

O EMMANUEL

An Advent Devotional



CHURCH OF THE
SAVIOR

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INTRODUCTION

This Advent devotional is organized around the great “O” Antiphons, a series of seven short prayers that each address Jesus with one of the titles he is given in the Old Testament, beginning with “O Wisdom” and continuing through “O Emmanuel.” An antiphon is a short prayer that is recited or sung in response to a psalm or, occasionally, another scripture passage. During Advent, the O Antiphons are special antiphons typically said in response to the Magnificat, or the Song of Mary, found in Luke 1:46-55 – although in some services, they can also replace the “Alleluia” sung before the gospel reading.

Even if you have not encountered the O Antiphons explicitly before, chances are that you already know some of them: the hymn “O Come O Come Emmanuel” is a loose English translation of an ancient Latin version of the O Antiphons. And the O Antiphons are a truly ancient tradition: they date back to at least the eighth century, and possibly even earlier. For centuries, then, Christians have used these short prayers to help them prepare for the birth of Christ, and I am excited to continue this tradition at Savior.

In this devotional, you will find seven sections, one for each antiphon. Each section contains the antiphon, an Old Testament reading, a New Testament reading, and a suggested devotional practice. You will notice that there are no assigned dates for the sections, because there are two ways you might use this devotional. The first is to divide the O Antiphons among the weeks of Advent: do the O Wisdom and O Adonai sections during the week of December 3; O Root of Jesse and O Key of David the week of December 10; the O Radiant Dawn and O King of All Nations sections during the week of December 17; and O Emmanuel on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Alternatively, you can go through one antiphon per day from December 17 to December 23; this is the traditional way these antiphons have been used. Choose the option that best fits the rhythms of your own life, as no matter how you pray them these ancient antiphons will help you prepare to celebrate Christmas.

Along with this devotional, you may also have picked up a set of seven ornaments to color and hang up. We would love to see pictures of your creativity with these ornaments!

—Sarah Lindsay
Pastor of Adult Formation

**O Wisdom
(O Sapientia)**



**O Wisdom of our God Most High,
guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge!**

READ

Old Testament: Isaiah 11:2-3 NLT

² And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
³ He will delight in obeying the Lord.
He will not judge by appearance
nor make a decision based on hearsay.

Antiphon

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

New Testament: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 NLT

²⁶ Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. ²⁷ Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. ²⁸ God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. ²⁹ As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

³⁰ God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin. ³¹ Therefore, as the Scriptures say, “If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord.”

Antiphon

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

PRACTICE: DISCERNMENT

Where in your life do you need the wisdom of Christ? Spend some time today listening to God. Choose a comfortable spot; you might light a candle to remind yourself of God's presence. Bring your questions before God, including your hopes and desires, and listen to what God might be saying to you.

You may have a particular dilemma or decision; you might also choose to ask God to show you what God may have for you during this Advent season, as we await the coming of Emmanuel.

**O Leader
(O Adonai)**



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

READ

Old Testament: Isaiah 11:4-5 NLT

⁴ He will give justice to the poor
and make fair decisions for the exploited.
The earth will shake at the force of his word,
and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked.
⁵ He will wear righteousness like a belt
and truth like an undergarment.

Antiphon

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

New Testament: Luke 1:46-55 NIV

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

- ⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost
thoughts.
- ⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
- ⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
- ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
- ⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.”

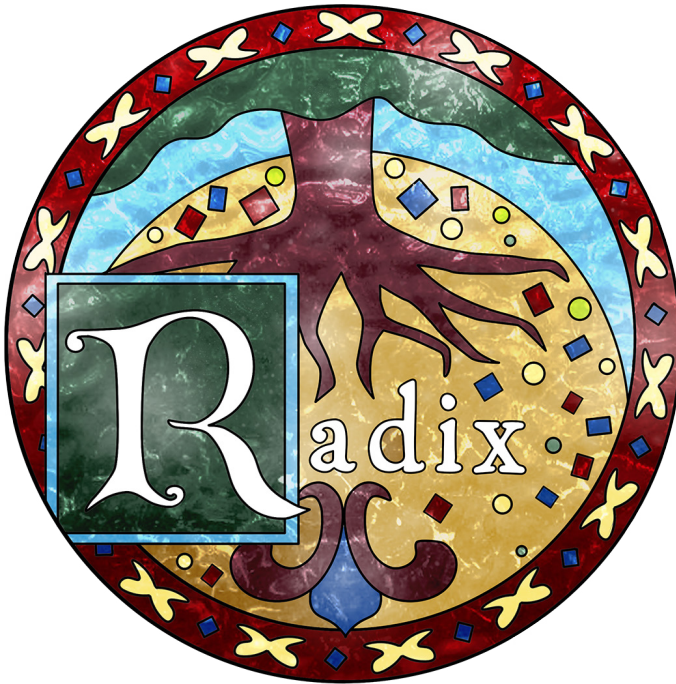
Antiphon

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

PRACTICE: JUSTICE

Both passages for today are about justice – the justice that the Messiah brings when he comes to rescue his people. For today’s practice, spend time praying for God’s justice. Think of a particular situation where you long for God to bring justice, and pray about that. Then, as you pray, ask God to show you where and how you can join in the work of justice, and for the courage to take action when you have a chance to be an agent of God’s justice in the world.

**O Root of Jesse
(O Radix)**



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

READ

Old Testament: Isaiah 11:1 NIV

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

Antiphon

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

New Testament: Luke 1:26-38 NLT

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. ²⁸ Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

²⁹ Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ³⁰ "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David.

³³ And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

³⁴ Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

³⁵ The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. ³⁷ For the word of God will never fail.”

³⁸ Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” And then the angel left her.

Antiphon

O Root of Jesse’s stem,
sign of God’s love for all his people:
come to save us without delay!

PRACTICE: SURRENDER

In the gospel reading above, we see Mary surrendering to God by accepting a difficult and life-changing call to become the mother of Jesus, the promised Savior. Spend some time in prayer talking to God about where you have surrendered or where you may be called to surrender to God: what has the experience of surrendering been like? What might you need to let go of, or what might you need to pick up, in order to continue surrendering to God?

**O Key of David
(O Clavis)**



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

READ

Old Testament: Isaiah 42:1-7 NIV

¹ “Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations.

² He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.

³ A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.

In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.

In his teaching the islands will put their hope.”

⁵ This is what God the Lord says—
the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out,
who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it,
who gives breath to its people,
and life to those who walk on it:

⁶ “I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness;
I will take hold of your hand.

I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people
and a light for the Gentiles,

⁷ to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Antiphon

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

New Testament: Revelation 5:12-14 NIV

¹² In a loud voice they were saying:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!”

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!”

¹⁴ The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Antiphon

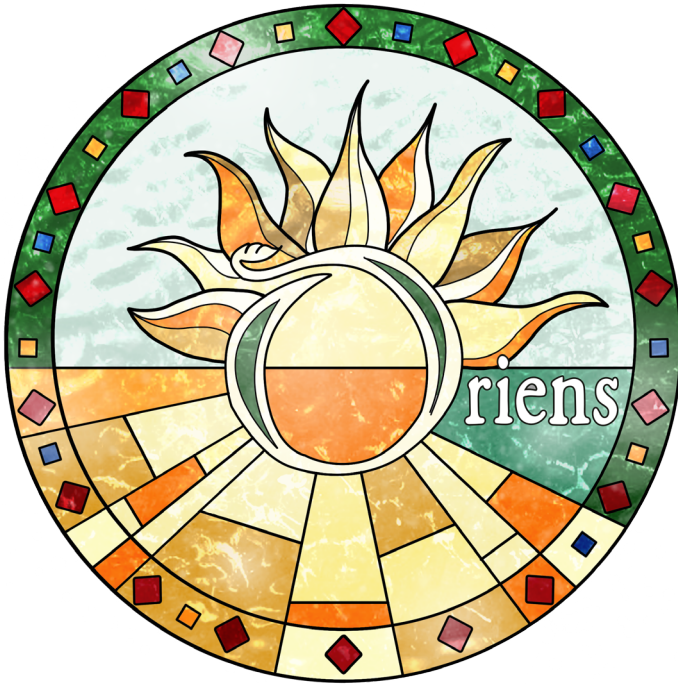
O Key of David,
opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom:
come and free the prisoners of darkness!

PRACTICE: WORSHIP

Spend some time today in worship. You might light a candle or put on some music to help you focus on God; you might also try standing, kneeling, or raising your hands to involve your body in your worship, if you are able.

To enter into worship, carefully read the passages above and pray the antiphon. Notice which phrases stand out to you as you read, and begin to worship God for these qualities. You might also imagine yourself among the crowd in heaven worshiping the Lamb. What about Jesus invites your worship?

**O Radiant Dawn
(O Oriens)**



**O Radiant Dawn,
splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:
come and shine on those who dwell in
darkness and in the shadow of death.**

READ

Old Testament: Isaiah 9:1-2 NIV

¹ Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

² The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

Antiphon

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

New Testament: John 8:12, 9:1-7 NLT

¹² Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”

¹ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from

birth. ² “Rabbi,” his disciples asked him, “why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?”

³ “It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. ⁴ We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work. ⁵ But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world.”

⁶ Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man’s eyes. ⁷ He told him, “Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam” (Siloam means “sent”). So the man went and washed and came back seeing!

Antiphon

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

PRACTICE: IMAGINATIVE PRAYER

Today, you will pray through the John passage above using imaginative prayer. Imaginative prayer is part of the Ignatian spiritual practice of contemplation. In this practice, begin by imagining what you would see, hear, or feel if you were there with Jesus in the passage from John. As you enter the scene through your imagination, notice how God may be speaking to you and how you might speak to God through the story.

**O King of All Nations
(O Rex Gentium)**



**O King of all nations
and keystone of the Church:
come and save man,
whom you formed from the dust!**

READ

Old Testament: Isaiah 2:2-5 NIV

² In the last days

the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established
as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills,
and all nations will stream to it.

³ Many peoples will come and say,

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths.”
The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

⁴ He will judge between the nations
and will settle disputes for many peoples.
They will beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.

⁵ Come, descendants of Jacob,
let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Antiphon

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

New Testament: Ephesians 2:17-22 NLT

17 He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. 18 Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. 20 Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. 21 We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. 22 Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Antiphon

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

PRACTICE: CREATE

Today, the invitation is to create something in response to the gift of Jesus to all peoples. Think of creating broadly: you might create a drawing or another piece of traditional art, but you might also color the accompanying ornament prayerfully, noticing your choices of colors and patterns. You might respond with your body, moving in a way that brings joy and helps you respond to God; you might even cook something, thinking of all the cultures that will come together in the Kingdom of God. Whatever you choose, use your creative action to respond to God's love for all peoples.

O Emmanuel



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

READ

Old Testament: Isaiah 7:14 NIV

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Antiphon

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

New Testament: Matthew 1:18-24 NLT

¹⁸ This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

²⁰ As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

²² All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet:

²³ “Look! The virgin will conceive a child!
She will give birth to a son,

and they will call him Immanuel,
which means ‘God is with us.’”

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife.

Antiphon

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

Created and compiled by Sarah Lindsay.

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Visio Divina questions adapted from Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (Downer’s Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2015), pp. 46-48.

PRACTICE: VISIO DIVINA

Visio divina is the practice of praying with and through what we see. As you contemplate the image below, use the reflection questions below to guide your prayers.

- Take a moment to quiet your heart and mind. Set aside distractions and sit comfortably; you might light a candle to remind you of the presence of God. Invite the the Holy Spirit to be with you.
- Look at the piece of art, taking your time. Can you see this scene as God sees it? What do you most notice in the image? What feelings does it evoke?
- Talk to God about what the image stirs in you, what you see and experience as you contemplate this work of art.





CHURCH OF THE
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Journeying Together: Loving God, Loving Others, Loving Life

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