Holy Wisdom Monastery

Celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours during Advent, Christmas and Epiphany

(Selections from the Liturgy of the Hours used by Benedictine Women of Madison, Holy Wisdom Monastery, Middleton, WI)

Anticipating Christmas with the O Antiphons

During the last week before Christmas, we begin the daily singing of the O Antiphons, an ancient practice that embraces the sense of longing and anticipation for Christmas which swells with each day. These antiphons are sung prior to the *Magnificat*, the *Song of Mary* from Luke 1:46-55, in our evening prayers throughout this week. Each antiphon begins by addressing God with a name that expresses God's loving design for people of all times and places. Each antiphon is completed with the petition to "Come" and continue the redeeming activity needed in our lives and in our world today. We invite you to enjoy the richness of this tradition, by joining us for evening prayer (4:30 pm) throughout these days. Antiphons for each day and accompanying prayers and blessings are reprinted below, along with special prayers for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Epiphany Sunday.

December 17

O Wisdom

O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love: come teach us to walk in the paths of knowledge.

Holy Wisdom, Mother and Friend, you fill our hearts but are never exhausted; you guide our ways and never fail us. Give us powers of discernment to seek your ways, and guide us, heart and mind and conscience, in being followers of Jesus, who is Emmanuel, God with us, for ever and ever.

Blessing
May holy Wisdom bless us with her presence, enlightening our hearts and refreshing our minds.

December 18

O Leader

O Adonai, leader of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and gave him the law on Mount Sinai: come with open arms to set us free.

Liberating God, in Israel you set down a pattern of bringing your people out of slavery into the glorious freedom of your children. Help us to see the bondage of sin and death afflicting the times in which we live, and to be part of your liberating grace. We ask this through Jesus, who was, who is, and who is to come, Incarnate God, for ever and ever.

Blessing
May Adonai, the Lion of Judah, reach out with a strong arm to defend us and to be our Savior.

December 19

O
Root
of Jesse

O Root of Jesse's stem, you stand as a sign among the peoples; to you all nations cry for help; before you rulers stand in silence: come to save us, do not delay.

O God, in the fertility of Elizabeth and Zechariah, you trace your saving ways in human history. Open our hearts and minds to the miracle that is every human birth, and to the goodness in which we are born. We ask this in Jesus' name.

> *Blessing*
> May Christ, the Flower of Jesse's stem, take root in our lives and bear fruit in our communities.

December 20

O
Key
of David

O Key of David, scepter of the house of Israel: you open and no one closes; you close, and no one opens. Come free the prisoners in darkness and the shadow of death.

God of light, as evening draws on, we bring to mind all who live in prisons of any and every kind. Led by your desire for freedom and joy for all peoples, may we spread the good news to all captive hearts.

> *Blessing*
> May God bless us, who comes in Christ to save us and release us from the chains of death.

December 21

O
Radiant
Dawn

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light and sun of justice: come illumine those lost in the darkness and the shadow of death.

O God, the dawning of each day is the promise of your salvation at work in our lives. In Jesus you have radiated a new light through his words and example. Keep the light of Jesus burning brightly in our lives so that the work of the Gospel may continue, and people may be freed from doubt and despair. We pray this through Jesus the Christ.

> *Blessing*
> May Christ, the rising dawn of eternal light, shine on us with justice and illumine us with peace.

December 22

O
Ruler

O Ruler and hope of all nations, cornerstone uniting all as one: come save the people you formed from the earth.

O God, your love for us unites us in Jesus. By the power of that love, you seek to break down barriers between peoples, nations and churches. Strengthen in us a drive to unity and reconciliation which can speak to the divisions of our times. Grant this, we ask, through Christ, our Peace, for ever and ever.

> *Blessing*
> May God, the Ancient of Days, lift us up through the salvation Christ is creating among us.

December 23

O Emmanuel, God's presence among us, our Ruler our Judge: come to save us, O Christ, our God.

O God, you are near, even in our hearts, and have opened to us the mystery that lies within our very being. Grant that we may cherish the interior life, finding in abiding contemplation the gift of energy in the world. We pray through Jesus the Christ, living with you and the Spirit, now and for ever.

Blessing
May Christ, Emmanuel, God with us, bless us with abiding peace.

Celebrations of Christmas in the Liturgy of the Hours

Christmas Eve – Blessing of the Crèche

God of Mary and Joseph, of shepherds and animals, bless us whenever we gaze on this crèche. Through all the days of Christmas may these figures tell the story of how humans, angels and animals found Christ in this poor place. Fill our households with hospitality, joy, gentleness and thanksgiving and guide our steps in the way of Christ's peace. Grant this through Christ our Savior.

Christmas Vigil

Good and gracious God, while all the world lay wrapped in deepest silence, and night had reached its midpoint, your Word leapt down to grace the world forever. As year by year the beauty of this night returns, growing old with our aging, yet renewed in the wonder of every child, so may we give birth to Christ again in lives of faith, hope and love. We pray through Jesus, the Word made flesh, living in the splendor of eternal light with you and the Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Christmas Day
Today the Savior has come! Let us pray to God with joy and wonder.

Blessing
May God's blessing be with us for joy, for the warmth of love and for peace.

Epiphany Sunday Vigil

In the darkness of night, O God, a star has risen in the East, shining upon the Word made flesh, Savior of the world and light to the nations. Grant us to walk by this light, radiating your love for the world, and bearing a message of peace. For Jesus is God-with-us forever and ever.

O Antiphon texts adapted from traditional Latin antiphons and translations by Colleen Winston, OSB ©2001, St. Walburg Monastery, Villa Hills, KY. Prayers and blessings published by Benedictine Women of Madison, Holy Wisdom Monastery, Middleton, WI ©2010.