

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.

20th December – O Clavis David (O Key of David). We appeal to the Lord as the One who, as the deputy of his Father, has power of all things – even over death.

(Isaiah 22: 20 – 23)

1] Gospel Reading: Luke 1: 26 – 38 (The Annunciation to Mary) The Angel Gabriel reveals God’s plan of salvation, and Mary accepts the part in that plan for which God has chosen her.

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 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.

21st December – O Oriens (O Rising Sun). We appeal to the Lord as the Dawning Light – revealing truth and justice to all.

(Numbers 24: 15 – 17a)

1] Gospel Reading: Luke 1: 39 – 45 (Mary's Visit to Elizabeth). In this encounter Elizabeth and the unborn John bear witness to the dignity of Mary and to the greatness of her Son.

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 those physically blind, and those who are ignorant of God's loving purpose for them.

4] Lord's Prayer & Collect as yesterday

22nd December – O Rex Gentium (O King of the Peoples). We appeal to the Lord as the one who alone can fulfil human longings for unity, and restore a purpose for living

(Psalm 47)

1] Gospel Reading: Luke 1: 46 – 56 (Mary's Song of Joy and Faith). In the *Magnificat* Mary gives us a picture of what it means to be truly human.

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 human situation worse.

4] Lord's Prayer & Collect as yesterday

23rd December – O Emmanuel (O God-with-us). We appeal to the Lord who is not only our judge, but our incarnate Saviour.

(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 all men, women and children, for each one of whom Jesus is the true hope.

4] Lord's Prayer & Collect as yesterday