

O Antiphons

The original Advent calendar was an ancient Latin hymn called the O Antiphons. Starting on December 17 and continuing through the day before Christmas Eve, this series of seven messianic titles is sung at evening prayer to mark the week leading up to the celebration of the Nativity of the Lord. In order, the antiphons are:

O Sapientia	Wisdom
O Adonai	Lord
O Radix Jesse	Root of Jesse
O Clavis David	Key of David
O Oriens	Sunrise
O Rex Gentium	King of the Nations
O Emmanuel	God with us

If you read the first letter (not counting the O) of each antiphon from bottom to top, the group of antiphons forms a backwards acrostic poem in Latin: *ero cras*, or “tomorrow I will [come].”

In many congregations, the O Antiphons are best known as the source for the popular Advent hymn “O Come, O Come Emmanuel.”

Here is a simple prayer for Advent that follows the imagery of the O Antiphons.

Come, Jesus Christ, our savior—	
teach us your way,	Sapientia / Wisdom
lead us to freedom,	Adonai / Lord
grow in our lives,	Radix Jesse / Root of Jesse
open our minds,	Clavis David / Key of David
shine in our actions,	Oriens / Sunrise
rule in our hearts,	Rex Gentium / King of the Nations
be with us here, now, always.	Emmanuel / God with us