The O Antiphons

Paule Freeburg, DC

1. O Wisdom

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FROM THE COLLECTION
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2. O Adonai

O Adonai and ruler of the House of Israel,

el, you gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Come to save us, save us with might and power!

3. O Root of Jesse

O Root of Jesse, you are a sign of God’s love for all

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4. O Key of David

O Key of David, you open the gates to the
Kingdom of God. Come and free us from the darkness.

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5. O Radiant Dawn

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6. O Christ, King of All Nations

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7. O Emmanuel

\( \text{\textbf{(d = ca. 100)}} \)

\textit{Soprano}\n
\textit{Alto}\n
\textit{Tenor}\n
\textit{Bass}\n
\textit{O Emmanuel, our King, you are the hope of all nations. Come and save us, O Lord our God!}

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The O Antiphons
8. O Christ for All Ages

\begin{quote}
\textbf{(q = ca. 104)}

\begin{align*}
\text{Soprano} & \quad \text{Alto} \\
(mf) & \quad (mp) \\
\text{Tenor} & \quad \text{Bass}
\end{align*}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\text{O Christ for all ages, you are the Redeemer for whom we long. Come, Lord Jesus, make your home in us!}
\end{quote}

9. O Christ, the Morning Star

\begin{quote}
\textbf{(q = ca. 116)}

\begin{align*}
\text{Soprano} & \quad \text{Alto} \\
(mf) & \quad (mp) \\
\text{Tenor} & \quad \text{Bass}
\end{align*}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
O Christ, the Morning Star, our God and Savior hidden in human form. Be born today in our hearts,
\end{quote}
10. O Word of God

O Word of God, you speak to all people through the coming of your Son, God made visible, our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Textwriter Notes

The O Antiphons have been sung in the Church since at least the eighth century. They formed the sung antiphon before the Magnificat canticle during Evening Prayer for the seven days before Christmas, and still do today. They proclaim the coming of Christ under seven titles used for the coming Messiah in the Hebrew Scriptures. Today, in our own time, these O Antiphons express our own desire for Christ to enter our hearts at Christmas.

The seven antiphons are actually known to many in the Church today. The Church uses them at Mass for the seven days before Christmas to introduce the Gospel proclamation. For example: on December 19, the Gospel of Luke 1:5–25 is introduced by:

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
O Root of Jesse’s stem,
sign of God’s love for all his people;
come to save us without delay!
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

And the O Antiphons are familiar to many in the Advent hymn, “O come, O come Emmanuel.” Each verse is an ‘O Antiphon. For example:

O come, O come, Emmanuel
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

O come thou Wisdom from on high
who orders all this mightily…

—Paule Freeburg, DC

Composer Notes

The four-part versions in this octavo are accessible to most SATB choirs. Make sure that the text is clearly heard and that attention is given to the dynamic markings. For the fuller SSAATTBB version, please contact the publisher.

They may be sung throughout the Advent Season but especially in the last weeks before Christmas. At Mass they can be sung as a prelude before Advent Masses, as the altar is incensed before the greeting, before distribution of Communion, as a meditation after a homily, or at the offertory as the gifts are presented.

They may also be sung during Advent, especially at celebrations of vespers (Evening Proper), at other prayer services, Advent reconciliation services, or for celebrations of Advent and Christmas Lessons and Carols.

You can hear these O Antiphons sung as the short response to the readings in Advent & Christmas: Prayer for the Journey (OCP; print edition 30143362; eBook edition 30143365). Available to listen on your preferred platform as an audiobook, or as CDs (30143363) from ocp.org.

—Christopher Walker