



O Antiphons

*A time of active waiting and
eager anticipation for
Christ's coming*

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THE O ANTIPHONS: THEIR ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICANCE

BACKGROUND

The seven solemn antiphons invoking Christ and based on Messianic titles are taken from the Old Testament book of the prophet Isaiah and used during Vespers in the Liturgy of the Hours beginning on Dec. 17 through Dec. 23 (the last day of Advent). They appropriately bracket the Magnificat, which is always recited during Vespers. *When the Savior comes, he comes through Mary.* (More about that later.)

What is the function of an antiphon? They are meant to be a kind of clue or context for interpreting the psalm or canticle they bracket. They provide a focus without heavy-handedly telling us what we are supposed to take away from the text.

The O Antiphons directly link the coming of Christ to the Messianic expectations and longings of the Hebrew people. In doing this they illustrate the ways in which the Church came to understand who Christ truly was and is and how He indeed fulfills these expectations.

These antiphons were introduced into the Latin Church before the 9th century (some say as early as the 6th century)—so they are very, very old.

The 7 titles in the order in which they appear:

O Wisdom (Sapientia)

O Adonai (Lord)

O Root of Jesse (Radix Jesse)

O Key of David (Clavis David)

O Dayspring (Oriens)

O King of Nations/Desire of Nations (Rex Gentium)

O Emmanuel (God with Us),

Originally, the O Antiphons consisted almost entirely of scripture as taken from **St. Jerome's Latin Vulgate**. The version of the antiphons now used in the Liturgy of the Hours is not always very true to the Latin original. *At best* it can be called a loose paraphrase.

The Hymn, O Come, O Come Emmanuel is a 19th century translation of a 13th century Latin hymn by an unknown author. The Latin hymn was a paraphrase based on 5 O Antiphons. (O Sapientia and Rex Gentium were missing)

Also: **the order of the antiphons is changed in the hymn.** It begins with O Emmanuel, which is the last one in the sequence used in the Liturgy the Hours.

All to say, the hymn (which everyone loves) is the means through which the O antiphons have been most effectively transmitted to the laity. It too can be called a paraphrase, but in my opinion, it is *much* more successful (because it is much more artful and powerful) than the one used in the Liturgy of the Hours. And the hymn we know has a lovely, plaintive melody (in a minor key) that captures well the sense of longing associated with these invocations.

EXAMPLES of Changes in wording:

Pre-Vatican II translation of the first O Antiphon:

O Wisdom (Sapientia) that proceedest out of the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end mightily, and disposing all things sweetly! come and teach us the way of prudence.

or. . . Post Vatican II Translation:

O Wisdom, O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care: Come and show your people the way to salvation.

or. . . the Hymn we all know:

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
And order all things, far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And cause us in her ways to go.

Pre-Vatican II translation of the 4th O Antiphon:

O Key of David (Clavis David) and scepter of the house of Israel! who openest and no man shuttest: who shuttest, and no man openeth; come and lead the captive from prison, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Post Vatican II translation:

O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel, controlling at your will the gate of heaven: Come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death; and lead your captive people into freedom.

Hymn

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE TITLES:

Translation issues aside, **what is most important is for us to understand just what the O Antiphons are telling us about Who Christ is and what His coming will actually mean for us.**

With all of the customary attention given to Christmas shopping, Christmas decorations and parties, Christmas cooking, traveling, etc. most of us have been brought up to experience Advent as a *de facto* “Christmas” season full of excitement, happy anticipation, good cheer and frenetic effort invested so that Christmas “will happen.”

The O Antiphons suggest something a bit more complex. These invocations asking Christ to come as Wisdom, Adonai, the Root of Jesse, Key of David, etc. mirror a set of very *particular as yet unfulfilled desires*, **a shared longing for something that has not yet materialized but which we are sure is there on the horizon.** They acknowledge that there is an emptiness which cannot be filled by any purchased Christmas gift or happy family celebration.

If you can recall the experience of a child (yourself) having just opened all your Christmas gifts and wondering to yourself: **“Is this all there is? Is Christmas done? Why don’t I feel perfectly happy?”** you will know what I mean.

Or if you are a person who has to struggle with **a nagging sadness** at Christmas in spite of all the “holiday cheer” you will know what I mean.

Israel suffered for centuries and responded with a vision that gave a name and a shape to this unfulfilled desire, **a longing for a Messiah**—a “King like David” who would finally liberate this tiny country from constant military defeat and consequent oppression and vindicate their faith in the God of Israel. The Messiah (“Anointed One”) was the heart’s deepest desire of every faithful Jew. **the Messiah would restore victory, peace and *glory* to Israel.**

The O Antiphons give us a clear picture of that vision and a moving expression of that shared desire in language that ancient Israel would have understood well.

The question is: do they also reflect the heart's deepest desire of every Christian? Is this an accurate description of the kind of Christ we want for Christmas?

Let's look briefly at each one of these invocations and Messianic titles to get a sense of the contours of this longing and then ask ourselves whether they in anyway match our own deepest hearts' desires.

DECEMBER 17:

Let us pray: O Wisdom that proceedest out of the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end mightily, and disposing all things sweetly! come and teach us the way of prudence.

And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord, He shall not judge according to the sight of the eyes, nor reprove according to the hearing of the ears. (Isaias 11:2-3)

This also is come forth from the Lord God of hosts, to make his counsel wonderful, and magnify justice. (Isaias 28:29)

MEDITATION

So, is acquiring the virtue of "prudence" your hearts' desire? Is it something you associate with the coming of Christ to your heart and home? I'm guessing not. The word doesn't even appear in the modern paraphrases. On the other hand, the prospect of a divine, irresistible power of "ordering" coming into your life might sound quite appealing. Just *Maybe?*

The Hebrew Bible contains several "Wisdom" books, and although they contain plenty of practical advice, Wisdom as understood in ancient Israel is something much more than responding in a smart way to difficult situations.

Virtue in the abstract is not real virtue. Virtue exists in the particulars of our life and behavior. Prudence, sometimes called the "Queen" of the virtues is greatly to be desired. It governs how we practice all other virtues. Without it,

our attempts to be brave, just, humble or generous may quickly misfire and cause new problems rather than solve old ones. Prudence “orders” our speech and our actions according to the needs of a particular set of circumstances.

The early Church quickly learned to associate Christ, the second person of the Trinity, with the Greek Word *Logos*, which gets rather inadequately translated in the New Testament as “Word” or “Wisdom.” It suggests a divinely-inspired rational character to the universe. In Judaism, Wisdom is the power and the pattern through which the universe is created. It is the pearl of great price that every young Jew was to pursue over and above every other earthly treasure. St. Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Colossians:

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col. 1:15-17)

So how would you feel about inviting the very same Wisdom through which the world was created into your life and submitting to a “mighty” but “sweet” re-ordering of your priorities, your relationships, your plans, your prayer life—**turning everything in your life inside out and upside down, so to speak?**

Could *that* be your heart’s desire?

[pause]

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high, and order all things, far and nigh; To us the path of knowledge show, and cause us in her ways to go. Rejoice, rejoice. . .

DECEMBER 18

Let us pray: O Adonai and leader of the house of Israel, who appearedst to Moses in the fire of the flaming bush, and gavest him the law on Sinai; come and redeem us by thy outstretched arm.

But he shall judge the poor with justice, and shall reprove with equity the meek of the earth: and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. And justice shall be the girdle of his loins: and faith the girdle of his reins. (Isaias 11:4-5)

For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king: he will save us. (Isaias 33:22)

MEDITATION

When the “outstretched arm” of Adonai, the Lord, is invoked in the OT, it is immediately recognized as a reference to God’s deliverance of the Hebrew people out of slavery and his rescue of them at the Red Sea. **This miraculous deliverance was a sign of not only of God’s power but of his favor** to this strange, large but rather pathetic band of slaves who had spent centuries in servitude. *Why did He do this?*

Having shown such a great act of favor toward Israel, the Lord then made a covenant with them on Mt. Sinai. If they were to be his people, then they must live a certain way and follow his commandments. The moral code He gave them through Moses on Sinai would set them apart from all the other people of the earth. Just 10 commands. Just 10! But they turned out to be much harder to obey than anyone thought.

When we ask for Christ to come and redeem us by his “outstretched” arm—arms, in fact outstretched on the Cross—we are asking Him not simply to deliver us from everything that seeks to enslave us and to deliver us from danger. We are saying to Him, **“Place us under Your law.”** Do we realize that we are asking to be “commanded” to live in a certain way, **to be set apart** from all the other peoples of the world in terms of the standards we embrace in word and deed?

Christ as the new Moses gave us those standards in the Sermon on the Mount (His Sinai); These standards do not abrogate those given on Sinai. They expand and push them to their supernatural limits.

Before his crucifixion Jesus gave his disciples a **“new” and final commandment**—that we love one another as he has loved us. There is no higher standard—no more costly command. He means it to apply to every one of us who claims to be his disciple.

Is the law of Our Lord the desire of our heart? Do we love Christ’s commands— not because they make sense or represent a very high moral ideal to which we aspire, but above all, because they have their source in HIM—because HE lived by these laws and in obeying them we will place ourselves on the path to redemption?

If you love me. . . keep my commandments.

[pause]

*O come, O come, Thou Lord of Might, Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law, In cloud, and majesty, and awe. Rejoice,
rejoice. . .*

DECEMBER 19

*Let us pray: O Root of Jesse who standeth as the ensign of the people; before
whom kings shall not open their lips; to whom the nations shall pray: come
and deliver us; tarry now no more.*

And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise
up out of his root. (Isaias 11:1)

In that day the root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of the people, him the
Gentiles shall beseech, and his sepulchre shall be glorious.
(Isaias 11:10)

Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and magnify him, all ye people. And again Isaias
saith: There shall be a root of Jesse; and he that shall rise up to rule the
Gentiles, in him the Gentiles shall hope. (Romans 15:8-13)

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within
and without, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel, proclaiming
with a loud voice: Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals
thereof? And no man was able, neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the
earth, to open the book, nor to look on it. And I wept much, because no man
was found worthy to open the book, nor to see it. And one of the ancients said
to me: Weep not; behold the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath
prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. (Apocalypse
5:1-5)

MEDITATION

Who was Jesse? Just another Bethlehemite who happened to have 8 strapping
sons, and one of them, the youngest, was named David. The prophet Samuel is
instructed by the Lord to anoint David as successor to King Saul, and after
many harrowing experiences, **David does finally become King of Israel and
the time of his reign is looked back upon as a “golden era.”** It was the little
kingdom’s greatest moment of historical success and glory—so much so that all

Israel's messianic hopes are bound up with the Davidic line of succession. David had vanquished Israel's enemies, so when he comes, the Messiah will, of course, be a king like David, sprung from the root or rod of Jesse.

We know that **Joseph was from the House of David**, which is why he had to return to Bethlehem for the census. Some say Mary was also from the same lineage. Jesus had the right "pedigree." But would he be a king *like David*?

Answer: NO. He turned to be something much, much more glorious than that. When he finally arrived, Jesus' people did not recognize who he was because he didn't fit the long-established "profile." He came to free his people, **but the enemy in his sights was not Rome. It was Satan.**

God's Chosen People, with precious few exceptions, were so wedded to a particular expectation about what their savior would look like, they missed the real thing entirely. But those who were not wedded to this ancient expectation—the Gentiles (you and me)—were open to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords: "In him the Gentiles shall hope." Christ was indeed a light to the nations, the means by which the God of Israel was made "visible" and accessible to pagan nations.

When we invoke Christ as the root of Jesse, we are placing ourselves, quite rightly, amongst those "gentiles" who had nothing to lose and everything to gain by accepting Christ as the Son of God—the one who will deliver us from those who seek our destruction.

The danger we face is ending up like the Chosen people who already KNEW for sure, exactly what the Messiah would be like and how he would operate in their lives. He would throw the Romans overboard and liberate Israel from foreign domination. He would make her, once again, great among the nations.

The danger for us is that when we invoke Christ's coming, we have too clear an idea in mind of exactly what we think he is going to accomplish for us— which enemies he will vanquish, which victories he will help us achieve. We all have some deep, deep desire which, when fulfilled, we are sure will make us happy.

The Root of Jesse may be hard to recognize when he comes. But he knows precisely who our real enemy is.

[pause]

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free Thine own from Satan's tyranny; From depths of hell Thy people save and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. Rejoice, rejoice . . .

DECEMBER 20

Let us pray: O Key of David and scepter of the house of Israel! who openest and no man shuttest: who shuttest, and no man openeth; come and lead the captive from prison, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.

And I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulder: and he shall open, and none shall shut: and he shall shut, and none shall open. (Isaias 22:22)

For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace. (Isaias 9:6)

MEDITATION

We are all very familiar with the Scripture in Matthew where Jesus gives Peter the “**Keys of the Kingdom**”:

“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:17-19).

This text grounds our understanding of papal authority, mirroring Christ’s own authority to govern the Church, and most especially **the authority of the priesthood to forgive sins**. Christ’s claim to be able to forgive sins was something that scandalized the religious authority of His day. Only *God* could do that! (Blasphemy!)

We know that to this day, the Catholic claim that a priest (standing in *Persona Christi*) can absolve us of our sins is a source of scandal to Protestants. There is no way God would or should share that power with anyone else!

Ironically, what in fact happens with so many Christians is something far more scandalous: we tend **to absolve ourselves** from the many “little” sins we commit in the course of each day. We do that by offering some kind of self-justification or simply by forgetting about them because they seem so

inconsequential. And this is easy to do because the word “sin” has just about vanished from the vocabulary of modern man. Now, **all is permitted**. (So, unless we are axe murderers, we have nothing to worry about!)

The authority of the keys was seen as a source of great hope in the early Church, and that is because Christians then were much more aware of the power of sin to enslave bodies, minds and souls. Mortal sin is indeed a prison for which we possess no key to unlock the prison door. We *die* in our sin unless someone else unlocks the door and frees us.

When we call upon Christ to unlock the doors that keep us enslaved and imprisoned, we are acknowledging that we are indeed sinners and that we cannot absolve ourselves. We will get no support from our culture for doing this. We may be mocked for our lack of self-esteem. We may be referred to some good therapist who will help us accept ourselves. But **the path to freedom begins with understanding the extent to which we are “locked into” certain sinful patterns of thought and behavior**. When we can name the sin and acknowledge our plight, we will hear the footsteps of Prince of Peace, Key in hand, headed our way.

[pause]

*O come, Thou Key of David, come, and open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery. Rejoice,
rejoice. . . .*

DECEMBER 21

Let us pray: O Dayspring, splendor of eternal light, and Sun of justice! come and enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

The people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light: to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen. (Isaias 9:2)

For behold the day shall come kindled as a furnace: and all the proud, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall set them on fire, saith the Lord of hosts, it shall not leave them root, nor branch. But unto you that fear my name, the Sun of justice shall arise, and health in his wings: and you shall go forth, and shall leap like calves of the herd. And you shall tread down the wicked when they shall be ashes under the sole of your feet in the day that I do this, saith the Lord of hosts. (Malachias 4:1-3)

MEDITATION

It was expected that **the Messiah, like the sun, would come from the East**, and just as the sun rolls over and disperses the darkness, God's anointed would be a truly radiant dawn showering blessings upon Israel. In the Gospel of John, Christ says plainly: "I am the Light of the World."

Without the light of the sun, life on earth would be impossible. Without the light of Christ, life on earth becomes a descent into spiritual darkness, into despair.

Much of the time, those who are "walking in darkness" don't know that that is in fact the case. They would call themselves "realists." But many such realists end up wanting to end it all. Depression and the suicide rate in our country has been rising dramatically. Deaths from drug overdoses have reached epidemic proportions. The young are being seduced into believing that what their bodies tell them about their gender is not "reality" at all. These are people walking in darkness in dire need of the Light. They are stumbling toward destruction.

Christ comes as Light, revealing the Truth. Israel called that light "The Sun of Justice." To those who rightly fear His name, He comes with "healing" in His wings. To those who prefer darkness to the Light, he comes as a devouring fire.

When we invoke this Light, the Truth, we can't be sure what we will suddenly see *in that light*. What we will see about ourselves, about our families, our country, our Church. . . **But we can be sure it will be "real" and not imagined.** And however painful it may initially be, we must anchor ourselves in the hope we have in Jesus' promise: "**You shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**"

[pause]

*O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice, rejoice . . .*

DECEMBER 22

*Let us pray: O King of Nations, and their desired One, and the corner stone
that makest both one; come and save man whom thou formedst out of slime.*

His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace: he shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom; to establish it and strengthen it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and for ever: the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isaias 9:7)

And he shall judge the Gentiles, and rebuke many people: and they shall turn their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into sickles: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they be exercised any more to war. (Isaias 2:4)

MEDITATION

There is a universal longing for peace in the human heart. Israel believed that true peace would only come when the Messiah reigned on the throne of David. **This King would establish peace through his administration of justice.** He would rightly judge Israel's enemies and all the nations (Gentiles). The end result would be an end to war. When justice prevails, we need plowshares, not weapons of war.

Christ told us he would give us *His* peace. **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.”** (John 14:27)

How does the world give peace? Usually through achieving victory on the battlefield—or at least through negotiating the cessation of hostilities. Strong armies and police forces “keep the peace.” But it never seems to last.

We were told by Our Lady of Fatima that war is a punishment for sin. That gives us a hint, I think of what Jesus meant when he spoke of His peace as being something the world cannot give. The world is not going to take away our sins and couldn't even if it wanted to. **As long as “The Prince of this world” is on the loose, peace will remain an unrealized hope and true justice just as elusive.** So, clearly, Our Lord was not saying that we can hope that wars will finally cease or that there really will someday be a “war to end all wars.” In fact, Scripture and the lives of the saints make clear that this life is a warfare—with the evil one—and our eternal destiny depends upon what kind of a fight we put up. But that doesn't mean that we have to wait until we get to St. Peter's gates to experience the peace of Christ.

Immediately following his promise about bestowing a peace that the world cannot give, the Lord says: **“Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”** (John 14:27). **A clear conscience and a serene and untroubled heart are truly signs of Christ's peace. That is something the world cannot**

give. That kind of peace is rooted in unshakable trust in the truth of God's Word, the power of His sacraments and his unending love for each one of us.

Isaiah calls the Messiah the "Prince of Peace" and says that **the government will be upon His shoulder.** Much of our distress lies in our failure to trust in that promise. We look at our own government and despair of justice ever being done. We forget God's admonition, "Vengeance is mine," says the Lord."

The secret to finding peace here and now is found in Psalm 37:

Fret not yourself because of the wicked,
 be not envious of wrongdoers!
For they will soon fade like the grass,
 and wither like the green herb.
Trust in the Lord, and do good;
 so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security.
Take delight in the Lord,
 and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Ps. 37:1-4)

[pause]

O come, Desire of Nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind; Bid Thou our sad divisions cease, and be Thyself our King of peace. Rejoice, rejoice. . .

DECEMBER 23

Let us pray: O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the Expectation and Savior of the nations! Come and save us, O Lord Our God.

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and his name shall be called Emmanuel. (Isaias 7:14)

MEDITATION

We have been reflecting on Israel's great longing for the promised Messiah. It was a centuries-old hope, never abandoned, always embraced. As a pious Jewish girl, Mary would have shared that very same hope. I imagine she would have made it the deepest desire of her heart, without ever dreaming that she would play the central role she was chosen to play in this great drama of redemption.

The women of Israel were honored primarily as mothers. To be barren was seen as a curse. To have sons—many sons—would give a woman great social status. To be Mother of the Messiah would have been seen as an unthinkably great honor. It is easy to imagine many women cherishing the hope that that honor might be theirs.

But not Mary. According to tradition, she had chosen to devote her entire being (body and soul) to the Lord and remain a virgin; so when she is visited by the angel Gabriel and told that she will conceive by the Holy Spirit and bear a Son, her life is turned upside down. What she hears next leaves her with no doubt that *she* will be the woman honored above all others. She will be the Mother of the Messiah:

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:32-33)

There it is: the promise of a King *like David* whose Kingdom will last forever. Her prayers were more than just “answered.” They were responded to in a way beyond all imagining. She has only to give her consent—and **her life will be turned upside down.**

The Magnificat—Mary’s canticle of praise and thanksgiving for answered prayer—tells us a great deal about the deepest desire of Mary’s Heart—what she was waiting for, longing for, praying for. When you look at the details of this prayer in light of what Israel longed for, you will see that Mary’s desires were identical to those of her people. And yet how differently they were fulfilled than from what both Israel and Mary expected!

When they bracket the Magnificat in the Liturgy of the Hours, **The O Antiphons are the clue to understanding Mary’s immaculate but still very human heart and her hope that the coming of the Messiah will bring about a great reversal in the fortunes of Israel.**

Mary was not “misled” in her hope, but as we realize what actually happened when Christ was born, suffered, died, rose from the dead and was preached throughout the known world—to *the Gentiles*—we see that **her Messianic “hope” had to die and rise again in a vastly glorified form.**

And that’s what has to happen to our hopes too. We call for Christ to come into our lives, hoping for very specific kinds of blessings. He will answer our prayer, but we must give our consent to the possibility that in coming into our

lives, He may well give us much more than we ask for! **He will come in a way that fulfills the Divine Will, not ours, and that could indeed turn our lives upside down.**

Let us stand and pray with the Mother of the Messiah:

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me
blessed: the Almighty has done great things
for me, and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation. He has shown the
strength of his arm, he has scattered
the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their
thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.*

*O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in
lonely exile here until the Son of God appear. Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*