

What is an Antiphon?

An **antiphon** (Greek ἀντίφωνον, ἀντι "opposite" and φωνή "voice") is a short chant in Christian ritual, sung like a refrain in a song. Antiphons were written with pieces of the Psalms and other verses from the Hebrew Scriptures. They also express deep theological convictions!

The singing of Antiphons (as sung by in early Christian communities by the end of the 5th century) had its root in the Synagogue. Early Christians borrowed the Jewish traditions of chanting psalms and of singing hymns together. There is some evidence from Acts of the Apostles that early Christians stayed close to those Jewish traditions of chanting and singing together. For example, Acts 2:46- 47 states that "with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people."

When we say the ancient Antiphons today, we are joining our voices with those who have said these very sentences for thousands of years. When you say or sing the Antiphons, you are adding YOUR VOICE to the endless songs of praise to God from the Communion of Saints!

These daily antiphons are intended to be used as numbered, when you light your Advent wreath candles or in any other prayerful manner of your choosing.

Sunday, November 29

“See the Name of the Lord comes from afar; His splendor fills the whole world.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *Where do you see the “splendor” of God in the world?*

Monday, November 30

“Lift up your eyes, O Jerusalem, and see the power of the King. Behold the Savior comes to loose you from your chains.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *What are some of the people, things or events that make you feel like you are in chains?*

Tuesday, December 1

“Christ the King is coming; Lift high, O gates, and let the King of glory in!”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *How would you define the word “glory?” Where do you see glory in the world?*

Wednesday, December 2

“Behold the Lord who comes, and all His Saints with him; and there will be in that day a great light. Alleluia.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *What does the word “saint” mean to you? Who has been a saint to you in your life?*

Thursday, December 3

Behold, the Lord shall appear in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to save us.

REFLECTION QUESTION: *What forces or patterns in your life keep you stuck, frustrated or not feeling free or joyful? What things do you do to try and save yourself from these negative realities?*

Friday, December 4

“Behold there comes one who is both God and human, of the House of David, to sit upon the throne. Alleluia!”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *When you hear stories of the life of Jesus, what parts of his human life can you relate to?*

Saturday, December 5

“Come O Lord in peace; visit us with your salvation that we may rejoice before you with a perfect heart.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *Do you hold competing loves in your heart? What are the conflicts you feel in your heart?*

Sunday, December 6

“Behold I am sending a messenger before you to prepare the way for you.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *Jesus said he is “the Way and the Truth and the Life.” Can you think of a person who has helped you follow the Way of Jesus?*

Monday, December 7

“Comfort, O comfort my people, says the Lord. Speak to Jerusalem. Tell her that I have forgiven her sins and her warfare is now over.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *As you approach Christmas Day this year, is there something you have done or left undone that needs forgiveness from God, from others or from yourself?*

Tuesday, December 8

“Rejoice and be glad O Daughter Zion. Behold, I am coming to live in your midst.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *Can you think of a time when you experienced the loving and liberating presence of Jesus in some moment or part of your life?*

Wednesday, December 9

“Zion, you shall be renewed and shall see your Righteous One. He is the one who comes to you.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *What does the word “righteous” mean to you? In what ways do you try to be righteous?*

Thursday, December 10

“I will help you, says the Lord; I am your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *What does the word “Redeemer” mean to you? Can you think of a choice or habit or pattern in your life from which you long for redemption?*

Friday, December 11

“Behold, the day is coming, says the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch. Do not be afraid. The King is coming, Alleluia!”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *Are you afraid of the same things you were afraid of as a child? How have your fears changed in adult life?*

Saturday, December 12

“Say to them: you that are of a fearful heart, be strong: for behold, the Lord our God will come to you.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *What practices help to mitigate your fears? Have you found habits that let you feel God’s presence in moments of fear?*

Sunday, December 13

“Blessed are you, O Mary, because you have believed in the Lord. The things which the Lord told you will indeed be fulfilled, Alleluia!”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *Are there parts of Mary’s story to which you can relate? What parts feel foreign to you?*

Monday, December 14

“The Lord, the Mighty Ruler of the universe will come from heaven in great majesty.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *What does the word “majesty” mean to you? Where do you see or experience majesty in your life?*

Tuesday, December 15

“The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *What good news would you like to share with those who are oppressed or brokenhearted?*

The “Great Days of Advent” being TODAY!

The Advent Antiphons for the last seven days of Advent (also called “the Great Days of Advent”) are often called the “O Antiphons” because they all begin with the greeting to God “O...”

These last seven days of Advent (with the exception of the fourth Sunday in Advent) focus on 7 different titles of Jesus and they all include the verb “come” so that the Church sings the names of Christ for each day while asking Jesus to COME into our world and into our lives!

Wednesday, December 16

O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love: come to teach us the path of knowledge!

REFLECTION QUESTION: *When in your life has God taught you something powerful? At what time in your life, has God had the most of your attention?*

Thursday, December 17

“O Adonai, Leader of the House of Israel, giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai: come to rescue us with your mighty power!”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *When have you been rescued?*

Friday, December 18

“O Root of Jesse’s stem, sign of God’s love for all people: at whom King’s shall shut their mouths, come to save us without delay!”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *When have you been left speechless? Has anything at church or from God left you speechless?*

Saturday, December 19

“O Key of David, Scepter of the House of Israel, you open, and no one can shut. You shut and no one can open. Come and bring the prisoners out of prison, those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *Have you ever known anyone in prison? Has there been a chapter in your life that felt like a metaphorical prison?*

Sunday, December 20

‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’

REFLECTION QUESTION: *What would it look like to let your life be according to God's word? What relationships or challenges might you need to let go of?*

Monday, December 21

“O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *How do you feel when you see a sunrise? Do you have a favorite place in the world where you have seen (or would like to see) a sunrise?*

Tuesday, December 22

“O King of all nations and keystone of the Church: come and save humankind, whom you formed of clay.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *Have you ever made, built or developed something significant from scratch and finished it? Did someone help you or teach you how? What inspired your creation?*

Wednesday, December 23

“O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law: come to save us, Lord our God!”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *‘Emmanuel’ means ‘God with us.’ When was the last time you felt that God was surely with you? When was the last time you felt that you were apart from God?*

Thursday, December 24 (Christmas Eve)

“O Bethlehem, make ready to receive Christ; for the Word made flesh comes to dwell in you, opening Eden to His people. Make ready, O Manger, to behold the deep mystery; He who cannot be contained will be contained in you, Alleluia!”

REFLECTION QUESTION: *Christ is born in us at our Baptism. Christ chooses to be contained in you. When do you feel Christ in you? What habits or practices help you to know and trust that Christ is in you?*

FUN FACT!

The seven titles for Jesus Christ (in Latin) mentioned in these last seven Antiphons leading up to Christmas Eve are:

Emmanuel, Rex, Oriens, Clavis, Radix, Adonai, Sapientia

The first letters of these titles, from last to first, form a Latin acrostic!

The first letter of each of these titles spells out two Latin words “*ERO CRAS*” meaning, “Tomorrow, I will come.”

Therefore, the Lord Jesus, whose coming we have prepared for in Advent and whom we have addressed in these seven Messianic titles, now speaks to us on the last day of the Antiphons, responding to our Antiphon prayers: “Tomorrow, I will come.”

So the O Antiphons not only bring intensity to our Advent preparation, but bring it to a joyful conclusion in a greeting and promise from Jesus.