

A Monastic Vigil in the Spirit of Advent

Musical Offering for Vespers (Cantor):

"O Radiant Christ, Incarnate Word" -- text by Ruth Duck (c) 1992 GIA.

Narrator:

The Season of Advent begins next weekend and is a time set aside for deep spiritual reflection. Marked by a spirit of expectation and hope, the four weeks leading up to the celebration of Christmas call Christians to focus on the birth of our Savior. Historically, the use of the symbols of darkness and light has been used to deepen the times of reflection during Vespers throughout the Advent Season.

(Psalm 139)

Cantor: Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night (v.11)

All:

Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you. (v.11-12)

Cantor: Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night (v.11)

All:

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth
your eyes saw my unformed body. (v.13-15)

Cantor: Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night (v.11)

All:

All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand (v.16-18).

Cantor: Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me
become night (v.11)

A brief period of reflective silence follows

(Psalm 139)

Cantor: The unfolding of your words gives / light;
it imparts understanding \ to \ the / simple (v. 130).

All: The unfolding of your words gives / light;
it imparts understanding \ to \ the / simple (v. 130).

Cantor:

Your decrees are / won- \ derful;
therefore my \ soul \ keeps / them.
The unfolding of your words gives / light;
it imparts understanding \ to \ the / simple.
With open mouth / I \ pant,
because I long for \ your \ com- / mandments.
Turn to me and be gracious / to \ me,
as is your custom toward those who \ love \ your / name. (vv.129-132)

All: The unfolding of your words gives / light;
it imparts understanding \ to \ the / simple (v. 130).

Cantor:

Keep my steps steady according to your / pro- \ mise,
and never let iniquity have dominion \ o- \ ver / me.
Redeem me from human op- / pres- \ sion,
that I may \ keep \ your / precepts.
Make your face shine upon your / ser- \ vant,
and teach \ me \ your / statutes.
My eyes shed streams of / tears
whenever your law \ is \ not / kept. (vv. 133-134)

All: The unfolding of your words gives / light;
it imparts understanding \ to \ the / simple (v. 130).

A brief period of reflective silence follows

The "O Antiphons"

Narrator:

The "O Antiphons" refer to the seven antiphons that are recited (or chanted) during Vespers by monastic communities during the special period of Advent preparation known as the Octave of Christmas or the week before Christmas beginning with December 17. It is a centuries old tradition that dates back as early as the 5th century. Each O antiphon is a reference to Christ. More specifically, each one highlights a title for the Messiah that relates to a messianic prophecy found in Isaiah. The messianic titles in Latin are:

- O **S**apientia (O Wisdom)
- O **A**donai (O Lord)
- O **R**adix Jesse (O Root of Jesse)
- O **C**lavis David (O Key of David)
- O **O**riens (O Radiant Dawn)
- O **R**ex Gentium (O King of all Nations)
- O **E**mmanuel (O Emmanuel-God with Us)

Centuries ago a Benedictine monk noted that when you take the first initial of each title and read it backwards it forms an acrostic (E-R-O-C-R-A-S) for the Latin words "Ero Cras" which means "Tomorrow I Come" or "I will be there tomorrow" as noted in the upper case letters above.

Historically, mystics within monasticism has expressed their mysticism as a passionate love affair between the individual and God. Thus, to hear the Lover Christ say to one "Tomorrow I Come" or "I will be there tomorrow" often created a longing by a mystic to say "come quickly to me, (my Love)" (Ps 70.5). During Advent, may the O Antiphons prompt us to say in the spirit of the mystics "come quickly my Love, come as quickly as you can."

A brief period of reflective silence follows

The "O Antiphons"

Cantor: *O Sapientia (O Wisdom):*

O Wisdom,
uttered by the mouth of the Most High,
and reaching to the ends of the earth--
come and teach us the way of prudence.

All: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord, and his delight shall be the fear of the Lord." (11:2-3), and "Wonderful is His counsel and great is His wisdom."(28:29).

Cantor: *O Adonai (O Lord):*

O Adonai,
ruler of the house of Israel,
who appeared to Moses in the burning bush--
come and redeem us.

All: "But He shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's afflicted. Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips." (11:4-5); and "Indeed the Lord will be there with us, majestic; yes the Lord our judge, the Lord our lawgiver, the Lord our king, who will save us." (33:22).

Cantor: *O Radix Jesse (O Root of Jesse):*

O Root of Jesse,
Standard of the nations and of kings,
whom the whole world implores--
come and deliver us.

All: "But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom." (11:1), and on that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious." (11:10).

Cantor: *O Clavis David (O Key of David):*

O Key of David,
and Sceptre of the house of Israel,
what you open none can shut--
come and lead us out of darkness

All: "I will place the Key of the House of David on His shoulder; when he opens, no one will shut, when he shuts, no one will open." (22:22), and "His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, from David's throne, and over His kingdom, which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever." (9:6).

Cantor: *O Oriens (O Radiant Dawn):*

O Radiant Dawn,
splendor of eternal light and Sun of justice,
shine on those lost in darkness--
come to enlighten us.

All: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shown." (9:1).

Cantor: *O Rex Gentium (O King of all Nations):*

O King of the nations,
so long desired,
cornerstone uniting humankind--
come and save the work of your creation.

All: "For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace." (9:5), and "He shall judge between the nations, and impose terms on many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again." (2:4).

Cantor: *O Emmanuel (O Emmanuel-God with Us):*

O Emmanuel,
God present in our midst,
long awaited Savior and King--
come and save us, O Lord our God.

All: "The Lord himself will give you this sign: the Virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel" (7:14) which means "God is with us."

Other Related Scripture References Include:

O Wisdom: Proverbs 1:20; 8; 9 and I Corinthians 1:30

O Lord and Ruler of the House of Israel: Exodus 3; Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6

O Root of Jesse: Isaiah 11:10; Romans 15:12; Revelation 5:5

O Key of David: Isaiah 22:22; Revelation 3:7

O Dawn of the East (Dayspring): Luke 1:78, 79; Malachi 4:2

O King of the Gentiles (Nations): Revelation 15:3; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew

21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:20; I Peter 2:6

O Emmanuel: Isaiah 7:14; 8:8; Matthew 1:23; Haggai 2:7 (KJV)

Narrator:

The hymn *O come, O come, Emmanuel* (in Latin, *Veni Emmanuel*) is a lyrical paraphrase of the O Antiphons. Listen!

Cantor:

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny
From depths of Hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times did'st give the Law,
In cloud, and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

A brief period of reflective silence follows

Leader:

Dear God,
In a world where so many are hungry,
may we eat our meal with humble hearts;
in a world where so many are lonely,
may we share this friendship with joyful hearts.
At this time we ask that you
rest your weary ones
touch your worried ones
soothe your wounded ones
caress your dying ones
And gently kiss each and every one of them.
- Amen -

Dinner Begins

The Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Leader:

We are an Advent people—a people who live in the eternal hope and expectation of the ever burning light of the Risen One. Before we light each of the Advent candles and read and reflect on the scriptures, let us reflect on some of the Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled with the coming birth of Christ. You are invited to read one of the passages of scripture.

Reader 1:

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD -
and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.
In that day the Root of Jesse
will stand as a banner for the peoples;
the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.
(Isa 11. 1-10)

Cantor: Be patient until the coming of the Lord;
and strengthen your hearts,
for the coming of the Lord is near. (James 5. 7-8)

Reader 2:

" 'The days are coming,' declares the LORD,
'when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made
to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. "
'In those days and at that time

I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line;
he will do what is just and right in the land.
In those days Judah will be saved
and Jerusalem will live in safety.
This is the name by which it will be called:
The LORD Our Righteousness.'
(Jer 33. 14-16)

Cantor: Be patient until the coming of the Lord;
and strengthen your hearts,
for the coming of the Lord is near. (James 5. 7-8)

Reader 3:

"But you, Bethlehem,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times."
Therefore Israel will be abandoned
until the time when she who is in labor gives birth
and the rest of his brothers return
to join the Israelites.
He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.
⁵ And he will be their peace.
(Micah 5. 1-5)

Cantor: Be patient until the coming of the Lord;
and strengthen your hearts,
for the coming of the Lord is near. (James 5. 7-8)

Acolyte Lights the First Advent Candle

Narrator: The first purple candle that will be lit is traditionally the candle of Expectation or Hope that is often expressed in prophecy. Purple, which is associated with royalty, is the historical color for three of the four Sundays of Advent and symbolizes Christ as the "Prince of Peace."

Reader 4 (reads after the first candle is lit):

(Isa 11. 1-10)

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD -
and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.
The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.
In that day the Root of Jesse
will stand as a banner for the peoples;
the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

Cantor:

(Ps 27.14)
Wait for the Lord,
Whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord:
keep watch, take heart

Acolyte Lights the Second Advent Candle

Narrator: The lighting of the Advent candles is always associated with different aspects of the Advent story within the scriptures. The

lighting of the next three candles will be associated with the pregnancy of Mary.

Reader 5 (reads after the second candle is lit):

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God." "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

(Luke 1. 26-38)

Cantor:

(Ps 27.14)

Wait for the Lord,
Whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord:
keep watch, take heart

Acolyte Lights the Third Advent Candle

Narrator: Pink is the color for the Third Sunday of Advent, known as Gaudete Sunday from the Latin word "rejoice." Gaudete Sunday anticipates the joy of the Christmas celebration, so the third candle that will be lit is a mixture of Advent purple and Christmas white.

Reader 6 (reads after the third candle is lit):

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"(Luke 1. 39-45)

Cantor:

(Ps 27.14)
Wait for the Lord,
Whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord:
keep watch, take heart

Acolyte Lights the Fourth Advent Candle

Narrator: Again, the purple candle is traditionally the candle of Expectation or Hope that is often expressed in prophecy. Purple, which is associated with royalty, is the historical color for three of the four Sundays of Advent and symbolizes Christ as the "Prince of Peace."

Reader 7 (reads after the fourth candle is lit):

an angel of the Lord appeared to (Joseph)
in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David,
do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife,
because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
She will give birth to a son,
and you are to give him the name Jesus,
because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord
had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child
and will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel"—which means,
"God with us."
(Math 1. 20-22)

Cantor:

(Ps 27.14)
Wait for the Lord,
Whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord:
keep watch, take heart

Acolyte Lights the Christ (Fifth) Candle

Narrator: The center candle is white and is called the Christ Candle. It is traditionally lit on Christmas Eve or Day. The central location of the Christ Candle within the Advent wreath reminds us that the incarnation is the heart of the season and giving light to the world.

Leader: (after the Christ Candle is lit):

(Hebrews 1. 1-3)
In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets
at many times and in various ways,
but in these last days God has spoken to us by the Son,
whom God appointed heir of all things,
and through whom he made the universe.
The Son is the reflection of God's glory
and the exact representation of God's being,
sustaining all things by God's powerful word.

A period of reflective silence follows

Lectio Divina: A Dialogue with God

Narrator:

The practice of Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading) includes dialoguing with God in prayer by hearing scripture as God speaking and responding in similar thoughts and words to what God said. Let us hear what God has to say to us.

Leader:

As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you;
You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice. (Isaiah 66. 13-14)

All: Dear God, as a mother comforts her child, comfort us that our hearts may rejoice.

Leader:

As a father has kindness on his children,
so the LORD has kindness on those who revere him
(Ps 103.13)

All: O Lord, as a father has kindness on his children, bestow your kindness
on us.

Leader:

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you; (Jer 1.5)

All: O God, you knew us before we were formed in the womb and you
consecrated us before we were born for your service.

The Song of Mary *Magnificat*
Luke 1:46-55

Cantor: O Emmanuel,
God present in our midst,
long awaited Savior and King--
come and save us, O Lord our God.

All: O Emmanuel,
God present in our midst,
long awaited Savior and King--
come and save us, O Lord our God.

Cantor: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior; *
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed: *
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him *
in every generation.

All: O Emmanuel,
God present in our midst,
long awaited Savior and King--
come and save us, O Lord our God.

Cantor: He has shown the strength of his arm, *
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, *
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things, *
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel, *
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
The promise he made to our fathers, *
to Abraham and his children forever.

All: O Emmanuel,
God present in our midst,
long awaited Savior and King--
come and save us, O Lord our God.

Cantor: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

All: O Emmanuel,
God present in our midst,
long awaited Savior and King--
come and save us, O Lord our God.

Leader: Let us pray

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; for those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

(Isa 9. 2, 6-7)

Leader: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.