



Advent

Preparing for the Coming of Christ

A familiar hymn that is usually sung during the beautiful season of Advent is *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. The lyrics help us to understand the essence of Jesus coming to us as our Savior.

Each verse of this hymn begins with a prayer that starts with the phrase, “O Come,” and includes an Old Testament reference to Jesus—the Messiah. The first Old Testament mention of the Messiah is Emmanuel, which means “God is with us.”

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile
here, until the Son of God
appear. (Refrain):
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel,
shall come to thee, O Israel.

Israel needed rescue from having been exiled in a foreign land. We also need to be rescued – from sin and selfishness. When we sing this song, we can remember the depth of God’s love for us by sending His Son, Jesus—God taking on human flesh—to rescue us from our sins, which harm us and others.

This next reference is to the Messiah’s infinite wisdom and knowledge. In His wisdom, God revealed to us His plan of loving goodness. We would receive access to the Father through Jesus, who came to reunite us with the Father after the Original

Sin of our first parents. We are reunited with the Father through sanctifying grace – God’s own divine life – that we receive through the channel of His Sacraments.

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. (Refrain)

In this song, another reference is to the Messiah’s power and might. This verse captures the scene in Exodus 19:16; the Lord appeared on Mount Sinai through the signs of a cloud and a trumpet blast to the Israelites whom He had saved from the captivity of Egypt. God gave Moses His Laws of Love so that we would know how to live to say close to Him.

O come, O come, thou Lord of
might, Who to Thy tribes, on
Sinai's height. In ancient times
didst give the law, in cloud
and majesty and awe. (Refrain)

In this stanza, we pray that the Messiah will rescue us from the devil, the “father of lies,” who hates God and seeks to lead us away from Him. Jesus won this victory of freedom from sin for us but we have to cooperate with His grace to resist temptation and sin and receive His salvation.

O come, thou rod of Jesse’s
stem, from Satan’s power
deliver them; From depths
of hell Thy people save, and
give them victory o'er the grave.
(Refrain)

The Messiah is from the line of David. We pray that He will open the gates of Heaven which were closed through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. The “key” to open the gates of our home in Heaven was Jesus’ Death and Resurrection.

O come, Thou Key of David,
come, and open wide our
heav'nly home; Make safe
the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.

In this last verse, we understand that Jesus is the desire and delight of every human heart. It is He who brings the peace and joy that we all long for and He alone is the source of these greatest gifts.

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

During these challenging times, we must never forget that Jesus is always present. He is God, King of the Universe, and everything is still ultimately under His Providence. As He promised, He will bring together all things for good as we place our trust in Him. May we come to know, in a deeper way, the peace and joy of Jesus this Christmas.

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