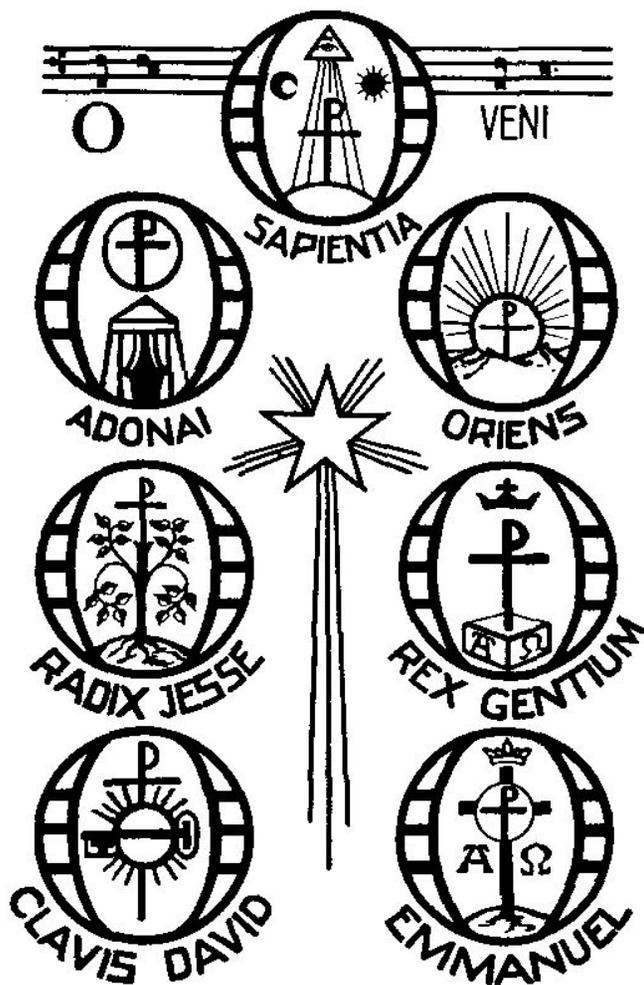


The antiphons have been intentionally arranged in this order. If one takes the first letter of each word from the antiphon, beginning with the last and moving to the first, you have the letters ERO-CRAS. This is a reverse acrostic (an acrostic is an arrangement where the first letter of each line comes together to spell a word), spelling the Latin phrase *ero cras*, “Tomorrow I come.” Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose coming we have prepared for in Advent, and whom we addressed in these seven antiphons, now speaks to use. To us, He promises that He comes soon. These antiphons not only bring intensity to our Advent preparation, but they bring it to a joyful conclusion.



## Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel

**Text: Unknown, Latin, c. 1100**

**Tune: Unknown, plainsong melody, c. 1200**

The great Advent hymn “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel” is one that has little known history. Its foundation is the Great O Antiphons, chanted at the Office of Vespers on December 17-23, the Octave before the Nativity of Our Lord. An unknown author took these antiphons and versified them, giving us the hymn *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel*. The tune’s origins are also unknown. Many scholars trace it to an adaptation of a 13th century plain-song *Kyrie*. Nevertheless, the Church has been given a treasure in this hymn. Here we sing of our Redeemer who comes to us. In this hymn, we plead that Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, come quickly to save us from death and the grave. Not only does that make it a fitting hymn to close the Advent season, but a hymn many find comforting in death, knowing that the Redeemer to whom they sing will soon rescue them from the misery of this earthly life. At this joyful message we all rejoice, knowing that Emmanuel soon will come to us and redeem us!

The hymn has as its origin the “Great O Antiphons.” These antiphons are chanted during the week before Christmas, before and after the *Magnificat* in the Office of Vespers. The exact origin of these antiphons is unknown. Boethius, a fifth century scholar, makes a reference to these antiphons in one of his writings, suggesting their use in his day. By the eighth century they were used in liturgical celebrations in Rome. While the era of their origin is unsure, they have been a part of Christian piety for well over 1,300 years. Today, many churches use these antiphons in some fashion in their Advent preparations. They are an outstanding teaching tool and prayer for the Faithful as we prepare for Our Lord’s coming.

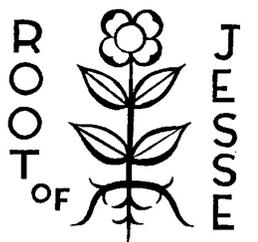
The importance of these antiphons is twofold. First, each one highlights a title for the Messiah. In that way, these all help to explain and teach who the Messiah is and what He does for His people. Secondly, each antiphon is based on a prophesy of Isaiah concerning the Messiah. Each antiphon is the basis for a stanza of *Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel*.



**December 17—O Sapientia.** *O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High, pervading and permeating all creation, mightily ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence.* Isaiah prophesied that “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord, and His delight shall be the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:2-3). (Stanza 2)

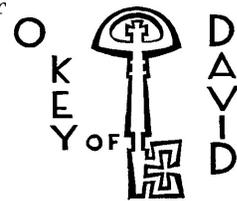


**December 18—O Adonai.** *O Adonai and Ruler of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and gave him the Law on Sinai: Come with an outstretched arm and redeem us.* Isaiah prophesied concerning Christ’s redemption: “But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist” (Isaiah 11:4-5). (Stanza 3)



**December 19—O Radix Jesse.** *O Root of Jesse, standing as an ensign before the peoples, before whom all kings are mute, to whom the nations will do homage: Come quickly to deliver us.* God promised that the Messiah would be of the lineage of Jesse, the father of King David. Also, it was promised that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:1). Isaiah promised the Messiah to be of Jesse’s lineage and “the Branch [growing] out of his roots” (Isaiah 11:1). (Stanza 4)

**December 20—O Clavis David.** *O Key of David and Scepter of the House of Israel, You open and no one can close, you close and no one can open: Come and rescue the prisoners who are in darkness and the shadow of death.* Only Christ can free from the bondage of sin. Every time sin is forgiven, the prisoners are loosed from their slavery to sin. This is as Isaiah prophesied: “The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so shall He open, and no one shall shut; and He shall shut, and on one shall open” (Isaiah 22:22). (Stanza 5).



**December 21—O Oriens.** *O Dayspring, Splendor of light everlasting: Come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.* Jesus Christ is the Light of the World (John 8:12). His light illumines the darkness and scatters sin and all its gloom. The Dayspring will usher us into everlasting day where the gloom of night will no longer plague us: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined” (Isaiah 9:2). (Stanza 6)



**December 22—O Rex Gentium.** *O King of the Nations, the Ruler they long for, the Cornerstone uniting all people: Come and save us all whom You made out of clay.* 5 is antiphon highlights the peace Christ brings to His people. The peace is the fulfillment of the promise that war will cease: “He shall judge between the nations and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4). (Stanza 7)



**December 23—O Emmanuel.** *O Emmanuel, our King and our Lord, the Anointed for the nations and their Savior: Come and save us, O Lord our God.* Finally, the promised Son of the Virgin (Isaiah 7:14) comes to be our Emmanuel, in whom all men rejoice. (Stanza 1)

