

O Wisdom

The “O Antiphons” start on

December 17th: refer to the seven antiphons that are recited (or chanted) preceding the Magnificat during Vespers of the Liturgy of the Hours. They cover the special period of Advent preparation known as the Octave before Christmas, December 17-23, with December 24 being Christmas Eve and Vespers for that evening being for the Christmas Vigil. The exact origin of the “O Antiphons” is not known. Boethius (c. 480-524) made a slight reference to them, thereby suggesting their presence at that time. At the Benedictine abbey of Fleury (now Saint-Benoit-sur-Loire), these antiphons were recited by the abbot and other abbey leaders in descending rank, and then a gift was given to each member of the community. By the eighth century, they are in use in the liturgical celebrations in Rome. The usage of the “O Antiphons” was so prevalent in monasteries that the phrases, “Keep your O” and “The Great O Antiphons” were common sayings. We might conclude that in some fashion the “O Antiphons” have been part of our liturgical tradition since the very early Church. The importance of “O Antiphons” is twofold: Each one highlights a title for the Messiah: O Sapientia (O Wisdom), O Adonai (O Lord), O Radix Jesse (O Root of Jesse), O Clavis David (O Key of David), O Oriens (O Rising Sun), O Rex Gentium (O King of the Nations), and O Emmanuel. Also, each one refers to the prophecy of Isaiah of the coming of the Messiah.



Why a Christmas Tree?

The traditional Christmas tree is a very ancient custom which exalts the value of life, as in winter the evergreen becomes a sign of undying life. In general, the tree is decorated and Christmas gifts are placed under it. The symbol is also eloquent from a typically Christian point of view: it reminds us of the “tree of life” (Genesis 2:9), representation of Christ, God’s supreme gift to humanity. The message of the Christmas tree, therefore, is that life is “ever green” if one gives: not so much material things, but of oneself: in friendship and sincere affection, and fraternal help and forgiveness in shared time and reciprocal listening.



**Youth 2000: Christmas Retreat for Young People –
Newbridge, Co. Kildare – 16th-18th December –
Music/Talks/Workshops/Prayer New People** for further information contact
Youth 2000 on 01 6753690 or Mobile 085 828 9231 or visit www.youth2000.ie



Ethical Gifts for Christmas: Trócaire recently launched its range of ethical gifts for Christmas 2015, whose purpose is to help families in developing countries build a better future. As Advent begins, we remember in our thoughts, prayers and actions, all those who face injustice, oppression and poverty. Trócaire gifts are one way in which we strengthen people's livelihoods, so that they have more secure incomes, sources of food and better futures. *Check out this year's range of Trócaire Gifts on www.trocaire.org.*



The Christmas Story via Facebook:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucM42-VMYK0>