



Advent meditation 23 by Father Robbie Low

## ADVENT XXIII

In the final seven days leading up to the Feast of the Nativity the Church used to sing what are called the Great O Antiphons at Vespers, featuring, as they do, titles of Christ. We are probably most familiar with them in that great hymn of longing, 'O come, O come Emmanuel'. The Great 'O's are thus:

O Sapientia (Wisdom)

O Adonai (Lord)

O Radix Jesse (Root of Jesse)

O Clavis David (Key of David)

O Oriens (Dayspring)

O Rex Gentium (King of the Nations)

O Emmanuel (God with us)

There are two things immediately worth noting, one obvious and one deeply obscure. The obvious is the centrality of the Davidic claim to eternal kingship. Later Christians tend to forget this but, if we return to the earliest preachings in the Acts of the Apostles, the emphasis on the historic line of 'God chosen kingship' and its place in the sequence of

eternity and the validation of the Messiah is central. David's line is the litmus of legitimacy.

The second is to realise that, as the ancients loved acrostics and, hidden in the titles, is the promise of the Second Advent. The first letter of each - SARCORE when reversed spells ERO CRAS – the Latin for 'I will be there'.

These titles and use in the liturgy of Christendom date back to at least the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, where they merit a passing reference in Boethius 'Consolation of Philosophy' and are probably much earlier.

Their value, as we approach the revelation of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, is to keep us in that inevitable tension between the divine/eternal and the human/historical of the mystery of salvation.

We begin with the glorification of Wisdom

*O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High,*

*reaching from one end to the other,*

*mightily and sweetly ordering all things:*

*Come and teach us the way of prudence.*

The Wisdom of God and the Word emanate from the mouth of God and are prerequisites of the divine creation and ordering of that creation.

Wisdom is not knowledge for that, as we see in the tragedy of Eden, on its own is a dangerous weapon. Wisdom is the totality of divine intention and, while it includes all knowledge, is accessible to Man as he seeks to conform to the divine intention and prudential ordering of the Uncreated Creator. It is the overarching and undergirding principle at work in the purposes of God. Much praised in the whole 'Wisdom' tradition writings of the Holy Scripture, it is the object of the sacred

quest of the serious pilgrim for it is the encounter with Christ.

Man who is merely knowledgeable is a danger to himself and others, if he is untutored by Wisdom.

So, in Christ, we are immersed in the deepest understandings, intentions and purposes of God.

Spiritual exercise: A decision that is pending.....submit it to the test.

Will it conform to the tests of eternity- discretion, foresight, knowledge, prudence, wisdom. What would Jesus do?