



**Hymns 101 – O Come, O Come, Emmanuel**

*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.*

Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)

*Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:*

*“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel” (which means, God with us).*

Matthew 1:20-23 (ESV)

**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.***

**O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer  
our spirits by thine advent here;  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
and death's dark shadows put to flight.**

*Refrain*

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

*Refrain*

**O come, Desire of nations, bind  
all peoples in one heart and mind;  
bid envy, strife and quarrels cease,  
fill all the world with heaven's peace.**

*Refrain*



## O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

The original Latin text of this monastic hymn comes to us from well over one thousand years ago, from somewhere in the eighth- or ninth-century. Seven days before Christmas Eve, monks would begin to celebrate the birth of Christ by singing the “*O antiphons*” – short phrases of praise to be sung before or after a canticle (hymn or chant using a biblical text). There were seven of these, including:

- ◇ **S**apientia (*Wisdom*) Modern verse 3
- ◇ **A**donai (*Hebrew word for God*)
- ◇ **R**adix Jesse (*stem or root of Jesse*)
- ◇ **C**lavis David (*key of David*)
- ◇ **O**riens (*dayspring*) Modern verse 2
- ◇ **R**ex genitium (*King of the Gentiles*) Modern verse 4
- ◇ **E**manuel

*In a not unusual riddle created by the monks, the first letter (in bold above) of the second word of each antiphon creates a two-word acrostic, SAR-CORE – which, read backwards is Ero Cras, Latin for “I will be present tomorrow.” A reminder of the imminent return of our Lord, rather than a Dan Brown-esque puzzle for Tom Hanks to solve in his next movie.*

*The modern form of this hymn was translated and by John Mason Neale (1818-1866) in 1851 and was set to music in 1854 by Thomas Helmore, who based his score upon a 15<sup>th</sup> century processional for French Franciscan nuns. Since then the English text has been retranslated several times to more closely interpret the original Latin and the music has been somewhat modernized to make the passages flow more freely. In the current form, this hymn is closer in meaning to the original Latin hymn and in singing it today, we can participate in a sacred Advent ritual hymn that is at least 11 centuries old.*