

The eight days before Christmas Eve (17th – 23rd December) are observed as a special time of preparation for the Christmas Festival.

At Mass the Gospel Readings are the accounts of the events leading up to the Birth of Our Lord. At Evening Prayer the Magnificat has antiphons, using titles from the Old Testament, which call on the Lord to come to our aid.

It would be good in this busy time to find a few moments of quiet each day and use these special readings and prayers – perhaps in this way.

1] Read the Gospel for the Day

2] Recite the Magnificat with its antiphon before and after.

3] Think of those for whom you wish the Lord's coming to bring salvation

4] Pray the Lord's Prayer and the Collect

For anyone who wishes to understand the origin of each of the Advent Antiphons I have suggested an Old Testament passage, which could be added to your prayers.

17th December – O Sapientia (O Wisdom). We appeal to the Lord, who is the Wisdom of God, by which the universe is created and maintained, and which is made flesh in Jesus.

(Ecclesiasticus / Wisdom of Sirach: 24: 3 – 9)

1] Gospel Reading: Matthew 1: 1 – 17 (The ancestors of Jesus). This is not just a list of names: note how four times God breaks into the ordinary family succession to bring about his purpose – with Tamar, Ruth, Bathsheba, and finally Mary: *of her was born Jesus who is called Christ.*

2] Antiphon to Magnificat:

O Wisdom, you come forth from the mouth of the Most High. You fill the universe and hold all things together in a strong yet gentle manner. O come to teach us the way of truth.

3] Remember all who seek the truth but have not yet found it in Jesus.

4] The Lord's Prayer and this Collect:

Come, Lord Jesus, and do not delay:

Give new courage to your people, who trust in your love.

By your coming raise us to the joy of your kingdom,

where you live and reign for ever. Amen.

18th December – O Adonai (O Lord and Leader of Israel). We appeal to the Lord, who chose the people of Israel to be his own possession.

(Exodus 3: 1 – 6)

1] Gospel Reading: Matthew 1: 18 – 24 (The Annunciation to Joseph of the coming birth of Emmanuel – 'God-is-with-us'). Joseph's fear is overcome, and his obedience to the angelic command ensures the safe birth and naming of Jesus.

2] Antiphon to Magnificat

O Adonai and Leader of Israel, you appeared to Moses in a burning bush, and you gave him the Law on Sinai. O come and save us with your mighty power.

3] Remember God's first people, the Jews, especially those persecuted or insulted

4] Lord's Prayer & Collect as yesterday

19th December – O Radix Jesse (O Stock of Jesse). We appeal to the Lord, who is the true ruler of all the nations.

(Isaiah 11: 1 – 4).

1] Gospel Reading: Luke 1: 5 – 25 (Annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist). The working out of God's plan begins with a priest about his business in the temple. But more is demanded of him than his priestly vocation.

2] Antiphon to Magnificat

O stock of Jesse, you stand as a signal for the nations; kings fall silent before you whom the peoples acclaim. O come to deliver us, and do not delay.

3] Remember the political leaders of our country and all other nations.

4] Lord's Prayer & Collect as yesterday

(AD X) O SAPIENTIA (DECEMBER 17TH, 2020)

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20th December – O Clavis David (O Key of David).

(Isaiah 22: 21 – 23)

1] Gospel Reading: Luke 1: 26 – 38 (The Annunciation to Mary)

2] Antiphon to Magnificat

O Key of David and sceptre of Israel, what you open no one else can close again; what you close no one can open. O come to lead the captive from prison; free those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

3] Remember all prisoners, exiles and refugees

4] Lord's Prayer & Collect as yesterday

21st December – O Oriens (O Rising Sun). We appeal to the Lord

(Numbers 24: 15 – 17a)

1] Gospel Reading: Luke 1: 39 – 45 (Mary's Visit to Elizabeth)

2] Antiphon to Magnificat

O rising Sun, you are the splendour of eternal light and the sun of justice. O come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

3] Remember

4] Lord's Prayer & Collect as yesterday

22nd December – O Rex Gentium (O King of the Peoples). We appeal to the Lord

(Psalm 47)

1] Gospel Reading: Luke 1: 46 – 56 (Mary's Song of Joy and Faith)

2] Antiphon to Magnificat

O King whom all the peoples desire, you are the cornerstone which makes all one. Come and save man whom you made from the clay.

3] Remember the divided peoples of the earth, whose self-centeredness makes the situation worse.

4] Lord's Prayer & Collect as yesterday

23rd December – O Emmanuel (O God-with-us). We appeal to the Lord

(Isaiah 7: 10 – 15)

1] Gospel Reading: Luke 1: 57 – 66. (The birth of John the Baptist)

2] Antiphon to Magnificat

O Emmanuel, you are our king and judge, the One whom the peoples await and their Saviour. O come and save us, Lord, our God.

3] Remember

4] Lord's Prayer & Collect as yesterday