



# “THE GREAT ‘O’ ANTIPHONS” AND “VENI EMMANUEL”

By Rev. John Gierke and Sharon Rapp

## Introduction

“Rejoice! Rejoice!” With Advent comes the singing of the beloved, ancient hymn. Joining voices in its haunting French melody in minor key, we anticipate Messiah’s return. In words based on 12th century Latin text, we acknowledge each title and image drawn from the prophecies of Isaiah. Reverently, we petition Christ: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”\*

Reflected in the stanzas of the hymn are a series of “O” Antiphons that were used in the early centuries of the church at Vespers, along with the *Magnificat*, on the days leading up to Christmas. *Dictionary.com* defines “antiphon” in ecclesiastical terms as:

- 1) a psalm, hymn, or prayer sung in alternate parts;
- 2) a verse or series of verses sung as a prelude or conclusion to some part of the service.

A closer look at the titles, antiphons, and corresponding verses of the hymn will enrich our worship. Let’s begin.

*The words of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” can be found in LSB #357; LW #31; TLH #62.*

*\*References available in the online leader guide*

## Opening Prayer

*O Father Almighty, You give us freedom and we sin, yet You continue to grant us forgiveness in Word and Sacrament. We praise You. O Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, You willingly became the sacrificial Lamb for our sin and continue to intercede for us before the Father. We thank You. O Holy Spirit, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, You continue to draw us to the Father and the Son, and You sanctify and strengthen us for service. We honor You. O Holy Trinity, enlighten us in our study of Your Name, we pray. Amen.*

**Read aloud each “O” Antiphon prior to the study of each section.**

## O SAPIENTIA “O Wisdom” (December 17)

What qualities of wisdom are found in **Isaiah 11:2–3a**? \_\_\_\_\_

How had Jesus demonstrated His wisdom in **Matthew 13:53–54**? \_\_\_\_\_

Read **Proverbs 9:10** and **2 Timothy 3:14–17**. What is wisdom, and what is its source? \_\_\_\_\_

What is its value to us? See also **Proverbs 8:11**. \_\_\_\_\_

Sing or read together verse 2 of our hymn for this study, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”

## O ADONAI “O Mighty Lord” (December 18)

List the acts of might described in **Isaiah 11:4–5**. \_\_\_\_\_

What do we learn in addition in **Isaiah 33:22**? \_\_\_\_\_

Read **Romans 7:7**. What is the purpose of the law? \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of power does Jesus have?

**Colossians 1:16** \_\_\_\_\_

**John 10:17–18** \_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew 28:18** \_\_\_\_\_

What was a sign of God’s presence and power among His people in **Exodus 13:21–22** and **1 Kings 8:10–11**? \_\_\_\_\_

Read **Acts 1:9–11**. How did Jesus ascend into heaven, and how will He return? \_\_\_\_\_

Who has authority to give us life in **Matthew 9:6** and **John 6:68–69**? \_\_\_\_\_

Sing or read verse 3 of our hymn.

## O RADIX JESSE “O Root of Jesse” (December 19)

What is Isaiah’s prophecy in **Isaiah 11:1** and **10**? \_\_\_\_\_

Who are some of Jesus’ well-known human ancestors?

**Matthew 1:1–16** \_\_\_\_\_

**Luke 3:23–38** (especially verses 31–32)

Read **Romans 15:12**. What does this root mean for us (see also **Ephesians 3:17-19** and surrounding verses)? \_\_\_\_\_

Sing or read together verse 4 of our hymn.

### **O CLAVIS DAVID "O Key of David" (December 20)**

What authority is given in **Isaiah 22:22**? \_\_\_\_\_

How do **Genesis 49:10** and **2 Samuel 7:16** support both this and the previous antiphon verse as well? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the scepter of the Son's kingdom in **Hebrews 1:8**? \_\_\_\_\_

Who recognized Jesus' heritage in **Matthew 21:9**? \_\_\_\_\_

Read **Galatians 3:22-24** and **John 10:7-10**. What doors have been opened and what rescue has been given to us? \_\_\_\_\_

Sing or read together verse 5 of our hymn.

### **O ORIENS "O Dayspring" (December 21)**

According to **Isaiah 9:2** what has come to the people walking in darkness? \_\_\_\_\_

In the following verses what kind of healing will occur and for whom?

**Malachi 4:2a** \_\_\_\_\_

**Isaiah 53:5** \_\_\_\_\_

How does Jesus describe himself in **John 8:12**? \_\_\_\_\_

How are we changed?

**Ephesians 5:8-9** \_\_\_\_\_

**2 Corinthians 3:18** \_\_\_\_\_

And what is to be our response in **Acts 13:47**? \_\_\_\_\_

Sing or read together verse 6 of our hymn.

### **O REX GENTIUM "O King of the Nations" (December 22)**

What will be accomplished in **Isaiah 9:6-7**? \_\_\_\_\_

What do we learn about this king in **Jeremiah 23:5**? \_\_\_\_\_

Who recognized His royalty?

**Matthew 2:1-2** \_\_\_\_\_

**John 1:49** \_\_\_\_\_

**John 19:19** \_\_\_\_\_

**Luke 1:30-33** \_\_\_\_\_

**John 18:36-37** \_\_\_\_\_

Read **Revelation 17:14** and **Romans 8:16-17**. How are we affected? \_\_\_\_\_

Sing or read together verse 7 of our hymn.

### **O EMMANUEL "O Emmanuel" (December 23)**

What is the prophecy in **Isaiah 7:14**? \_\_\_\_\_

According to **Matthew 1:18-24a**, who else was involved in naming this child? \_\_\_\_\_

How does Peter answer Jesus' question in **Matthew 16:15-16**? \_\_\_\_\_

What does Jesus call Himself in **Luke 22:70**? \_\_\_\_\_

Who supports His witness in **John 8:17-18**? \_\_\_\_\_

How is "Emmanuel" explained in **John 1:1-4** and **14**? \_\_\_\_\_

What does that mean for us? See **John 10:27-30**. \_\_\_\_\_

To us? See **Matthew 28:19-20**. \_\_\_\_\_

What comfort is given in knowing that Jesus is powerfully present with us, even when hidden from our sight? \_\_\_\_\_

Sing or read together verse 1 of our hymn.

### **If time allows or at home**

**Complete** all sections of the study.

**Illustrate** one or more of the antiphons. **Study** and enjoy each of the "O" Antiphons and the related verse of our hymn on their appointed dates during Advent season devotions. **Review** the "Second Article of the Apostles' Creed" and its explanation in *Luther's Small Catechism\**.

### **Closing Prayer**

*O Emmanuel, Son of God, Anointed for the nations, our Savior: come and ransom us. O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High, permeating all creation, ordering all things: come and teach us. O ruler of the house of Israel, appearing to Moses in the burning bush and giving him the law on Sinai: come with outstretched arms and redeem us. O Root of Jesse, standing as an ensign before the peoples, before whom kings are mute and to whom the nations will do homage: come and deliver us. O Key of David, scepter of the house of Israel, opening and closing with authority: come and set free the prisoners who are in the shadow of death. O Dayspring, splendor of light everlasting: come and enlighten those in darkness. O King of the nations, longed-for ruler, cornerstone uniting all people, forming us out of clay: come and be our peace. O Come, O Come, Emmanuel! Amen.*

*This study is based on a sermon by the Rev. John Gierke, of Peace Lutheran Church in Conway, Arkansas, husband of Tonya and dad of nine-year-old Nicholas. A past LWML Mid-South District Counselor and 2003 LWML Convention host committee co-pastoral advisor, he serves as LCMS Mid-South District Secretary.*

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