Luke 2:6-20

6 So it was, that while they were there, the
days were completed for her to be delivered.
7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and
wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid
Him in a manger, because there was no room
for them in the inn.
8 Now there were in the same country
shepherds living out in the fields, keeping
watch over their flock by night.
9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood
before them, and the glory of the Lord shone
around them, and they were greatly afraid.
10 Then the angel said to them, “Do not be
afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of
great joy which will be to all people.
11 For there is born to you this day in the city
of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
12 And this will be the sign to you: You will
find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying
in a manger.”
13 And suddenly there was with the angel a
multitude of the heavenly host praising God
and saying:
14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth
peace, goodwill toward men!”
15 So it was, when the angels had gone away
from them into heaven, that the shepherds
said to one another, “Let us now go to
Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to
pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”
16 And they came with haste and found Mary
and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.
17 Now when they had seen Him, they made
widely known the saying which was told them
concerning this Child.
18 And all those who heard it marveled at
those things which were told them by the
shepherds.
19 But Mary kept all these things and
pondered them in her heart.
20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying
and praising God for all the things that they
had heard and seen, as it was told them.

Elizabeth's Song

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

**Advent**
by Christina Rossetti

This Advent moon shines cold and clear,
These Advent nights are long;
Our lamps have burned year after year,
And still their flame is strong.
"Watchman, what of the night?" we cry,
Heart-sick with hope deferred:
"No speaking signs are in the sky,"
Is still the watchman's word.

The Porter watches at the gate,
The servants watch within;
The watch is long betimes and late,
The prize is slow to win.
"Watchman, what of the night?" but still
His answer sounds the same:
"No daybreak tops the utmost hill,
Nor pale our lamps of flame."

One to another hear them speak,
The patient virgins wise:
"Surely He is not far to seek,"–
"All night we watch and rise."
"The days are evil looking back,
The coming days are dim;
Yet count we not His promise slack,
But watch and wait for Him."

One with another, soul with soul,
They kindle fire from fire:
"Friends watch us who have touched the goal."
"They urge us, come up higher."
"With them shall rest our waysore feet,
With them is built our home,
With Christ." "They sweet, but He most sweet,
Sweeter than honeycomb."

There no more parting, no more pain,
The distant ones brought near,
The lost so long are found again,
Long lost but longer dear:
Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
Nor heart conceived that rest,
With them our good things long deferred,
With Jesus Christ our Best.

We weep because the night is long,
We laugh, for day shall rise,
We sing a slow contented song
And knock at Paradise.
Weeping we hold Him fast Who wept
For us,–we hold Him fast;
And will not let Him go except
He bless us first or last.

Weeping we hold Him fast to-night;
We will not let Him go
Till daybreak smite our wearied sight,
And summer smite the snow:
Then figs shall bud, and dove with dove
Shall coo the livelong day;
Then He shall say, "Arise, My love,
My fair one, come away."

**Santa Lucia**

Night walks with a heavy step round yard and hearth,
As the sun departs from earth, shadows are brooding.
There in our dark house, walking with lit candles,
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia!

Night walks grand, yet silent, now hear its gentle wings,
In every room so hushed, whispering like wings.
Look, at our threshold stands, white-clad with light in her hair,
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia!

Darkness shall take flight soon, from earth's valleys.
So she speaks wonderful words to us:
A new day will rise again from the rosy sky
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia!

A Visit from St. Nicholas

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds;
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below,
When what to my wondering eyes did appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny rein-deer,
With a little old driver so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment he must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"
As leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;
So up to the housetop the coursers they flew
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too—

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a pedler just opening his pack.
His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly
That shook when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight—
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!"