

O Antiphons & Christmas Novenas

O Antiphons

The "O" antiphons are the introductory verses taken from the Divine Office for the last seven days before Christmas. They call out to Christ in words of the Old Testament, bidding Him hurry and come. We can use the "O" antiphons with our night prayers during this last week of Advent.

- Dec. 17: **O Sapientia**, O Wisdom, O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care. Come and show your people the way to salvation.
- Dec. 18: **O Adonai**, O Sacred Lord of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain: come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.
- Dec. 19: **O Radix Jesse**, O Flower of Jesse's stem, you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples; kings stand silent in your presence; the nations bow down in worship before you. Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid.
- Dec. 20: **O Clavis David**, O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel, controlling at your will the gate of heaven: come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death; and lead your captive people into freedom.
- Dec. 21: **O Oriens**, O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.
- Dec. 22: **O Rex Gentium**, O King of all the nations, the only joy of every human heart; O Keystone of the mighty arch of man, come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust.
- Dec. 23: **O Emmanuel**, king and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Savior of all people, come and set us free, Lord our God.

Decorations for the Christmas tree, itself a symbol of the tree of life, can be made from paper or cookie dough, with simple patterns designed for the "O" antiphons. Symbols for them might be as follows:

- O Wisdom* — a triangle for the Trinity, eternal seat of wisdom.
O Adonai — a flame for the burning bush from which God spoke to Moses.
O Root of Jesse — a simple flower recalling that Jesus is the son of David, son of Jesse.
O Key of David — a key, for Christ, the key to salvation.
O Rising Dawn — a sun with flames for Christ, sun of justice.
O King of the Gentiles — a crown to show Christ is king of all men.
O Emmanuel — a manger, because Emmanuel means God-with-us.

Christmas Novena I

Say 15 times a day from St. Andrew's Day (30 November) until Christmas

Hail, and blessed be the hour and moment at which the Son of God was born of a most pure Virgin at a stable at midnight in Bethlehem in the piercing cold. At that hour vouchsafe, I beseech Thee, to hear my prayers and grant my desires. (Mention your intentions here) Through Jesus Christ and His most Blessed Mother.

Christmas Novena II

Begins on December 16 and ends on December 24

This Novena matches up very well with the O Antiphons, and with the custom of Las Posadas.

December 16:

O Shepherd who rules Israel, You who lead Joseph like a sheep, come to guide and comfort us.
Recite one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory be.

December 17:

O Wisdom that comes out of the mouth of the Most High, that reaches from one end to another, and orders all things mightily and sweetly, come to teach us the way of prudence!
Recite one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory be.

December 18:

O Adonai, and Ruler of the house of Israel, Who did appear unto Moses in the burning bush, and gave him the law in Sinai, come to redeem us with an outstretched arm!

Recite one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory be.

December 19:

O Root of Jesse, which stands for an ensign of the people, at Whom the kings shall shut their mouths, Whom the Gentiles shall seek, come to deliver us, do not delay.

Recite one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory be.

December 20:

O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel, that opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens, come to liberate the prisoner from the prison, and those who sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

Recite one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory be.

December 21:

O Dayspring, Brightness of the everlasting light, Son of justice, come to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death!

Recite one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory be.

December 22:

O King of the Gentiles, and desire thereof! O Corner-stone, that makes of two one, come to save man, whom You have made out of the dust of the earth!

Recite one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory be.

December 23:

O Emmanuel, our King and our Law-giver, Longing of the Gentiles, and salvation thereof, come to save us, O Lord our God!

Recite one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory be.

December 24:

O You who sit upon the cherubim, God of hosts, come, show Your face, and we shall be saved.

Recite one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory be.

Christmas Novena III**The "O Antiphons" Crown of Advent Preparation**

The theme of the Advent season has been one of joyous expectancy as the Church, in vigilant preparation, waited and watched for the first signs of the coming of the Lord. The very name Advent, and the Masses of the four Sundays with their urgent plea to Christ to "hasten and delay not" have reminded us that we are awaiting His coming in grace at Christmas, and in glory at the end of time.

On the evening of December 17 the last and most intensive phase of Advent preparation begins. On this evening is inaugurated the first of the Great "O's" of Advent. The "O Antiphons" are seven jewels of liturgical song, one for each day until Christmas Eve. They seem to sum up all our Advent longing as they paint in vivid terms the wretched condition of mankind and his need of a Savior. Addressing Christ with seven magnificent titles, they beg Him with mounting impatience to come to save His people.

The "O Antiphons" are intoned with special solemnity in monasteries at the Vesper Hour, before and after our Lady's great song of thanksgiving, the Magnificat, which is sung every evening as the climax of this Hour of the Divine Office. But in recent years families interested in the liturgy have discovered these gems of poetry and have used them as part of their family evening prayers, sometimes in conjunction with the "O Antiphon House." This is a little house which can be bought or constructed simply; it has seven sealed windows, each masking an appropriate symbol for the different "O Antiphons," and an eighth window hiding the Christmas scene. These windows are opened one by one each day at the singing of the antiphon. The "O Antiphons" in an English translation follow.

O ANTIPHONS

O WISDOM, who came from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end and ordering all things mightily and sweetly: *come*, and teach us the way of prudence.

O LORD AND RULER of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the flame of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai: *come*, and redeem us with outstretched arm.

O ROOT OF JESSE, who stands for an ensign of the people, before whom kings shall keep silence and unto whom the Gentiles shall make supplication: *come* to deliver us, and tarry not.

O KEY OF DAVID, and Sceptre of the House of Israel, who opens and no man shuts; who shuts and no man opens: *come*, and bring forth the captive from his prison, he who sits in darkness and in the shadow of death.

O DAWN OF THE EAST, brightness of the light eternal, and Sun of Justice: *come*, and enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

O KING OF THE GENTILES and their desired One, the Cornerstone that makes both one: *come*, and deliver man, whom You formed out of the dust of the earth.

O EMMANUEL, God with us, our King and Lawgiver, the expected of the nations and their Savior: *come* to save us, O Lord our God.

Because the idea of making a Novena on the last nine days of Advent appeals to many families, a traditional "Christmas Novena" is presented here, adapted and shortened for family use. Drawing on the rich texts of the Advent season, the Novena also includes the proper "O Antiphon," sung before and after the Magnificat each day. The Novena begins on December 16.

Father: Our Father, Hail Mary. O Lord, open my lips.

All: And my mouth shall proclaim Your praise.

Father: O God, come to my assistance.

All: O Lord, make haste to help me. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia.

Father: The Lord our Coming King, hasten to adore.

All: The Lord our Coming King, hasten to adore.

Eldest Child: Rejoice, O daughter of Zion, and exult, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold the Lord shall come, and in that day there shall be a great light and the mountains shall bring forth sweetness, and the hills shall flow with milk and honey.

All: The Lord our Coming King, hasten to adore.

Eldest Child: Behold, He that is God and man shall come forth from the house of David, His father, to sit upon His throne, and you shall see Him and your heart shall rejoice.

All: Hasten to adore.

Eldest Child: Behold, the Lord shall come, our protector, the Holy One of Israel, bearing on His Head the crown of a kingdom.

All: The Lord our Coming King, hasten to adore.

Eldest Child: The Lord will descend as rain on the field. His justice shall rise in those days and abundance of peace; and all the kings of the earth shall adore Him, all nations shall serve Him.

All: Hasten to adore.

Eldest Child: A Child shall be born to us and He shall be called the God of strength. Bethlehem, city of the Highest God, out from you shall go forth the Ruler of Israel, and peace will be on the earth, when He shall have come.

All: The Lord our Coming King, hasten to adore.

Eldest Child: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

All: Hasten to adore.

Eldest Child: The Lord, our Coming King,

All: Hasten to adore.

All Sing: A thrilling voice by Jordan rings Rebuking guilt and darksome things; Vain dreams of sin and visions fly Christ in his might shines forth on high.

Now let each earth bound soul arise That sunk in guilt and wounded lies; See the new stars refulgent ray Shall chase disease and sin away.

All Sing: Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, for the day of the Lord is nigh; behold, He will come to save us, alleluia, alleluia!

Father: Let the heavens rejoice and the earth exult; praise the Lord, you mountains.
All: Let the mountains break forth into gladness and the hills with justice.
Father: For the Lord shall come, and to His poor He shall show mercy.
All: Drop down dew, you heavens, from above and let the clouds rain the Just One;
Father: Let the earth be opened and bud forth the Savior.
All: Be mindful of us, O Lord, and visit us in Your salvation.
Father: Show to us, O Lord, Your mercy and grant us Your salvation.
All: Come, O Lord; in peace visit us that with a perfect heart we may rejoice before You.
Father: Come, O Lord, do not tarry; do away with the offences of Your people.
All: Come and show to us Your countenance, O Lord; You sit upon the Cherubim.
Father: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
All: As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
All Sing: Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, for the day of the Lord is nigh; behold, He will come to save us, alleluia, alleluia!

Mother or Eldest Child: *Lesson from Isaiah the Prophet.* The land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad, and the wilderness shall rejoice and shall flourish like the lily. It shall bud forth and blossom, and shall rejoice with joy and praise; the glory of Libanus is given to it, the beauty of Carmel and Saron. They shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of our God. Strengthen the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees. Say to the faint-hearted: Take courage and fear not. Behold, God himself will come and save you. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free; for waters are broken out in the desert and streams in the wilderness. And that which was dry land, shall become a pool, and the thirsty land, springs of water.

All: Thanks be to God. *Sing or pray the "O Antiphon" for the day, beginning with "O Wisdom" on December 17. On December 16, the first day of the Novena, the following is said:* Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His Name shall be called Emmanuel, alleluia, alleluia.

Father: My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

All: Because he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaid, for behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

Father: Because he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name;

All: And his mercy is from generation to generation toward those who fear him.

Father: He has shown might with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

All: He has put down the mighty from their thrones and has exalted the lowly.

Father: The hungry he has filled with good things and the rich he has sent empty away.

All: He has given help to Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy—

Father: As he promised our fathers—toward Abraham and his descendants forever.

All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Father: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

All: *Repeat Antiphon of the day.*

Father: O Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come to You.

Father: Let us pray. Stir up Thy power and come, we pray Thee, O Lord, and with great might help us; may our deliverance, which our sins impede, be hastened by the help of Thy grace and the forgiveness of Thy mercy. Who lives and reigns forever and ever.

Father: Let us bless the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Father: May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace.

All: Amen.