

O Antiphons: A theological translation

By [Thom Turner](#)

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My friend [Tim Ghali](#)

asked me to contribute some liturgy for an Advent service, and I chose to use the O Antiphons as a base. The O Antiphons are the daily prayers for services during the week proceeding Christmas Day. The daily services leading up to church have mostly gone away in the West, but the O Antiphons live on in the hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” which is the O Antiphons put to music. What ended up happening through my changing of the King James Bible-like language of my copy of the O Antiphons was that I kept pushing the language and poetic nature of the prayers until I flushed out a re-imagining of the O Antiphons. When trying to describe it, the best term I could come up with is a “theological translation.” I wanted to flesh out the theological underpinnings of the O Antiphons, and I did so by changing the O Antiphons from two lines to four lines. Enjoy! And please, if feel free to use them and let me know how they read in your faith community.

December 17 - O Wisdom (*O Sapientia*)

O Wisdom, coming to us as the voice of God,
The rushing wind of your voice hovers over the earth,
calling us back to the peacefulness of Eden.
Come now and teach us discernment.

December 18 - O Lord (*O Adonai*)

O Lord of your chosen people, you have spoken to us
through prophets. Through burning bushes and flaming tongues
you have given us your law: to love God and love others.
Come with your outstretched arms and bring salvation to all.

December 19 – O Root of Jesse (*O Radix Jesse*)

O Root of Jesse, out of you springs up the kingdom of God.
No other kings or nations have the power you possess,
so they keep silent before you and the witness of your kingdom.
Come with your kingdom now and save us.

December 20 – O Key of David (*O Clavis David*)

O Messiah, King of the Jews, you have given us the mysteries
of God and taught us the way of your kingdom. When someone
knocks you give to them freely and without reservation.
Come now and free those who are held captive by darkness.

December 21 – O Morning Star (*O Oriens*)

O Morning Star, bright light, eternal dawn, sun of justice,
shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow
of death; be our guide on the path of righteousness.
Come now and show us the light that brings eternal joy.

December 22 – O King of the Gentiles (*O Rex Gentium*)

O King of the Gentiles, the object of our desire,
you are the rock on which the church has been built.
You graft your chosen people together in one body.
Come now and save us who are but dirt and clay.

December 23 – O God-who-is-with-us (*O Emmanuel*)

O God-who-is-with-us, our coming king, composer of justice,
the nations will gather and bow down to you
who will come to judge the living and the dead.
Come now and save us, our God in the flesh.

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