

## Reflection Friday 4<sup>th</sup> Week Advent 23 December 2022

*"O Immanuel, you are our king and our judge, the One whom the peoples await and their Saviour. O come and save us, Lord our God."*

Now we leave the signs behind. Emmanuel" meaning "God-With-Us" is simply, straightforwardly and literally real. We say openly *"Come and save us!"*

*"The maiden is with child," says Isaiah, "and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel."*

Looking back on the O Antiphons, they are sung in reverse order, in the hymn "O come, O come, Emmanuel".

In Latin, it is possible to take the first letter of each of the titles given to Jesus, again from last to first, to get E R O C R A S i.e. *ero cras, "I will be tomorrow"*. If the earth, stars, sun and moon, sing the praises of the Lord, there is surely nothing wrong in making the letters of the alphabet as found in the O antiphons do the same.

The 24th of December has no Vespers (evening prayer). The Vespers of that evening are the First Vespers of Christmas. In many Christian countries, children will be sitting staring out of the window waiting for the first star to appear so that the celebrations can begin.

Christmas celebrates the dawn of the Light of the World. The powers of darkness are overcome by his coming to share our life. The long reign of sin is ended and grace has been poured out upon the earth. The Sun of Justice has arisen, and evil is vanquished."

*Perhaps the hardest thing to remember about Christmas is that it celebrates the incarnation, not just the nativity. The incarnation is an on-going process of salvation, while the nativity is the once-for-all-historical event of Bethlehem. We do not really celebrate Christ's 'birthday,' remembering something that happened long ago. We celebrate the stupendous fact of the incarnation, God entering our world so thoroughly that nothing has been the same since. And God continues to take flesh in our midst, in the men and women and children who form his body today. And the birth we celebrate is not just the past historical event but Christ's continuing birth in his members, accomplished by the power of the Spirit through the waters of baptism.*