



CHRIST WAS BORN TO SAVE

Christmas with the Dominican Friars

Nearly seven hundred years ago, a Dominican friar named Henry Suso had a vision of angels singing and dancing with joy about the birth of the Infant Jesus. The German preacher and mystic poet was soon swept up by the angelic song and penned the Christmas hymn *In Dulci Jubilo* as a result. In the loose translation familiar to many today, we sing,

*Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice;
Now ye need not fear the grave:
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
To gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!*

Christ was born to save. This is what caused the angels to sing and dance in Blessed Henry's vision and is the true source of Christmas joy. God fulfilled his promise to restore creation to friendship with him through his Chosen People. Once again, God proved faithful to a mistrustful humanity, and confounded their doubts and expectations in the most extraordinary ways. The Lord of Hosts robed in majesty, became a lowly child, bundled in swaddling clothes. And why? That, as he shares our humanity, we may share in his divinity, by becoming adopted sons and daughters of God.

Christ was born for this. The crib points to the Cross, and to the Resurrection still further. God has truly become man, and it means that we may share in his victory over sin and death. The sacred songs and chants of Christmas recorded by our *schola cantorum* recount this tremendous mystery. "Rejoice, rejoice!" we hear in the carol *Gaudete*: "with nature marveling, the world has been renewed by the reigning Christ. The closed gate of Ezekiel is passed through." Likewise, in the beloved Marian hymn *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*, we praise the "true man, yet very God; from sin and death he saves us, and lightens every load." The heavenly choirs announce in *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*, that Christ was "born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth!"

Christ was born to save. And so we cannot help but rejoice at “the dawn of redeeming grace” (*Silent Night*), as we beseech this Child, “born to die upon the Tree...to assail [absolve] and save us all” (*Blessed Be that Maid Mary*). “Be near me, Lord Jesus,” we pray in *Away in a Manger*, “and fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.” For, “though an infant now we view him, he shall fill his Father’s throne. Gather all the nations to him; every knee shall then bow down” (*Angels from the Realms of Glory*).

Christ was born for this: that we should trust once more in God’s faithfulness and “gain his everlasting hall.” This Christmas, may God lead us all to “rejoice with heart and soul and voice” in so great a Savior.



1. Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

German 15th c., 19th c.

vv. 1–2 tr. Theodore Baker (1851–1934)

vv. 3–4 tr. Harriet Spaeth (1845–1925)

1. Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming,
As men of old have sung.
It came a floweret bright,
Amid the cold of winter,
When half-spent was the night.

2. Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
The Rose I have in mind;
With Mary we behold it,
The virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright,
She bore to men a Savior,
When half-spent was the night.

ES IST EIN ROS' ENTSPRUNGEN

German, 16th c.

harm. by Michael Praetorius (1571–1621)

3. The shepherds heard the story
Proclaimed by angels bright,
How Christ the Lord of glory
Was born on earth this night.
To Bethlehem they sped
And in the manger found him,
As angel heralds said.

4. This flower, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,
Dispells with glorious splendor
The darkness everywhere;
True man, yet very God,
From sin and death he saves us,
And lightens every load.

2. *Good Christian Men, Rejoice*

Bl. Henry Suso, O.P. (1295–1366)
tr. John Mason Neale (1818–1866)

1. Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice,
Give ye heed to what we say.
Jesus Christ is born today!
Ox and ass before him bow,
And he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!

2. Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice,
Now ye hear of endless bliss:
Jesus Christ was born for this!

3. *Alma Redemptoris Mater*

Marian antiphon from Advent to Candlemas

Alma Redemptoris Mater,
aquae pervia caeli porta manes,
et stella maris,
succurre cadenti surgere qui curat populo:

Tu quae genuisti, natura mirante,
tuum sanctum Genitorem:
Virgo prius ac posterius,
Gabrielis ab ore sumens illud Ave,
peccatorum miserere.

IN DULCI JUBILO, German melody, 14th c.
Klug's Geistliche Lieder, Wittenberg, 1535
arr. Vincent Ferrer Bagan, O.P. (b. 1983)

He has oped the heav'nly door,
And man is blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this!

3. Good Christian men, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice;
Now ye need not fear the grave:
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
To gain his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525–1594)

Loving Mother of the Redeemer,
you who remain the open gate of heaven,
and the star of the sea,
hasten to the aid of your people who, falling,
strive to rise again.

You who, to the wonderment of nature,
bore your holy Creator,
remaining a virgin after as before, receiving
that “Ave” from the mouth of Gabriel:
have mercy on us sinners.

4. *Dominus dixit ad me*

Dominican chant

Psalm 2:7, 1

Officium (Introit) for Christmas Mass during the Night

Dominus dixit ad me:
Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te.

℣. Quare fremuerunt gentes:
et populi meditati sunt inania?

The Lord said unto me:
You are my Son; today I have begotten you.

℣. Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?

5. *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

Charles Wesley (1707–1788), alt.

MENDELSSOHN

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

adapt. by William H. Cummings (1831–1915)

1. Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th’angelic hosts proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”

2. Christ, by highest heav’n adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of a virgin’s womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;

Hail th’incarnate Deity;
Pleased as man with man to dwell;
Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”

3. Hail, the heav’n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Ris’n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth!
Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”

6. *Blessed Be That Maid Mary*

Sloane manuscript, 15th c.

1. Blessed be that Maid Mary:
Born He was of her body;
Very God ere time began,
Born in time the Son of Man.

Refrain:

Eya! Jesus hodie

Natus est de Virgine.

[Indeed! Today Jesus
is born of the Virgin.]

2. In the manger of an ass
Jesu lay and lulled was;
Born to die upon the Tree
Pro peccante homine. [for sinful man.]

Refrain

STAINES MORRIS
Lute Book (1594) of William Ballet
harm. by Charles Wood (1866–1926)
arr. Vincent Ferrer Bagan, O.P. (b. 1983)

3. Sweet and blissful was the song
Chanted of the angel throng:
“Peace on earth,” alleluia,
“*In excelsis gloria!*” [Glory in the highest!]

Refrain

4. Fare three kings from far-off land,
Incense, gold, and myrrh in hand;
In Bethleem the Babe they see,
Stella ducti lumine. [led by the light of a star.]

Refrain

5. Make we joy now in this fest
In quo Christus natus est;
[on which Christ is born;]
On this child, I pray you, call
To assoil and save us all.

Refrain

7. *In the Bleak Midwinter*

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

CRANHAM

Gustav Holst (1874–1934)

1. In the bleak midwinter,
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter,
Long ago.

2. Our God, heav'n cannot hold him,
Nor earth sustain;
Heav'n and earth shall flee away
When he comes to reign:
In the bleak midwinter
A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ.

3. Angels and archangels
May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
Thronged the air;
But his mother only,
In her maiden bliss,
Worshiped the beloved
With a kiss.

4. What can I give him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man,
I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give him:
Give my heart.

8. *Gaudete*

Medieval Latin carol
setting from *Piae cantiones* (1582)

Gaudete, gaudete!
Christus est natus
ex Maria virgine.
Gaudete!

Tempus ad est gratiae,
hoc quod optabamus;
carmina laetitiae,
devote reddamus.

Deus homo factus est,
natura mirante;
mundus renovatus est
a Christo regnante.

Ezechielis porta
clausa per transitur;
unde lux est orta
salus invenitur.

Ergo nostra contio,
psallat iam in lustris;
benedicat Domino:
salus Regi nostro.

Rejoice, rejoice!
Christ is born
of the Virgin Mary.
Rejoice!

It is now the time of grace
that we have desired;
verse of joy
let us devoutly offer.

God has become man
with nature marveling;
the world has been renewed
by the reigning Christ.

The closed gate of Ezekiel
is passed through,
whence the light rises,
salvation is found.

Therefore, let our gathering
now sing in brightness;
let it give praise to the Lord:
greeting to our King.

9. Angels from the Realms of Glory

James Montgomery (1771–1854)

REGENT SQUARE

Henry T. Smart (1813–1879)

1. Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:

Refrain:

Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King!

2. Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with man is now residing,
Yonder shines the infant light:

Refrain

3. Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations,
Ye have seen his natal star:

Refrain

4. Saints, before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear;
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In his temple shall appear:

Refrain

5. Sinners, wrung with true repentance,
Doomed for guilt to endless pains,
Justice now revokes the sentence,
Mercy calls you; break your chains:

Refrain

6. Though an infant now we view him,
He shall fill his Father's throne.
Gather all the nations to him;
Every knee shall then bow down:

Refrain

7. All creation, join in praising
God, the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising,
To the eternal Three in One:

10. Away in a Manger

American, late 19th c.

MUELLER

James R. Murray (1841–1905)

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

2. The cattle are lowing; the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

3. Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.

11. Silent Night

Joseph Mohr (1792–1848)

tr. John F. Young (1820–1885)

STILLE NACHT

Franz Gruber (1787–1863)

v. 3 arr. Justin Bolger, O.P. (b. 1979) &

Vincent Ferrer Bagan, O.P. (b. 1983)

1. Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

2. Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar.
Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia;
Christ, the Savior, is born.

3. Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

12. *Puer natus est*

Dominican chant

Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 98(97):1

Officium (Introit) for Christmas Mass during the Day

Puer natus est nobis,
et filius datus est nobis:
cuius imperium super humerum eius:
et vocabitur nomen eius,
magni consilii Angelus.

℣. Cantate Domino canticum novum:
quia mirabilia fecit.

Unto us a child is born;
unto us a son is given.
Dominion is on his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
the Angel of Great Counsel.

℣. Sing unto the Lord a new song,
for he has accomplished wondrous deeds.

13. *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

John Francis Wade (1711–1786)

tr. Frederick Oakeley (1802–1880)

ADESTE FIDELES

John Francis Wade (1711–1786)

1. O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

Refrain:

O come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord!

2. God of God, Light of Light,
Lo! He abhors not the Virgin's womb.
Very God, Begotten not created.

Refrain

3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Gloria, gloria in excelsis Deo!

Refrain:

Venite, adoremus Dominum!

4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning,
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.

Refrain

14. See amid the Winter's Snow

Edward Caswall (1814–1878)

1. See amid the winter's snow,
Born for us on earth below,
See the tender Lamb appears,
Promised from eternal years.

Refrain:

Hail, thou ever blessed morn;
Hail, redemption's happy dawn;
Sing through all Jerusalem,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

2. Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies;
He who, throned in height sublime,
Sits amid the cherubim.

Refrain

3. Say, ye holy shepherds, say,
Tell your joyful news today,
Why have ye now left your sheep
On the lonely mountain steep?

Refrain

HUMILITY

John Goss (1800–1880)

4. As we watched at dead of night,
Lo, we saw a wondrous light:
Angels singing "Peace on earth"
Told us of the Savior's birth.

Refrain

5. Sacred infant, all divine,
What a tender love was thine,
Thus to come from highest bliss
Down to such a world as this.

Refrain

6. Teach, O teach us, holy Child,
By thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble thee,
In thy sweet humility.

Refrain

15. Tollite hostias

Psalm 96(95):8b, 9a, 11a, 13a

cf. Offertory for Christmas Mass during the Night

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)

arr. Vincent Ferrer Bagan, O.P. (b. 1983)

Tollite hostias, et adorate Dominum
in atrio sancto eius.

Laetentur coeli, et exultet terra
a facie Domini, quoniam venit. Alleluia.

Bring offerings, and adore the Lord
in his holy place.

Rejoice, heaven, and exult, all the earth,
before the Lord, for he comes. Alleluia.

16. Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

HELMSLEY, English, 18th c.

arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958), alt.

1. Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
Once for our salvation slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending
Swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia!
Christ the Lord returns to reign.

2. Ev'ry eye shall now behold him,
Robed in dreadful majesty;
Those who set at nought and sold him,
Pierced and nailed him to the tree,
Deeply wailing,
Shall the true Messiah see.

3. Those dear tokens of his passion
Still his dazzling body bears,
Cause of endless exultation
To his ransomed worshippers;
With what rapture,
Gaze we on those glorious scars!

4. Yea, amen! Let all adore thee,
High on thine eternal throne;
Savior, take the pow'r and glory;
Claim the kingdom for thine own:
Alleluia!
Thou shalt reign and thou alone.



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