



## *A Christmas Anticipation Service*

**Adapted from the original prepared for the  
St. Eulalia's VOTF Affiliate, Winchester MA**

The service is designed as a respite in a busy and chaotic season, providing a period of prayer, silence, song, and reflection as we anticipate and celebrate the coming of the Lord.

## *Welcome & Introduction*

We welcome everyone tonight to our Christmas celebration – or more correctly, to our Christmas anticipation.

At a recent VOTF National Conference, Fr. Don Cozzens talked of Thomas Merton and of contemplation and prayer and the need to sit and be still, to prayerfully listen for wisdom. It can be difficult in this busy and often chaotic season to slow down enough and let go enough to see how the Lord has come into our midst and continues to do so.

We are happy and gratified to be gathered here as a VOTF community, because we truly have been working for and waiting for a new birth in our Church. And it is fitting tonight we slow down and in prayer, silence, song, and reflection, anticipate and celebrate the coming of the Lord.

**(Led by First Presenter) SILENCE:** We begin with a reflection on a verse from Psalm 46: Be still and know that I am God. (Open with brief instruction: breathing, leading to centering and into 3 minutes of sitting in silent meditation.)

**O ANTIPHONS explanation:** In the Church's Liturgy of the Hours, Evening Prayer (also known as Vespers) always included the great prayer of Mary known as the Magnificat. Each day a short "antiphon" that links the prayer to the feast of the day or the year precedes the Magnificat. In the last seven days of Advent (Dec. 17-24), antiphons before the Magnificat are very special. Each begins with an exclamation "O" and ends with a plea for the Messiah to come. As Christmas approaches, the cry becomes increasingly urgent.

These moving "O Antiphons" were composed in the seventh century when monks put together texts from the Old Testament, which looked forward to the coming of our salvation. They form a rich, interlocking mosaic of scripture. The great "O Antiphons" became very popular in the Middle Ages when it became traditional to ring the bells of the church each evening as they were being sung. You may feel that you don't know any O Antiphons, but if you've ever sung the hymn "O Come, O Come Emmanuel, you have offered several of these prayers, e.g. O Come our Wisdom from on high or O Come, O Rod of Jesse's stem.

Tonight we will use these O Antiphons as the basis of our prayer and reflection. Each of the 7 antiphons will be read by one of our members, followed by a 1-minute reflection, sharing their experience of a grace or blessing in their life related to that antiphon. After a moment of silence, all will recite together the Antiphon and join in singing or reciting an appropriate hymn. This sequence is repeated for all 7 of the antiphons.

***Let us begin: (each section led by a different person)***

## O WISDOM

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

### *Suggested Reflection:*

*The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—  
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and of power,  
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord  
and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. (Is 11:2-4)*

Silent meditation on scripture (2 to 3 minutes suggested)

*Recite Antiphon together (O Wisdom....)*

*Intercessions: Let us pray. (R) Come, Lord, and do not delay.*

*You created the world and all who live in it.....*

*You came to give us life to the full.....*

*You desire all people to live in love in your kingdom.....*

### SONG: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (sing or recite together)

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

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

## O ADONAI

*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.*

### *Suggested Reflection:*

*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)*

*Silent meditation*

*Recite Antiphon together (O Adonai....)*

*Intercessions: Let us pray. (R) Come, Lord Jesus*

*In the mystery of your incarnation, you revealed your glory to the world....*

*You have taken our weaknesses upon yourself...*

*You live and rule over all...*

**SONG: Save Us, O Lord**

(Recite together) – Save us, O Lord; carry us back. Rouse your power and come. Rescue your people; show us your face. Bring us back. O Shepherd of Israel, Hear us. Return and we shall be saved. Arise, O Lord; hear our cries, O Lord; bring us back.

**O STOCK OF JESSE**

*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.*

***Suggested Scripture Reflection:***

*I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star. (Rev 22:16)*

*Silent meditation*

*Recite Antiphon together: (O stock of Jesse...)*

*Intercessions: Let us pray. (R) Come, Lord Jesus*

*Come to those imprisoned in the darkness of ignorance....*

*May the world know your justice, which the heavens proclaim....*

*Show the radiance of your own divine light and in your glory grant us true happiness.*

***SONG: Like A Shepherd (Sing or recite 3<sup>rd</sup> verse together)***

**Like a shepherd he feeds his flock and gathers the lambs in his arms, holding them carefully close to his heart, leading them home.**

**Come unto me if you are heavily burdened, and take my yoke upon your shoulders. I will give you rest.**

**O KEY OF DAVID**

*O key of David and scepter 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.*

***Suggested Scripture Reflection:***

*We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true--even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. (1Jn 5:20)*

*Silent meditation*

*Recite Antiphon together: (O Key of David....)*

*Intercessions: Let us pray. (R) Come, Lord Jesus*

*Complete in us the works of your loving kindness....*

*Give us whatever we need to serve you...*

*Steep the souls of the faithful departed in the dew of your loving kindness...*

**SONG: On Eagle's Wings (Sing or recite 1<sup>st</sup> verse together)**

You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord, who abide in his shadow for life, say to the Lord: "My refuge, my rock in whom I trust!"

And I will raise you up on eagle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of his hand.

**O RISING SUN**

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

***Suggested Scripture Reflection:***

**The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. (Mt 4:16)**

***Silent meditation***

***Recite Antiphon together: (O Rising Sun...)***

***Intercessions: Let us pray. (R) Come, Lord Jesus***

*Gather together all the people of the earth.....*

*Our faith seeks you out, let us find everlasting joy with you....*

*Graciously gather the dead into the ranks of the blessed.....*

***SONG: Morning Has Broken (Sing or recite together)***

Morning has broken like the first morning; Blackbird has spoken like the first bird. Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning! Praise for the springing fresh from the Word!

**O KING**

*O King whom all the peoples desire, you are the corner stone which makes all one. O come and save mankind whom you made from clay.*

***Suggested Scripture Reflection:***

***For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed. (1 Peter 2:6)***

***Silent meditation***

***Recite Antiphon together: (O King...)***

***Intercessions: Let us pray. (R) Come, Lord Jesus***

By your coming you rescued the world from sin, cleanse our souls and bodies from guilt...

By the mystery of your incarnation we are made your brothers and sisters, do not let us become estranged from you and one another....

The prophets of old foretold your birth among us, now make virtue come to life in us...

***SONG: Let There Be Peace On Earth (Sing or recite together)***

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.  
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.  
With God as our Father, brothers all are we;  
let me walk with my brother in perfect harmony.

**O EMMANUEL.**

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

***Suggested Scripture Reflection:***

**For the Lord is our judge, our lawgiver, and our king. He will care for us and save us. (Is 33:22)**

***Silent meditation***

***Recite Antiphon together (O Emmanuel...)***

***Intercessions: Let us pray. (R) Come, Lord Jesus***

Our land looks forward with delight at the approach of your Son, let it experience the fullness of your joy....

***You came first to save the world, now come again to save those who believe in you...***

***You brought freedom to us by saving us, continue to save us and make us free...***

**SONG: O Come, O Come Emmanuel (Sing or recite together)**

**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!**

***VIGIL POEM by Maya Angelou (May be recited by single or multiple readers)***

*We are born in pain, then relief comes.  
We are lost in the dark, then day breaks.  
We are confused, confounded, and fearful,  
Than faith takes our hand.  
We stumble and fumble and fall,  
Then, we rise.*

*Into each of our meanest nights, you  
Have arrived,  
Oh, Lord, Creator,  
To lead us away from our ignorance  
And into knowing.*

*Now, we gather at your altar,  
Rich and poor, young and  
Achingly old,  
We are the housed and the homeless,  
We are the lucky,  
And the lazy.*

*As if at the foot  
Of an ancient baobab tree,  
IN THIS MOMENT  
We gather to stand, kneel, sit, squat, and  
Crumple here,  
Knowing that, when the medical geniuses  
Have done their best, When the Nobel Prize Winners  
Have used their most powerful energy,  
We have You.  
Creator,  
We bring to you  
Our brothers, sons, fathers, uncles,  
Nephew, cousins, beloved and friends*

*They are among the best we have  
And You are all we have.  
Heal, we pray.  
Heal, we pray.  
Heal us all,  
We pray*

**All read together: THE MAGNIFICAT**

**My soul glorifies the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.  
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;  
henceforth all ages will call me blessed.  
The Almighty works marvels for me.  
Holy his name!  
His mercy is from age to age,**

**on those who fear him.**  
**He puts forth his arm in strength**  
**and scatters the proud-hearted.**  
**He casts the mighty from their thrones**  
**and raises the lowly.**  
**He fills the starving with good things,**  
**sends the rich away empty.**  
**He protects Israel, his servant,**  
**remembering his mercy,**  
**the mercy promised to our fathers,**  
**to Abraham and his sons forever.**

**Concluding song: *O Come, O Come Emanuel***

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!

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

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, o come, Thou Lord of might,  
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height  
in ancient times did give the law,  
in cloud, and majesty, and awe.

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse's stem,  
form ev'ry foe deliver them  
that trust Thy mighty power to save,  
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Thou Key of David, come,  
and open wide our heav'nly home,  
make safe the way that leads on high,  
that we no more have cause to sigh.

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,  
and cheer us by thy drawing nigh;  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
and death's dark shadow put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Desire of the nations, bind  
in one the hearts of all mankind;  
bid every strife and quarrel cease  
and fill the world with heaven's peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!