

The Great O Antiphons

Prophetic Expectations of the Coming One: Jesus the Messiah

'Antiphon' – a verse sung before and after a canticle such as The *Magnificat* which is always sung in the ancient office of Vespers.

These seven antiphons are prayers addressed to Jesus in the vocative case ('O') using seven of his messianic titles from the prophecy of Isaiah. As such they are examples also of 'typology' in understanding the facets of the coming Messiah.

The pattern of each is invocation to Christ and then the petition beginning with the word *veni* – come.



Emmanuel (God is with us)
Rex Gentium (King)
Oriens (Morning Star)
Clavis David (Key of David)
Radix Jesse (Root of Jesse)
Adonai (Lord)
Sapientia (Wisdom)

The Western Church has used them since 6th Century during the last week of Advent, 17-23 December, the Octave before the Great Vigil of Christmas Eve, the Golden Nights.

The Season of Advent has disappeared from much Western secular life. There is no anticipation, only satisfaction – the 'Holiday Season'. The Church lives in two worlds held in tension during Advent – secular world of Feasting and the sacred world of prayerful waiting and anticipation.

Antiphons give a thought to hold while you sing utterly familiar words – Magnificat... They help shape the interpretation of what is to follow.

Advent is more a season of preparation and anticipation than of penitence (40days) like Lent. So the the antiphons were also used as the 'Alleluia' (forbidden in Lent) introduction to the daily Gospel reading at the Mass. Read backwards they form the acrostic '*Ero cras*' – Tomorrow I will be, or I come. [Or with mediaeval 8th antiphon, '*Vero cras*' – Truly tomorrow. I think this was a deliberate Benedictine conceit but many think it was just coincidence and the antiphons have often appeared in different orders – and with additional ones.

The traditional four Sunday themes are Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell. There is not only an anticipation of the birth of Jesus, but of his Second Coming 'to be our judge'.

Title:	Meaning:	Old Testament prophetic verses:
Sapientia	Wisdom	<p>Isaiah 11:2-3 And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord, He shall not judge according to the sight of the eyes, nor reprove according to the hearing of the ears.</p> <p>Isaiah 28:29 This also is come forth from the Lord God of hosts, to make his counsel wonderful, and magnify justice.</p>
Adonai	Lord of Israel	<p>Isaiah 11:4-5 But he shall judge the poor with justice, and shall reprove with equity the meek of the earth: and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. And justice shall be the girdle of his loins: and faith the girdle of his reins.</p> <p>Isaiah 33:22 For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king: he will save us.</p>
Radix Jesse	<p>Root of Jesse</p> <p>Jesse was Father of King David and the son of Obed and the grandson of Ruth and of Boaz</p>	<p>Isaiah 11:1, 10 And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. In that day the root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of the people, him the Gentiles shall beseech, and his sepulchre shall be glorious.</p> <p>Micah 5:1 Now shalt thou be laid waste, O daughter of the robber: they have laid siege against us, with a rod shall they strike the cheek of the judge of Israel.</p> <p>Romans 15:8-13 For I say that Christ Jesus was minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. But that the Gentiles are to glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: Therefore will I confess to thee, O Lord, among the Gentiles, and will sing to thy name. And again he saith: Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again: Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and magnify him, all ye people. And again Isaiah saith: There shall be a root of Jesse; and he that shall rise up to rule the Gentiles, in him the Gentiles shall hope. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing; that you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Ghost.</p> <p>Revelation 5:1-5 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel, proclaiming with a loud voice: Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man was able, neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth, to open the book, nor to look on it. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open the book, nor to see it. And one of the ancients said to me: Weep not; behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.</p>
Clavis David	Key of David	<p>Isaiah 22:22 And I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulder: and he shall open, and none shall shut: and he shall shut, and none shall open.</p> <p>Isaiah 9:6 For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace.</p>
Oriens	Radiant Dawn, Dayspring	<p>Isaiah 9:2 The people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light: to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen.</p>

		<p>Malachi 4:1-3 For behold the day shall come kindled as a furnace: and all the proud, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall set them on fire, saith the Lord of hosts, it shall not leave them root, nor branch. But unto you that fear my name, the Sun of justice shall arise, and health in his wings: and you shall go forth, and shall leap like calves of the herd. And you shall tread down the wicked when they shall be ashes under the sole of your feet in the day that I do this, saith the Lord of hosts.</p> <p>2 Peter 1:19: "Keep your attention closely fixed on it, as you would on a lamp shining in a dark place, until the first streaks of dawn appear and the morning star rises in your heart".</p>
Rex Gentium	King of all Nations, King of the Gentiles	<p>Isaiah 9:7 His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace: he shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom; to establish it and strengthen it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and for ever: the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.</p> <p>Isaiah 2:4 And he shall judge the Gentiles, and rebuke many people: and they shall turn their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into sickles: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they be exercised any more to war.</p>
Emmanuel	God with us	<p>Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and his name shall be called Emmanuel.</p>
[Virgo Virginum]	[Virgin of Virgins]	

To Explore

Must the performance have a denouement?
Or many little climaxes?

The facets and types of Jesus are all part of a whole – the Triune God.

What are the central themes?

Can we go with many themes?+

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.

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.

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.

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.

O Morning Star, splendour of light eternal and sun of righteousness: **Come** and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

O King of the nations, and their desire, the cornerstone making both one: **Come** and save the human race, which you fashioned from clay.

O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Saviour: **Come** and save us, O Lord our God.

Common Worship

O Sapientia, quae ex ore Altissimi prodiisti, attingens a fine usque ad finem, fortiter suaviterque disponens omnia: **veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiae.**

O Adonai, et Dux domus Israel, qui Moysi in igne flammae rubi apparuisti, et ei in Sina legem dedisti: **veni ad redimendum nos in brachio extento.**

O Radix Jesse, qui stas in signum populorum, super quem continebunt reges os suum, quem Gentes deprecabuntur: **veni ad liberandum nos, jam noli tardare.**

O Clavis David, et sceptrum domus Israel; qui aperis, et nemo claudit; claudis, et nemo aperit: **veni**, et educ vinctum de domo carceris, sedentem in tenebris, et umbra mortis.

O Oriens, splendor lucis aeternae, et sol justitiae: **veni**, et illumina sedentes in tenebris, et umbra mortis.

O Rex Gentium, et desideratus earum, lapisque angularis, qui facis utraque unum: **veni**, et salva hominem, quem de limo formasti.

O Emmanuel, Rex et legifer noster, exspectatio Gentium, et Salvator earum: **veni ad salvandum nos, Domine, Deus noster.**

Breviarium Romanum