

Music Blurb for 12-23-18

News and Notes

This week we'll sing some of our favorite Advent hymns: "O come, O come Emmanuel" (only some verses, not all), "Lo, how a Rose e're blooming," and "People, look east." The choir will be singing Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring."

Sunday Bulletins

Today's opening hymn, "O come, O come Emmanuel" is perhaps the most well-known hymns of Advent. It can be found in the hymnals of almost every Protestant denomination as well as those for the Roman Catholic Church. The text has its origins in the "O" antiphons which date back to the eighth century. Starting on December 17 and continuing through December 23, every evening at Vespers one of the antiphons is sung with the canticle "The Song of Mary" (Magnificat). Each antiphon begins with the word "O," hence the name "O" antiphons. Each antiphon goes on to describe the attributes of the coming Savior as laid out in Old Testament prophecy. Verse one in our hymnal is the same as verse eight so the antiphons actually start at verse two. In the verses we are singing today (the last three antiphons): O **O**riens (O rising sun), O **R**ex gentium (O King of nations), O **E**mmanuel, going backwards and using the first letter of the Latin attributes they spell ERO. If we did all seven antiphons it would spell ERO CRAS which means "I will be there tomorrow."

A Latin hymn text based on five of the "O" antiphons first appeared in 1710 and provides the foundation for the present hymn. In the mid-19th century, John Mason Neale (who translated so many other Latin texts into English) translated the text as "Draw nigh, draw nigh, Emmanuel." Neale continued to work on the text and by the first edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in 1861 changed it to "O come, O come Emmanuel." That was the version that found its way into the Episcopal Church's *Hymnal 1871*. Between then and our present hymnal the text has undergone several other tweaks.

The tune appeared in *Hymns Noted* (London 1854) as an accompaniment of Neale's translation. While the editor made claims as to its source, its provenance could never be proved. Then in 1966 a Mother Thomas Moore found the tune in a 15th century Processional that once belonged to Franciscan nuns and was in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The original use was as part of a funeral Mass but it fit note for note to the present tune VENI, VENI EMMANUEL.