



## CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

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## MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

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Dear Parish Family,

December 19, 2010

Thank you to everyone who participated in Wednesday evening's Penance Service at St. Mary. The students at St. Mary School also were able to participate in this Sacrament during an extended period of Eucharistic Adoration following the noon Mass that day. This coming week, on Tuesday, December 21, there will be a Penance Service at 6:30 pm at Mt. St. Joseph.

Thank you, too, to all the young people who helped out with this weekend's Masses. Your willingness to take on responsibilities at the Sacred Liturgy is a sign of your spiritual generosity. God bless you for that! And thank you to the parents whose example inspires their children to be so helpful.

Thank you, as well, to everyone who attended the Gratiot County Players' production of "*Miracle on 34th Street*" over the previous two weekends. This was my first stage role in over 30 years! We all can be very proud of our fellow parishioners who had many roles and responsibilities on and off-stage.

Christmas Eve is Friday, and Christmas is Saturday! The Mass schedule for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day is as follows:

St. Mary	5:00 pm	Christmas Eve
Mt. St. Joseph	7:00 pm	Christmas Eve
St. Mary	10:00 pm	Christmas Eve
<b>Mt. St. Joseph</b>	<b>9:00 am</b>	<b>Christmas Day</b>

Starting January 5 at 6:45 pm at St. Mary, and ending on the first Wednesday of March, we will be showing the video series *Boundaries*. On February 11 at 7:00 pm at St. Mary we will show the movie *The 13th Day*. Both events are free.

Please continue to pray for our parishes and each other as we wrap up our Advent celebration and move into the joyful Christmas season. God bless you!

Fr. David

## Saint of the Week

## SAINT JOHN OF KANTY

The people of Olkusz in Bohemia in 1431 had every reason to be suspicious of their new pastor. They knew what a Cracow professor would think of their small rural town. But even more insulting, their town was once again being used as a dumping ground for a priest who was "in disgrace."

John had indeed been kicked out of his university position – unjustly. Rivals who resented John's popularity with the students had cooked up a false charge against him. John was not even allowed to appear at his own hearing or testify in his own defense. So at age 41, he was shipped off to be an apprentice pastor. Certainly no one would have blamed John if he was furious at such injustice. However, he was determined that his new parishioners would not suffer because of what happened to him.

But there was no overnight miracle waiting for him in Olkusz. He was nervous and afraid of his new responsibilities. And, despite the energy he put into his new job, the parishioners remained hostile. But John's plan was very simple, and came not from the mind but from the heart. He let his genuine interest and concern for these people show in everything he did. Despite working for years without any sign of success, he was very careful not to demonstrate impatience or anger. He knew that people could never be bullied into love, so he gave them what he hoped they would find in themselves.

After eight years, he was exonerated and transferred back to Cracow. He had been so successful that these once-hostile people followed him several miles down the road, begging him to stay. For the rest of his life, he was professor of sacred Scripture at the university. He was so well-liked that he was often invited to dinner with nobility.

Once John was sitting down to dinner when he saw a beggar walk by outside. He jumped up immediately, ran out, and gave the beggar the food in his bowl. He asked no questions, made no demands. He just saw someone in need and helped with what he had.

John taught his students this philosophy again and again, "Fight all error, but do it with good humor, patience, kindness, and love. Harshness will damage your own soul and spoil the best cause."

# The “O Antiphons”

The “O Antiphons” refer to the seven antiphons that are recited (or chanted) preceding the Magnificat during Vespers of the Liturgy of the Hours. They cover the special period of Advent preparation known as the Octave before Christmas, Dec. 17-23, with Dec. 24 being Christmas Eve and Vespers for that evening being for the Christmas Vigil.

The exact origin of the “O Antiphons” is not known. Boethius (c. 480-524) made a slight reference to them, thereby suggesting their presence at that time. At the Benedictine abbey of Fleury (now Saint-Benoit-sur-Loire), these antiphons were recited by the abbot and other abbey leaders in descending rank, and then a gift was given to each member of the community. By the eighth century, they are in use in the liturgical celebrations in Rome. The usage of the “O Antiphons” was so prevalent in monasteries that the phrases, “Keep your O” and “The Great O Antiphons” were common parlance. One may thereby conclude that in some fashion the “O Antiphons” have been part of our liturgical tradition since the very early Church.

The importance of “O Antiphons” is twofold: Each one highlights a title for the Messiah: *O Sapientia* (O Wisdom), *O Adonai* (O Lord), *O Radix Jesse* (O Root of Jesse), *O Clavis David* (O Key of David), *O Oriens* (O Rising Sun), *O Rex Gentium* (O King of the Nations), and *O Emmanuel*. Also, each one refers to the prophecy of Isaiah of the coming of the Messiah. Let’s now look at each antiphon with just a sample of Isaiah’s related prophecies :

**O Sapientia:** “*O Wisdom, O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care. Come and show your people the way to salvation.*” Isaiah had prophesied, “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).

**O Adonai:** “*O sacred Lord of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain: come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.*” Isaiah had prophesied, “But He shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land’s afflicted. He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. 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, he it is who will save us.” (33:22).

**O Radix Jesse:** “*O Flower of Jesse’s stem, you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples; kings stand silent in your presence; the nations bow down in worship before you. Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid.*”

Isaiah had prophesied, “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). Remember also that Jesse was the father of King David, and Micah had prophesied that the Messiah would be of the house and lineage of David and be born in David’s city, Bethlehem (Micah 5:1).

**O Clavis David:** “*O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel controlling at your will the gate of Heaven: Come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death; and lead your captive people into freedom.*” Isaiah had prophesied, “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).

**O Oriens:** “*O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.*” Isaiah had prophesied, “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).

**O Rex Gentium:** “*O King of all the nations, the only joy of every human heart; O Keystone of the mighty arch of man, come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust.*” Isaiah had prophesied, “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) .

**O Emmanuel:** “*O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Savior of all people, come and set us free, Lord our God.*” Isaiah had prophesied, “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). Remember “*Emmanuel*” means “God is with us.”

According to Professor Robert Greenberg of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the Benedictine monks arranged these antiphons with a definite purpose. If one starts with the last title and takes the first letter of each one: *Emmanuel, Rex, Oriens, Clavis, Radix, Adonai, Sapientia* - the Latin words *ero cras* are formed, meaning, “Tomorrow, I will come.” Therefore, the Lord Jesus, whose coming we have prepared for in Advent and whom we have addressed in these seven Messianic titles, now speaks to us, “Tomorrow, I will come.” So the “O Antiphons” not only bring intensity to our Advent preparation, but bring it to a joyful conclusion.