



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

The "O" Antiphons

There are seven short verses sung before the Magnificat during Evening Prayer of the Church on the seven days before the vigil of Christmas. They each begin with the exclamation "O". Each of them ends with a plea for the Messiah to come. As Christmas approaches the cry becomes more urgent.

The antiphons were composed in the seventh or eighth century when monks put together texts from the Old Testament which looked forward to the coming of our salvation. They form a rich mosaic of scriptural images. These seven verses, or antiphons as they are called, appear to be the originals although from time to time other texts were used. They became very popular in the Middle Ages. While the monastic choirs sang the antiphons the great bells of the church were rung.

A curious feature of these antiphons is that the first letter of each invocation may be taken from the Latin to form an acrostic in reverse.

So the first letters of Sapientia (Wisdom), Adonai (Lord), Radix (Rod of Jesse), Clavis, Oriens (Rising Sun/Day-spring), Rex (Key of David), and Emmanuel, provide the Latin words: ERO CRAS. The phrase spells out the response of Christ himself to

the heartfelt prayer of his people: "Tomorrow I will be there".

Why not join with the Prayer of the Church each evening and reflect on these words preparing for Christmas day by day:

December 17th:
O Wisdom, you come forth from the mouth of the Most High. You fill the universe and hold all things together in a strong yet gentle manner. O come to teach us the way of truth.

December 18th:
O Adonai and leader of Israel, you appeared to Moses in a burning bush and you gave him the Law on Sinai. O come and save us with your mighty power.

December 19th:
O stock of Jesse, you stand as a signal for the nations; kings fall silent before you whom the peoples acclaim. O come to deliver us, and do not delay.

December 20th:
O key of David and scepter of Israel, what you open no one else can close again; what you close no one can open. O come to lead the captive from prison; free those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

December 21st:
O Rising Sun, you are the splendor of eternal light and

the sun of justice. O come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

December 22nd:
O King whom all the peoples desire, you are the cornerstone which makes all one. O come and save man whom you made from clay.

December 23rd:
O Emmanuel, you are our king and judge, the One whom the peoples await and their Savior. O come and save us, Lord, our God.

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The "O" Antiphons
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Things to talk about:

- Which verse in "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" do you like the best? Why?
- As we move closer to the Feast of Christmas, where have you found God in the midst of your Advent?
- How do you rejoice at the thought that "Emmanuel shall come to *you*"?



O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Text: Veni, Veni Emmanuel;
Latin 9th Century
Translated: John Neal, 1818-66

Oh, come, oh, come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!**

Oh, come,
O Wisdom from on high,
Who ordered all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.

Oh, come, oh, come,
great Lord of might,
Who to your tribes
on Sinai's height
In ancient times once gave the law,
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.

Oh, come O Rod of Jesse's stem,
From ev'ry foe deliver them
That trust your mighty pow'r to save;
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave.

Oh, come, O Key of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

Oh, come, O Dayspring from on high,
And cheer us by your drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadow
put to flight.

Oh, come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Oh, bid our sad divisions cease,
And be for us our King of Peace.

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!**



Saint in the Spotlight — Saint Peter Canisius, priest, doctor of the Church

This Friday, December 21, the church remembers Saint Peter Canisius.

St Peter Canisius was one of the most important figures in the Catholic Counter-Reformation in Germany. His was such a key role that he has often been called the “second apostle of Germany” in that his life parallels the earlier work of Boniface....

In 1547 Peter attended several sessions of the Council of Trent, whose decrees he was later assigned to implement. After a brief teaching assignment at the Jesuit college at Messina, Peter was entrusted with the mission to Germany—from that point on his life’s work. He taught in several universities and was instrumental in establishing many colleges and seminaries. He wrote a catechism that explained the Catholic faith in a way which common people could understand—a great need of that age.

Renowned as a popular preacher, Peter packed churches with those eager to hear his eloquent proclamation of the gospel. He had great diplomatic ability, often serving as a reconciler between disputing factions. In his letters (filling eight volumes) one finds words of wisdom and counsel to people in all walks

of life. At times he wrote unprecedented letters of criticism to leaders of the Church—yet always in the context of a loving, sympathetic concern.

At 70 Peter suffered a paralytic seizure, but he continued to preach and write with the aid of a secretary until his death in his hometown (Nijmegen, Netherlands) on December 21, 1597.

Taken from www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay

In the late 1800’s the city of Buffalo, NY, had a large number of prominent citizens with German ancestry and heri-

tage. Therefore, when the German Jesuits decided to open a college there, it was a natural choice for them to name it after this famous Saint. Thus, in 1870, Canisius College, and nearby Canisius High School, opened their doors in honor of this important man.



Advent Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

- Advent and Christmas focus our attention on the most important mystery, the Trinity, via the Incarnation (CCC 456-478; NDC 37)
- What we mostly do during Advent is wait (CCC 522-544) and as we do, we are revealed to ourselves (CCC 359; GS 22)
- Advent begins anew our celebration of salvation history (CCC 1095, 1168-1173; NDC 37)

CCC: Catechism of the Catholic Church; GS: Gaudium et Spes; NDC: National Directory for Catechesis. These documents can be found online at www.vatican.va or www.usccb.org.

Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about Advent? Check out the following books or websites for more information:

- Catholic Customs & Traditions, Greg Dues, Twenty-Third Publications, 2003
- www.catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/re0374.html
- Listen to the O Antiphons sung in Latin: http://www.wdtptrs.com/JTZ/o_antiphons/

These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.



ADVENT PRAYER

**Come, the fulfillment of every longing,
like the child's wildest
Christmas dream realized.
We know you may not
burst upon us dramatically,
but will come subtly.
Alert us to your quiet,
attune us to your silences,
show us your hidden ways.**

By Katy Coffey

“What’s What” is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement [Draft]:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.