!'

⁷ You have put gladness in my heart
more than when their grain and wine abound.

⁸ I will both lie down and sleep in peace;
for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety. *Psalm 4*

All **Glory to the Father,**
and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning,
is now and ever shall be for ever.
Amen

First reading (part of the reading for Evening Prayer on Monday 20 December)

A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah

Awake, awake,
put on your strength, O Zion!
Put on your beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city;
for the uncircumcised and the unclean
shall enter you no more.
Shake yourself from the dust, rise up,
O captive Jerusalem;
loose the bonds from your neck,
O captive daughter Zion!

For thus says the Lord: You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money. For thus says the Lord God: Long ago, my people went down into Egypt to reside there as aliens; the Assyrian, too, has oppressed them without cause. Now therefore, what am I doing here, says the Lord, seeing that my people are taken away without cause? Their rulers howl, says the Lord, and continually, all day long, my name is despised. Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore on that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I.

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,

who brings good news,
 who announces salvation,
 who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'
Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,
 together they sing for joy;
for in plain sight they see
 the return of the Lord to Zion.
Break forth together into singing,
 you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Lord has comforted his people,
 he has redeemed Jerusalem.
The Lord has bared his holy arm
 before the eyes of all the nations;
and all the ends of the earth shall see
 the salvation of our God.
Depart, depart, go out from there!
 Touch no unclean thing;
go out from the midst of it, purify yourselves,
 you who carry the vessels of the Lord.
For you shall not go out in haste,
 and you shall not go in flight;
for the Lord will go before you,
 and the God of Israel will be your rear-guard. *Isaiah 51:1-12*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading (Evening Prayer on Monday 20 December)

A reading from the Second Letter of St Peter

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ:

To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: may grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through

faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours made careful search and inquiry, inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated, when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look!

Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct. *1 Peter 1:1-15*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Longing for light, we wait

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading (Eucharist on Monday 20 December)

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'

The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.'

Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her. *Luke 1:26-38*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

It's certainly worth preparing for Christmas. Christmas is a principal festival of the Church alongside Maundy Thursday, Good Friday; and Easter; Epiphany, Ash Wednesday and Whit; and All Saints. There is no Gospel without the Incarnation. To borrow a phrase from St Paul, 'If Christ is not God-made-flesh, then we are of all men most to be pitied.'

But, as a Christian, it's increasingly hard to appreciate Christmas. Far more than Good Friday and Easter, Christmas has been colonised by secular society. Remembering Jesus at Christmas requires me to set aside focused time, but most of my focused time is spent gift-buying and event-planning. I forget who and what I'm celebrating.

The church has traditionally set aside time to prepare herself for Christmas with the season of Advent. In the month leading up to Christmas, Advent invites us to reimagine what life was like before Christ. During this season, we remember the timing of Jesus' First Coming, how only after a long darkness did God send a Saviour. In that remembering, we recognise our need for Jesus' Second and Final Coming.

Over the years, the church has creatively engaged in all kinds of ritual to drive home the truth of Christmas in the heart of the faithful, from midnight mass to candlelight services. One of the oldest Christmas liturgies is the O Antiphons.

The O Antiphons are a series of seven short sentences (antiphons) that are recited or chanted during Evening Prayer in the days leading up to Christmas.

They are familiar to most of us as paraphrased in the great Advent hymn 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,' but they have been in use in the church since at least the eighth century. The O Antiphons direct our attention to the promised Messiah and build our expectation for his coming.

There is an interesting fun fact associated with the O Antiphons. The first letters of each of the titles, when followed from last to first—Emmanuel, Rex, Oriens, Clavis, Radix, Adonai and Sapientia—spell the Latin words *ero cras*. This short phrase means, ‘Tomorrow, I will come.’

Christ has promised to come to us and to be for us all that we need. In Advent, we wait for him, look for him, expect him. We are invited to pray our expectation and our faith in him because God has not only promised to come to us but has come to us.

Below in our prayer for intercessions are the O Antiphons. As you pray each night of this holy season of Advent, here are some questions to reflect upon:

How do you desire Jesus to come to you now, in this season of your life?

Which name or title reflects your current desire or need?

How have you experienced Jesus as Emmanuel, ‘God with us’?

Has Jesus been for you Clavis, a ‘key,’ or Oriens, ‘the rising dawn’ or ‘morning star,’ shedding light on your path?

When has Jesus been for you Sapientia, ‘wisdom’ from on high, teaching you the way to true, authentic life?

How do you put your trust in Jesus as Adonai, ‘Lord’ and as Rex Gentium, ‘King of the Nations’?

How are you ‘rooted’ (Radix Jesse) in Jesus and where are signs of new life springing forth in your life?

I encourage everyone to adopt this ancient tradition and pray these antiphons on the seven nights before Christmas Eve to help you welcome the new-born King. Amen.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

17 December—O Sapientia ('O Wisdom, teacher')

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 deliverer')

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')

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')

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')

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')

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')

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*

Merciful Father,

All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The peace

May the God of peace make you completely holy, ready for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Jesus, name above all names ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

May God the Father, judge all-merciful,
make us worthy of a place in his kingdom.

May God the Son, coming among us in power,
reveal in our midst the promise of his glory.

May God the Holy Spirit make us steadfast in faith,
joyful in hope and constant in love

And the blessing of God the Almighty:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

be with you now and remain with you always. **All** Amen.

HYMN 4 Infant holy, infant lowly ([please click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
And now we give thanks, most gracious God,
surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses
and glorified in the assembly of your saints.
The glorious company of apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
We, your holy Church, acclaim you.
In communion with angels and archangels,
and with all who served you on earth and worship you now in heaven,
we raise our voice to proclaim your glory,
for ever praising you and saying:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with those who waited patiently for the coming Messiah,
and all the saints, to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

All **Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

O Lord our God,
make us watchful and keep us faithful
as we await the coming of your Son our Lord;
that, when he shall appear,
he may not find us sleeping in sin
but active in his service
and joyful in his praise;
through Jesus Christ our Lord

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.