

MONDAY
13 DECEMBER
 Numbers 24:2-7.
 15-17
 Psalm 25:3-8
 Matthew 21:23-27

TUESDAY
14 DECEMBER
 Zephaniah 3:1-2.
 9-13
 Psalm 34:1-6.
 21-22
 Matthew 21:28-32

WEDNESDAY
15 DECEMBER
 Isaiah 45:6b-8. 18.
 21b-end
 Psalm 85:7-end
 Luke 7:18b-23

THURSDAY
16 DECEMBER
 Isaiah 54:1-10
 Psalm 30:1-5.
 11-end
 Luke 7:24-30

FRIDAY
17 DECEMBER
 Genesis 49:2.
 8-10
 Psalm 72:1-5.
 18-19
 Matthew 1:1-17

SATURDAY
18 DECEMBER
 Jeremiah 23:5-8
 Psalm 72:1-2.
 12-13. 18-end
 Matthew 1:18-24

REFLECTION

We are getting close now, and our readings look back for hints that will help us understand what is about to happen.

Isaiah reminds us again that there is only one God in the universe. Zephaniah tells us that this God makes allowances and rescues people from the consequences of their failings. Genesis, Jeremiah and Numbers explore the long-cherished dream of a ruler like King David, from the house of Judah. It is all leading to a long-planned but still unexpected birth.

In Friday's Gospel reading we turn to Matthew and his long list of names. Among the distinguished men we find some surprising women: Tamar, who bore children to her father-in-law; Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute; Ruth the Moabite; and finally an unmarried mother – "Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah".

God's plan does not take the obvious route, or use the obvious people. We are nearly ready for the birth of the king in the stable.

PRAYER

God for whom we watch and wait,
 you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of your Son:
 give us courage to speak the truth,
 to hunger for justice,
 and to suffer for the cause of right,
 with Jesus Christ our Lord.



The Marriage of Ruth, nave ceiling of Ely Cathedral.
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ADVENT

PART III – CELEBRATION AND SONG

Gaudete (meaning "rejoice") Sunday is the third Sunday of Advent, and is when Christians focus on celebration rather than penitence. Rose-coloured vestments may be worn, the pink candle lit on the Advent wreath and the readings emphasise the joyful anticipation of God With Us.

This year 17 December falls on Friday, and is when we move into the Late Advent Weekdays – the final countdown to Christmas. Traditionally on these days the O Antiphons or Greater Antiphons are sung. An antiphon is a response, usually sung in plainsong (a traditional style of music dating from the Middle Ages, sometimes known as Gregorian chant). The response is sung to a psalm or other sung part of a service, and in the Anglican Communion during Advent the O Antiphons are usually sung to the Magnificat at Evensong.

Each of the *O Antiphons* is a name for Jesus, one of the attributes prophesied by Isaiah and others. They start on 17 December with *O Sapientia* (O Wisdom – Isaiah 11:2; 28:29), followed by *O Adonai* (*Adonai* – the Hebrew word for Lord – Isaiah 33:22); *O Radix Jesse* (Root of Jesse – Isaiah 11:1. 10); *O Clavis David* (Key of David – Isaiah 22:22); *O Oriens* (Sunrise – Isaiah 9:2); *O Rex Gentium* (King of the nations – Isaiah 2:4); and *O Emmanuel* (Emmanuel – Isaiah 7:14).

The O Antiphons date back to the eighth century, but you may be more familiar with them in the form of a popular Advent carol. Originally written in Latin by an unknown author, "Veni, veni, Emmanuel" translates as "O come, O come, Emmanuel", and is based on the O Antiphons. The familiar melody is believed to be of French origin and was probably added a hundred years later, while the Latin was translated into English by John Mason Neale in the mid nineteenth century.

The O Antiphons also form a rather quirky little puzzle. If you read the first letters of the Latin titles backwards you'll read "Ero Cras", which translates as: "Tomorrow, I will come."



LIVE
 the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU
 THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
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 and
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Third week of Advent

Monday 13 December to
 Saturday 18 December
 2021

WEEK