



St. John's Episcopal Church
Chula Vista

Household Evening Prayer with the O Antiphons December 17 – 23



December 17 O SAPIENTIA

The Wisdom of God covers the earth like a mist:
O come, let us worship.

Scripture

Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out: "To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live. O simple ones, learn prudence; acquire intelligence, you who lack it. Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.

Proverbs 8:1-5, 9-11

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other, mightily and sweetly ordering all things: Come, and teach us the way of prudence.

The Song of Mary

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in you, O God my Savior, *
for you have looked with favor on your lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
you, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and holy is your name.
You have mercy on those who fear you *
from generation to generation.
You have shown strength with your arm *
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones *
and lifting up the lowly.
You have filled the hungry with good things *
and sent the rich away empty.
for you have remembered your promise of mercy,
The promise made to our forebears, *
to Abraham and his children forever.

Collect

O Wisdom, you have called the children of God to learn from you, for your teaching is more precious than silver and gold: Come and instruct us in the way of understanding, that we may care for your world with love and justice; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.



December 18 O ADONAI, O LORD

The burning bush announces freedom from all that enslaves:
O come, let us worship.

Scripture

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.
Isaiah 11:3-6, 9

O Adonai, O Ruler of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai: Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.

The Song of Mary

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in you, O God my Savior, *
for you have looked with favor on your lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
you, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and holy is your name.
You have mercy on those who fear you *
from generation to generation.
You have shown strength with your arm *
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones *
and lifting up the lowly.
You have filled the hungry with good things *
and sent the rich away empty.
for you have remembered your promise of mercy,
The promise made to our forebears, *
to Abraham and his children forever.

Collect

O Adonai, Ruler of the house of Israel, in ages past you rescued your people from slavery, exile, poverty, and corruption: Come among us with your mighty arm, bring an end to all that degrades your creation, and lead us to your holy mountain where all shall be gathered in lasting peace; through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

[Among the Jewish people, the Hebrew word *Adonai* – “Lord” in English – replaces the sacred name of God which is never spoken]



December 19 O ROOT OF JESSE

From the fallen tree, a green shoot grows:
O come, let us worship.

Scripture

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.
Isaiah 11:1-2

O Root of Jesse, standing as a sign among the peoples; before you rulers will shut their mouths, to you the nations will make their prayer: Come and deliver us, and delay no longer.

The Song of Mary

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in you, O God my Savior, *
for you have looked with favor on your lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
you, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and holy is your name.
You have mercy on those who fear you *
from generation to generation.
You have shown strength with your arm *
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones *
and lifting up the lowly.
You have filled the hungry with good things *
and sent the rich away empty.
for you have remembered your promise of mercy,
The promise made to our forebears, *
to Abraham and his children forever.

Collect

O Shoot of Jesse, where the world sees only brittle death, you bring forth life and healing sap for those who trust in you: Come among us and grow the seed of faith within our lives so that it may bear good fruit in works of love and justice for our neighbors; through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

[Jesse was the father of David, from whom, says Matthew, Jesus of Nazareth was descended]



December 20 O KEY OF DAVID

God's living key, Jesus Christ, opens wide the door to the future:
O come, let us worship.

Scripture

On that day I will call my servant, and will clothe him with your robe and bind your sash on him. I will commit your authority to his hand, and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open. I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place, and he will become a throne of honor to his ancestral house.

Isaiah 22:20-23

O Key of David, and scepter of the House of Israel; you open and no one can shut; you shut and no one can open: Come and lead the prisoners from the prison house, and all those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

The Song of Mary

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in you, O God my Savior, *
for you have looked with favor on your lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
you, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and holy is your name.
You have mercy on those who fear you *
from generation to generation.
You have shown strength with your arm *
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones *
and lifting up the lowly.
You have filled the hungry with good things *
and sent the rich away empty.
for you have remembered your promise of mercy,
The promise made to our forebears, *
to Abraham and his children forever.

Collect

Into our lives marked by the restrictions of this world and our own making, you lead us into the freedom of the children of God: Come, now, O liberating Key, and free us from any bondage, that we might enter your future with hope; through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.



December 21 O ORIENS, O RISING DAWN

The winter solstice heralds the return of God's own light:
O come, let us worship.

Scripture

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you, as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
Isaiah 9:2-5

O Rising Dawn, splendor of light eternal and sun of righteousness: Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

The Song of Mary

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in you, O God my Savior, *
for you have looked with favor on your lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
you, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and holy is your name.
You have mercy on those who fear you *
from generation to generation.
You have shown strength with your arm *
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones *
and lifting up the lowly.
You have filled the hungry with good things *
and sent the rich away empty.
for you have remembered your promise of mercy,
The promise made to our forebears, *
to Abraham and his children forever.

Collect

O Rising Dawn, you scatter the shadows and enlighten the ignorance of your children: Come among us with the brightness of your living Light so that we might experience anew your life-giving presence and give thanks for your abundant grace; through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.



December 22 O REX GENTIUM, O RULER OF NATIONS

Our king reigns from the tree of life:
O come, let us worship.

Scripture

See, my servant shall prosper;
he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.
Just as there were many who were astonished at him
— so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of mortals —
so he shall startle many nations;
kings shall shut their mouths because of him;
for that which had not been told them they shall see,
and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.
Isaiah 52:13-15

O Ruler of the Nations, and their desire, the cornerstone making both one: Come and save the human race, which you fashioned from clay.

The Song of Mary

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in you, O God my Savior, *
for you have looked with favor on your lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
you, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and holy is your name.
You have mercy on those who fear you *
from generation to generation.
You have shown strength with your arm *
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones *
and lifting up the lowly.
You have filled the hungry with good things *
and sent the rich away empty.
for you have remembered your promise of mercy,
The promise made to our forebears, *
to Abraham and his children forever.

Collect

You have refused the pomp and splendor of this world, great Ruler of the nations, and lifted up the lowly into your peaceable kingdom: Come among us and plant your gracious reign on earth, so that from east to west your creation might give you praise; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen



December 23 O EMMANUEL

In the midst of winter's darkness, God is with us:
O come, let us worship.

Scripture

Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
I am the Lord, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King.
Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
The Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.
Isaiah 43:14a, 15–19a; 7:14–15

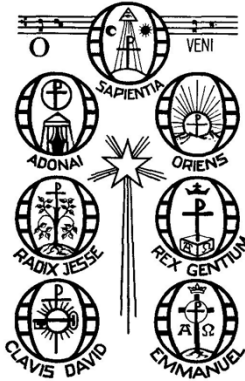
O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Savior: Come and save us, O Lord our God.

The Song of Mary

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in you, O God my Savior, *
for you have looked with favor on your lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
you, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and holy is your name.
You have mercy on those who fear you *
from generation to generation.
You have shown strength with your arm *
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones *
and lifting up the lowly.
You have filled the hungry with good things *
and sent the rich away empty.
for you have remembered your promise of mercy,
The promise made to our forebears, *
to Abraham and his children forever.

Collect

Behold your children who yearn for the advent of your love and justice, reconciliation and peace:
Come among us, Emmanuel, and give birth to your gracious kingdom in our lives and among the nations of the earth, so that from generation to generation your mercy will be praised; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.



The Great O Antiphons of Advent

Mention is made of the O Antiphons as early as the 6th century. These seven antiphons were sung at the beginning and again at the end of the Song of Mary, the Magnificat, at evening prayer. In monastic communities throughout Europe, a new antiphon was sung each evening, beginning on December 17, as an immediate preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus Christ. This practice has continued in Anglican, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic communities and homes where Advent evening prayer is celebrated.

Each antiphon presents an image of God inspired by the texts of the Hebrew Bible, an image that also serves to highlight the work of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Rather than viewing the antiphons as Hebrew prophecies fulfilled in Jesus – for the prophets spoke to their time, not a distant future – the rich images presented in the antiphons call out for God’s saving presence in the world today, that saving presence recognized by Christians in the Word made flesh, Jesus of Nazareth. They rest in this ancient conviction of Jewish and Christian communities: God’s work in the past continues in the present and the work of that presence is to open what is closed, enlighten what is murky, free from confinement, and heal what is wounded in the creation. Perhaps this is why the antiphons continue to be cherished across the generations: they speak so clearly to the human condition, to its frailty and its yearning for greater life and hope.

What many Christians know as the metrical hymn, “O come, O come, Emmanuel” (*Hymnal 1982*, No. 56) came quite late in Christian history, first appearing in 1710 in a Roman Catholic hymnal published in Cologne, Germany. It has been paired with a chant tune of the 15th century known as VENI EMMANUEL.