

The O Antiphons

Celebrating the Final Days of Advent

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The “O Antiphons” are a beautiful finale to the season of Advent—building up our anticipation as we await the birth of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The word “antiphon” refers to a short Bible verse or message that is usually song and is part of the Church’s prayer in the Mass or in Liturgy of the Hours. The “O Antiphons” are the antiphons prayed before the recitation of the Magnificat in Evening Prayer for December 17 through 24. Each O Antiphon uses a different title or image of the coming Messiah found in the Old Testament—giving us a chance to reflect on how Jesus fulfills every promise made by God throughout all of salvation history. The O Antiphons form the basis for the ancient hymn, O Come, O Come Emmanuel. If you take the first letter of each antiphon in reverse order, you get the Latin phrase “*Ero cras*” which means “I am coming”—and Jesus’ coming is exactly what we are celebrating in Advent! Here is a link to the Catholic Culture website that includes Scripture citations for each of the O Antiphons: <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/prayers/view.cfm?id=1472>



ADVENT

The “O” Antiphons

- The **O Antiphons** are Magnificat antiphons used at Vespers of the last seven days of Advent.
 - December 17: O Sapientia (*O Wisdom*)
 - December 18: O Adonai (*O Lord*)
 - December 19: O Radix Jesse (*O Root of Jesse*)
 - December 20: O Clavis David (*O Key of David*)
 - December 21: O Oriens (*O Dayspring*)
 - December 22: O Rex Gentium (*O King of the nations*)
 - December 23: O Emmanuel (*O God is with Us*)

We can make use of these O Antiphons in our Catholic homes to help our families keep these final days of Advent rather than charging right into Christmas as soon as the school break begins. Hopefully you will be able to make use of one or more of these ideas in your home to

keep the season of Advent up until Christmas begins. By the way, keeping Advent helps make it easier for us to keep the entire season of Christmas—if we’ve done Advent correctly, we won’t be sick of Christmas on December 26!

Here are the words of all the verses of O Come, O Come Emmanuel. Sing the corresponding verse of the hymn when you gather for prayer on each of the days of the O Antiphons—this is especially meaningful when the candles of the Advent Wreath are being lit or when you can gather around a fireplace:

*O come, Thou Wisdom, from on high, and order all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show, and teach us in her ways to go.*

O come, o come, Thou Lord of might, who to thy tribes on Sinai's height In ancient times did give the law, in cloud, and majesty, and awe.

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

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse's stem, from every foe deliver them That trust Thy mighty power to save, and give them victory o'er the grave.

O come, Desire of nations, bind, in one the hearts of all mankind; Bid every strife and quarrel cease and fill the world with heaven's peace.

O come, Thou Key of David, come, and open wide our heavenly home, Make safe the way that leads on high, that we no more have cause to sigh.

O Come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here, Until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel, Shall come to thee, O Israel!

Here is a great video of Peter Hollens singing the song—and he recorded the video at the Sanctuary of Our Sorrowful Mother in Portland, Oregon: beautiful!
<https://youtu.be/zshzkkD-NYA>

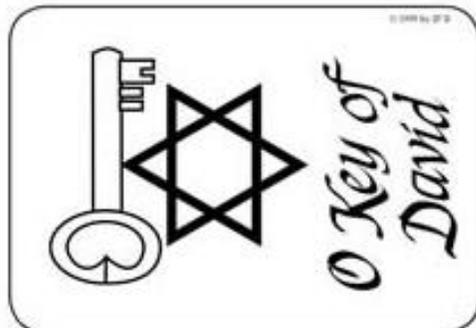
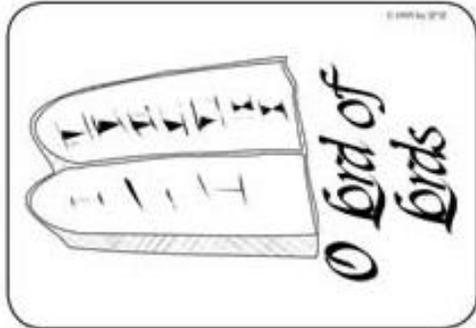
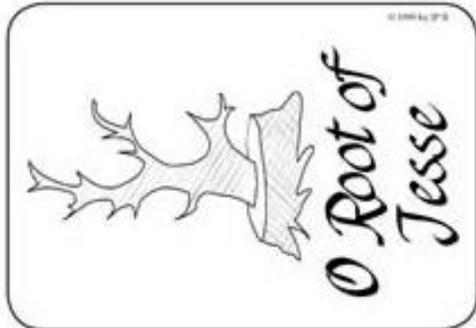
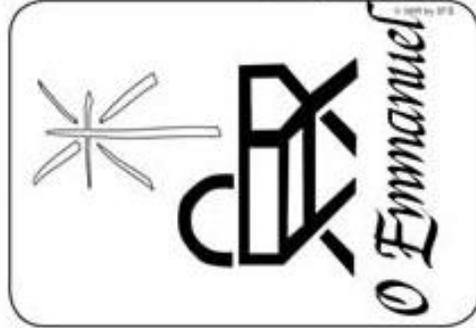
Ideas for Activities Using the O Antiphons

Coloring an ornament for each day:

The O Antiphons

Clip and Paste 28

- Dec. 17 O Wisdom
- Dec. 18 O Lord
- Dec. 19 O Root
- Dec. 20 O Key
- Dec. 21 O Dawn
- Dec. 22 O King
- Dec. 23 O Emmanuel



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Print out this page and color the ornaments. Put them on your tree or on a window or place around your Advent Wreath.

Another great version of the O Antiphons to color can be found here:

<https://www.looktohimandberadiant.com/2015/12/the-o-antiphons.html>

Making salt dough ornaments for each day:

Here is a great recipe with clear directions for making salt dough ornaments:

<https://www.thebestideasforkids.com/salt-dough-ornament-recipe/> For making O Antiphon ornaments, here are some suggested shapes that are very simple to make:

O Wisdom— a triangle for the Trinity, eternal seat of wisdom.

O Adonai— a flame for the burning bush from which God spoke to Moses.

O Root of Jesse— a simple flower recalling that Jesus is the son of David, son of Jesse.

O Key of David— a key, for Christ, the key to salvation.

O Rising Dawn— a sun with flames for Christ, sun of justice.

O King of the Gentiles— a crown to show Christ is king of all men.

O Emmanuel— a manger, because Emmanuel means God-with-us.

O Antiphon House

This craft idea uses cardboard (like a cereal box turned “inside out”) to make a little house with “windows” to open for each of the O Antiphons. The craft from the Catholic Culture website includes suggestions for a symbol for each antiphon (or you could use the ornaments from page 3): <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/activities/view.cfm?id=957>

Additional Craft Ideas

More O Antiphon ideas with lots of simple crafts and coloring pages at Catholic Icing:

<https://www.catholicicing.com/o-antiphon-ideas-for-catholic-families-an-advent-tradition/>



Active Games for Busy Bodies

Balloon Bop: Blow up 7 balloons and write one O Antiphon title on each balloon. Challenge your children to keep all the O Antiphons up in the air at the same time, for the length it takes to sing the song (or play a recorded version of it). Alternative—have the kids move all the O Antiphon balloons through the house and bop them into a box/laundry basket before the song ends.

“John Says”: This is a version of Simon Says but using St. John the Baptist to give the commands. Practice an action that goes with each of the O Antiphons:

Wisdom: hold a “thinking” pose

Lord: genuflect or kneel

Root of Jesse: stand as a tall tree

Key of David: use forearm like a key unlocking a door (hold it straight, then twisting it)

Rising Dawn: crouch down, then stand up holding arms in circle above head like the sun

King of the Gentiles: strike a kingly pose holding “scepter” or swishing cape

Emmanuel: pretend to cuddle a baby in your arms

Review the actions together. Then the game begins—the person calls out one of the O Antiphons. If the person says “John says” first, then everyone needs to do that action. Someone can get out if they don’t do the correct action or if they do the action when “John says” wasn’t said first. Play until one person remains.

O Antiphon Relay Race: Print and cut out a set of O Antiphons on page 3 for each team (or just write them out on scraps of paper), then place them in a bowl or basket or envelope. Set the O Antiphons up on one side of the house/room and a starting line for the teams at the other end of the house/room. Have the teams race to pick up one O Antiphon at a time and bring them back to the starting line. For an extra challenge, have the team arrange them in the proper order for the 7 days!