

*O Emmanuel, God with us, our King and Lawgiver,  
the Expected of nations and their Savior,  
come and save us, O Lord our God.*

O Antiphon for December 23

I am reminded of a carol we sing as the feast of Christ's birth approaches: "Hurry, the Lord is at hand." It seems that we have the "hurry" part down pat. As the time nears, the stores and chores rear their heads to make us speed up and try to accomplish the impossible goals we set for ourselves. We need to look inside ourselves for the answers.



"The Lord is at hand" is the part of the hymn I would like us to focus on for these last two days of Advent. We hear the call of the ancients in the O antiphon, "O Emmanuel," which draws us to the real meaning of Christmas. It reminds us *whose* coming we are commemorating. It is God, the king and lawgiver. We are expecting the Most High.

This "Most High" has come to us, not in the garb of the exalted, or rich, or royal, but as a child. This child could not even feed himself or take care of his basic needs. He wasn't able to commandeer for himself, or for his mother and father, even a room where a modicum of comfort could be had. He appeared helpless and unaware of his circumstances. If this is the Most High, what are we to look for in this feast?

We all know the answer to that query: We are looking for a man who has modeled so many virtues just in this act of coming into the world. His humility sings on the first Christmas night and in all subsequent Christmas nights. He, who could command all the forces of nature to provide a sensational display, comes in the depth of the night with no one around to observe.

This king, who could have courtiers protecting him from foes, summoned the shepherds, a rough and tough group from the surrounding hills. These burly men could protect and be sensitive to their charges, just as their God was and is to the poor and downtrodden.

We are also taught the virtue of celebration. God sent angels to announce his coming. Their words, "Glory to God in the highest," sets the proper tone of praise to God for all we have received and will receive from God. A heart full of thanks and praise should be in our celebration of the season.

Love of his mother has come to us through her Son and is always a part of the Christmas celebration. There are many more, and I leave it to you to meditate on and pray over them in the remaining days of Advent.

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Sandra DeNardis, CDP

