



Dear Parishioners:

A bit about the “O” antiphons: These prayers introduce the recitation of the Magnificat at Vespers for the days leading up to Christmas. They have been prayed since about the eighth century. There is even some evidence they were used since about the fifth century.

The importance of O Antiphons is two-fold. Each one highlights a title for the Messiah: *O Sapientia* (O Wisdom), *O Adonai* (O Lord), *O Radix Jesse* (O Root of Jesse), *O Clavis David* (O Key of David), *O Oriens* (O Rising Sun), *O Rex Gentium* (O King of the Nations), and *O Emmanuel*. Also, each one refers to the prophecy of Isaiah of the coming of the Messiah.



Let's now look at each antiphon:

*O Sapientia*: O Wisdom, O holy Word of God

*O Adonai*: O sacred Lord of ancient Israel

*O Radix Jesse*: O Flower of Jesse's stem, you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples

*O Clavis David*: O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel controlling at your will the gate of Heaven

*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

*O Rex Gentium*: O King of all the nations, the only joy of every human heart

*O Emmanuel*: O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Savior of all people, come and set us free

We approach the wonderful feast of Christmas and await with expectant hearts the coming of our God and Savior. God has waited long enough and will soon be present to the world. Of course, he has already made his presence known by his birth many centuries ago, his first advent, which means arrival. We must not think, however, that this is the only arrival of Jesus.

He arrives every year at this holy time, to you and to me, in a personal manner that can touch our very souls. It is an intimate touch that calls for a personal response of encountering him deeply, perhaps so deeply that we have a difficult time trying to tell one another just what the encounter does to us.

Jesus will arrive in a quite public manner at the end of time when he arrives as the judge of the living and the dead. He will gather everyone who has ever been conceived. It will be a time of ecstatic joy or dreadful woe. There will be no in between for anyone because all will be judged.

These three arrivals, Advents, are cause for great joy, because God has not abandoned us to our deserved fate. His profound mercy binds us to him in a way that forgives our sins, allows us weakness, and welcomes us back even when we sin and fall short of his glory. Could one be more compassionate than our God?

As the Baptist points out today, our God and Savior will baptize in the Holy Spirit, making us his daughters and sons for all eternity. We become members of a royal family invited to evangelize and cooperate in making the Savior present to the world. In a sense we too become an advent for our world. We are his eyes, hands, mouth, heart, his peace in this world, his mystical body reaching out to a world desiring peace and justice. This is not an easy task.

Our world was not ready for him who is Love to be living among us. If God waited for what we think is the *right* time, we would still be waiting for Him. If it were up to mankind there would never be a right or best time for Him to live among us. God our Father chose the time and it became the right time even if we think it should be different. Because he has already come in historical time, we now have the blessed opportunity to be an Advent for the world. He knew that we are the people who could do this for him; He never asks of us the impossible.

Let us use the quietness of Advent to become a time of joyful preparation to receive again the newness of his birth, not way over there or so long ago, but here and now in the nearness of our own body and soul. If you think you are not worthy, you're on the right track. The manger was not ready, but he came anyway. You are worth more than any stable.

Pace – bene,

*Msgr. Bell*

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