

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

December 7, 2014 at 6:00am

O Wisdom

by Sisters of the Monastery of Mount St. Scholastica

Scripture for Life

Advent 2014

O Wisdom, guide us on the right path.

Many paths present themselves as we journey through life. Which will I take and where will it lead? Advent invites us to follow the path leading to justice and truth found in the circumstances and disruptions of daily life -- the stranger at my door, a friend asking forgiveness, an annoying neighbor, a sick child crying during the night, etc. Am I willing to open my heart and respond?

-- Sr. Joanne Yankauskis

What are the O Antiphons?

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops describes the Advent O Antiphons as "a magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfillment not only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well."

An antiphon in religious tradition is a psalm or hymn chanted by alternating voices. It is also a brief passage from the Scriptures that is prayed or sung during the liturgy. The O Antiphons refer to seven prayers recited during the Advent time known as the Octave before Christmas (Dec. 17-23). These antiphons, beginning with "O," are followed by a title for the Messiah: O Wisdom, O Root of Jesse, O Emmanuel, etc., so familiar to us from our Advent hymns and Scriptures.

While the exact time of origin of these antiphons is not known, they have been chanted in monasteries and used in liturgical celebrations in Rome since the eighth century. Traditionally, seven antiphons are usually sung, though other traditions have added to this.

During December, NCRonline.org will offer an antiphon a day during each day of Advent (Dec. 1-24) from sisters of the Monastery of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kan. In this time of waiting and longing for the coming of the Messiah, please join us in calling upon Emmanuel -- God with us -- to renew our hearts and come yet again as dawn spills into the winter darkness.

[The Monastery of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kan., is home to 140 Benedictine sisters whose presence has been in the Kansas-Missouri area for the last 150 years. While primarily engaged in education, the sisters also sponsor the Keeler Women's Center; Sophia Center, which houses their spirituality programs; and Maur Hill-Mount Academy and Benedictine College, which they co-sponsor with St. Benedict's Abbey.]

Editor's note: Enjoying the antiphons? Sign up for our Spiritual Reflections email alert to receive Scripture reflections throughout Advent and the rest of the year: [Email alert sign-up](#).

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