

A Christmas Novena for Social Media

The privileged days from December 17 through the 23 are set apart from the rest of Advent in a particular way, through the special invocations that are used as antiphons for the Magnificat at evening prayer on each of these days. These texts, commonly known as the “O” Antiphons, have been paraphrased in the popular Advent chant “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”. Each of these scripturally based antiphons has a two-part structure. In the first part, Christ is addressed with a title based on images or themes found in the Old Testament. In the second part, we find a short prayer for His coming.

(Text and reflections taken from “The “O” Antiphons” Prayers for a Waiting Word, by Silas Henderson, Lay Witness, November/December 2013)

A Christmas Novena with the “O” Antiphons

The “O” Antiphons can be prayed in the final week before Christmas as beautiful reminder of our anticipation of the coming Messiah. The antiphons themselves, along with complimentary Scripture passages and brief reflections are one way to pray with the Church during this season

December 17 O Sapientia!

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.

Read: Sirach 24: 3 – 12

Saint Paul reminds us that God “has made Christ our wisdom and also our justice, sanctification, and our redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30) and that Jesus is the wisdom that “is not of this age...which God decreed before the ages for our glorification” (1 Cor. 2: 6 – 7). During these days of Advent, we pray for peace and justice and for the gifts of prudence and discernment, so that we follow Christ along the way that leads to the Father.

Our Father...

December 18 O Adonai!

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

Read: Exodus 3: 1 – 15

When God spoke to Moses in the burning bush, revealing the Divine Name, God entered into the network of human relationship or, as Pope Emeritus Benedict observed, “God comes out of God’s self, so to speak and becomes one of us, present among us and for us.” The promise of God’s abiding presence among us has been brought to fulfillment in Jesus, the one who has come to support and sustain as we move from darkness and death to the light and life of God’s Kingdom.

Our Father...

December 19 O Radix Jesse!

O Flower of Jesse’s stem, you have been raised up as a sign for all people; kings stand silent in your presence; the nations bow down in worship before you. Come; let nothing keep you from coming to our aid.

Reading: Isaiah 52: 13 – 53: 12

Drawing on the prophecy of Isaiah, this text reminds us that the Messiah is to be a sign for all people (Is. 11:10) Jesus, who was born into the family of David (cf. Mt. 1; 1), the son of Jesse, has become the sign of God’s presence and saving love: “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. He said this to show by what death he was to die” (John 22:32-33). As Christmas draws near, we pray that we will be open to the renewing truth and power of the Gospel.

Our Father...

December 20

O Clavis 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.

Reading: Psalm 107: 1 – 16

Although humility is not a virtue often associated with Advent, an honest assessment of who and what we are in the sight of God is an essential part of receiving the gift that is offered to us during these sacred days – the gift of the One who leads us from captivity into the freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:21). During these dark days of Advent, we pray for minds and hearts open to welcome the light of Christ Christmas and every day.

Our Father....

December 21

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.

Reading: Malachi 3: 13 – 21

At Christmas, we not only recall Jesus' birth at Bethlehem but we also anticipate the return of Christ, the Sun of Justice, at the end of time. Advent reminds us that we live in a time of unfulfilled hope and expectation. As we prepare to celebrate the great feast of light, we recall that there are still dark places in our world and in our own hearts, and we continue to pray for enlightenment and peace.

Our Father....

December 22

O Rex Gentium!

O King of all the 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.

Read: Jeremiah 10: 1 – 11

The Letter to the Ephesians reminds us that it is only Christ that true communion can exist among individuals and nations: “For He is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through His flesh...that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace” (Eph. 2: 14, 15b). We await the Lord’s coming, the one who builds us and sustains the Church and who is hope for a war-weary world.

Our Father...

December 23

O Emmanuel!

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

Read: Isaiah 33: 10 – 22

The fundamental truth of the Christian faith is that God become a human being, coming to dwell among us. God is not distant, but is, rather “Emmanuel,” God-with-us. As Pope Emeritus Benedict observed, this message is “ever new, ever surprising, for it surpasses even our most daring hope.” The mystery of “Emmanuel” invites us to remember that in Jesus, God did not change. Instead humanity was changed and each of us was brought into the ever-expanding life and love that is God’s own self.

Our Father...

December 24

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.

Read: Luke 2: 1 – 14

Prayer in Praise of the Mother of God

Mary, Our Mother, the whole world reveres you as the holiest shrine of the living God, for in you the salvation of the world dawned. The Son of God was pleased to take human form from you. You have broken down the wall of hatred, the barrier between heaven and earth which was set up by man's first disobedience. In you heaven met earth when divinity and humanity were joined in one person, the God-Man.

Mother of God, we sing your praise, but we must praise you even more. Our speech is too feeble to honor you as we ought, for no tongue is eloquent enough to express your excellence.

Mary, most powerful, most holy, and worthy of all love! You're name brings new life, and the thought of you inspires love in the hearts of those devoted to you.

Amen.