



**The Chapels Royal of St Peter ad Vincula and St John the Evangelist  
HM Tower of London**

Dear friends,

Advent will shortly be upon us. The liturgical colour will turn to purple, as in Lent. Purple stands not only for penitence but also for preparation and for royalty. You will recall that, at his coronation, His Majesty King Charles III wore a purple garment which again represented not only royalty but also penitence and preparation as he began his reign.

It can sometimes seem strange in Lent and Advent to be preparing for something which we know happened two thousand years ago. How can we look forward to something in the past? Part of the answer lies in the fact that the element of remembering in this context means not only calling to mind but also reliving, re-experiencing. So it is that in Lent we aim to re-experience the events leading up to Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Day.

In Advent we rehearse the anticipation of those awaiting the coming of the Messiah and we celebrate the Incarnation – the birth of God as a human baby. More than that, however, in Advent we also look forward to something which is very much yet to happen – the Second Coming. It is that second ‘coming’ – which is what the word ‘advent’ means – which both embraces but also looks far beyond the events of two millennia ago. The ‘O Antiphons’, referred to below in relation to this week’s poem, wonderfully express that sense of anticipation of the final coming of the Rule of God.

I wish you all a blessed Advent,

Cortland.

**Sunday Service Details 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023  
The First Sunday of Advent**

**0915** Said Holy Communion, St John the Evangelist, White Tower  
**1100** Advent Carol Service, St Peter ad Vincula

**Readings**

Special readings for this service

**Collect for the First Sunday of Advent**

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness,  
and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life,  
in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility;  
that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty  
to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal,  
through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

## **Poem of the week: O Rex Gentium by Malcolm Guite.**

The Reverend Dr Malcolm Guite, born in 1957 in Nigeria where his father was a Methodist missionary, was educated at a boarding school in the UK after his parents had moved to Canada. Hating his time at school, he abandoned Christianity, embracing instead a rational scientific materialism. He won a scholarship to Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he gradually returned to his Christian faith, moved by beauty in the poetry of John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley and by his visits to historical sites with deep religious significance - Rome, Glencolumbkille in Northern Ireland, and Iona in Scotland. He decided to begin composing poetry of his own. In his final year of undergraduate study, while writing a literary paper analysing the Psalms, Guite had a religious experience which he likened to a conversion. He was confirmed in the Church of England shortly after and has since become one of our foremost Anglican poets. Incidentally, Malcolm Guite also performs as a singer and guitarist, fronting the Cambridgeshire-based blues, rhythm and blues and rock band Mystery Train. He has described himself as “a poet, priest, rock & roller, in any order you like, really. I’m the same person in all three.”

The ‘O Antiphons’ are an ancient set of texts addressing Christ with titles drawn from the Hebrew Scriptures. In the Roman Catholic Church, they are sung between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of December, a custom also adopted by other churches. They consist of short verses, all of which end by invoking the coming of the Lord. The antiphons, with their Latin titles, are as follows:

- 17 December: *O Sapientia* (O Wisdom)
- 18 December: *O Adonai* (O Lord)
- 19 December: *O Radix Jesse* (O Root of Jesse)
- 20 December: *O Clavis David* (O Key of David)
- 21 December: *O Oriens* (O Dawn of the East)
- 22 December: *O Rex gentium* (O King of the Nations)
- 23 December: *O Emmanuel* (God with us).

Malcolm Guite took inspiration from the antiphon for 22<sup>nd</sup> December – O Rex Gentium – for his challenging poem, in which he contrasts the grace and self-sacrifice shown by our Lord with the treatment that he received at human hands. The poem features in his book, *Waiting on the Word: A Poem a Day for Advent*, Christmas and Epiphany (Canterbury Press, 2015).

Here, first, are the words of the antiphon:

### ***O Rex Gentium***

*O King of the nations, and their desire,  
The cornerstone making both one;  
Come and save the human race,  
Which you fashioned from clay.*

### **‘O Rex Gentium’ by Malcolm Guite**

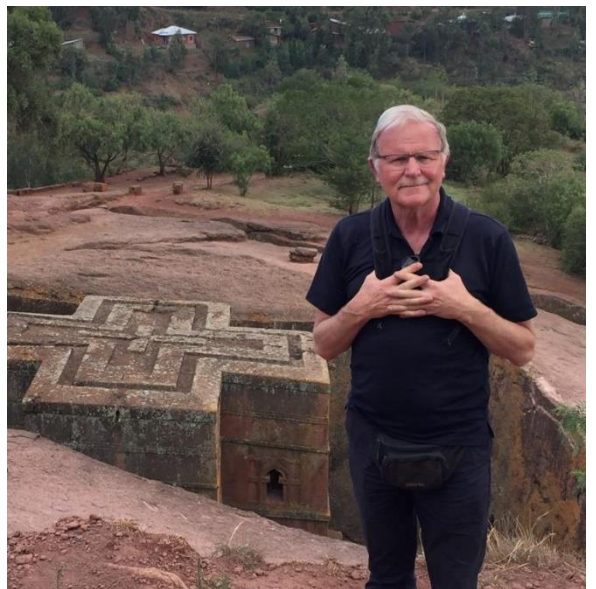
O King of our desire whom we despise,  
King of the nations never on the throne,  
Unfounded foundation, cast-off cornerstone,  
Rejected joiner, making many one,  
You have no form or beauty for our eyes,  
A King who comes to give away his crown,  
A King within our rags of flesh and bone.  
We pierce the flesh that pierces our disguise,  
For we ourselves are found in you alone.  
Come to us now and find in us your throne,  
O King within the child within the clay,  
O hidden King who shapes us in the play  
Of all creation. Shape us for the day  
Your coming Kingdom comes into its own.

**Malcolm Guite, born 1957.**



## **In other news...**

Our Chaplain Canon Roger Hall celebrates a significant birthday on 1<sup>st</sup> December. I am sure that you will all join me in wishing him Many Happy Returns!





## **Crown and Coronation.**

These images are from the spectacular Crown and Coronation light show at the Tower, 17<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> November, to celebrate the new exhibition in the Jewel House.



## **Colourful autumn leaves in Hornsey, North London**





## **Jigsaw**

The Gardens at Hampton Court Palace. <https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=2beb2b4d1f32>



## **Prayers**

Please continue to remember those on our sick list, some of whom are very ill, amongst whom we name: Norma, Ann, Ros, Mark, Dan, Ian, Patti, Florence and Kofi.

### **Please continue to pray for Ukraine, Israel and Palestine:**

God of peace and justice, we pray for the people of Ukraine, Israel and Palestine today.

We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.

We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow, that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.

We pray for those with power over war or peace,  
for wisdom, discernment, and compassion to guide their decisions.

Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,  
that you would hold and protect them.

We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of peace. Amen

With best wishes to all, Cortland.



The Reverend Cortland Fransella  
Deputy Priest in Ordinary to HM The King  
[cortland.fransella@hrp.org.uk](mailto:cortland.fransella@hrp.org.uk)