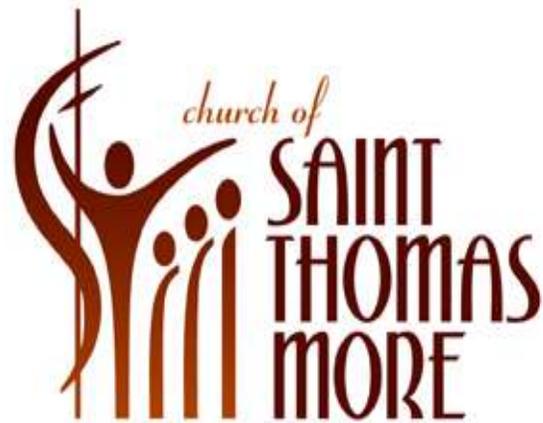


O Come O Come Emmanuel

We know it as THE song of Advent: “Veni Veni Emmanuel!” We rejoice that Jesus, Emmanuel, is coming to be “God With Us”.

The words of each verse of this song come from the “O” Antiphons, short verses sung during Evening Prayer from December 17th to the 23rd. Each antiphon is a plea for the Messiah to come.

These antiphons were composed in the seventh or eighth century, with texts from the Old Testament that looked forward to the coming of the Messiah:



December 17th: O Sapientia (Wisdom)

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.

December 18th: O Adonai (Lord)

O sacred Lord of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush and who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain, come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.

December 19th: O Radix Jesse (Root of 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.

December 20th: O Clavis David (Key of 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.

December 21st: O Oriens (Rising Sun)

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

December 22nd: O Rex (King)

O King of all 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.

December 23rd: O Emmanuel (God With Us)

O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Savior of all people, come and set us free, Lord, our God.

When written in reverse order, the first letters of Sapientia, Adonai, Radix, Clavis, Oriens, Rex, and Emmanuel spell the Latin phrase: “ERO CRAS”, which means, “Tomorrow I will be there”, the response of Christ himself to our pleas of longing.

Steve Raml
Director of Liturgy & Music