

come, emmanuel

DEVOTIONS FOR
ADVENT & CHRISTMAS
2023-2024



AUGSBURG FORTRESS

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Welcome

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 you, O Israel.
—“O come, O come, Emmanuel,” ELW 257

In *Come, Emmanuel* we join Christians around the world, past and present, in the Advent tradition of reflecting on brief prayers known as the “O Antiphons.” Christians have used the O Antiphons since the eighth century or perhaps even longer. Their name comes from the way each one begins (“O Wisdom,” “O Adonai/Lord,” and so on). The O Antiphons were sung during evening prayer or mass, especially in the last seven days of the Advent season. Around the twelfth century, the O Antiphons became the basis for the hymn we know as “O come, O come, Emmanuel.”

Come, Emmanuel includes daily devotions for the first Sunday of Advent (December 3, 2023) through Epiphany (January 6, 2024). Each of the seven antiphons will be the focus for five days in this book:

- + O Wisdom (December 3–7)
- + O Adonai/Lord (December 8–12)
- + O Root/Branch of Jesse (December 13–17)
- + O Key of David (December 18–22)

- ✦ O Emmanuel (December 23–27)
- ✦ O Morning Star/Dayspring (December 28–January 1)
- ✦ O Ruler/King of the nations (January 2–6)

On the first day of each set of devotions, a contemporary version of the antiphon serves as the scripture text, and a stanza from “O come, O come, Emmanuel” serves as the “To ponder” quotation. The next four days in the set include scripture texts traditionally associated with the antiphon and quotes chosen by the writers. Turn to pages 93–94 if you would like to sing a verse of “O come, O come, Emmanuel” that matches up with each day’s devotion.

This book also offers an expanded version of household blessings and prayers (see pages 77–89) to enrich your preparations and celebrations.

Emmanuel came that first Christmas. Emmanuel comes to us today. Emmanuel will come again. Rejoice and share the good news!



December 26

Matthew 1:22-25

All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

To ponder

Abide with richest blessings among us, bounteous Lord;
let us in grace and wisdom grow daily through your word.

—“Abide, O dearest Jesus,” ELW 539

God is with us

On this second day of Christmas, as we clean up the debris from yesterday and start eating up the leftovers, we may have a few moments of quiet to consider how Christ has come into our world, our hearts, and our homes this season, not just to make a joyful appearance, but to make a home there forever—this day, and every day to come.

This may be easy to feel today, still warm with the joys of the season, but it will be even more important to remember tomorrow and beyond: God is with us in Jesus. In times of challenge and difficulty, God's presence with us in Jesus gives us strength beyond our weakness and clarity beyond our doubts. In the great hymn "Abide, O dearest Jesus," seventeenth-century German pastor and teacher Josua Stegmann reminds us that Jesus is with us in every time of trouble. Himself subjected to humiliation and loss in time of war, Stegmann's hymn is a song of courage and hope in the face of challenges.

Prayer

Faithful God, we live in the promises you make to us, and we feel those promises most strongly in the miracle of the Word made flesh, who we remember and celebrate at Christmas. May this light and warmth not fade; may your presence with us in Jesus always give us courage to live. Amen.



December 27

Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus came and said to [the disciples], “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

To ponder

The Lord now sends us forth with hands to serve and give,
to make of all the earth a better place to live.
The angels are not sent into our world of pain

to do what we were meant to do in Jesus' name;
that falls to you and me and all who are made free.
Help us, O Lord, we pray, to do your will today.
—“The Lord now sends us forth,” ELW 538

Sent forth to make a difference

The story of Christ's coming at Christmas is not just to warm our hearts with the knowledge and comfort of God's love and abiding presence, it also empowers and energizes and propels us forward.

God in Christ is with us always. Now Jesus calls us to live what we believe. In the Spanish hymn we sing as “The Lord now sends us forth,” that commission to go out into the world to baptize and teach—in other words, to transform the world and society around us—is clear. Our call is to love and honor God by helping others, and to love our neighbors as ourselves by making a difference in our communities.

Prayer

God of all, you are our loving parent as well as our powerful guide. Empower us to live fearlessly, to help others without counting the cost, and to bear your love to the world. Wherever we see injustice, let our voice be clear and our witness forthright—and may your love prevail. Amen.