

1 A Wenchoster Advent

Churches across the Shire
Raise now your voices clear!
Join the cathedral choir
In hymns of Advent cheer!
For 'tis the time of year we love
To greet our Saviour from above!

Wenchoster leads the way!
Shaston of Farthings old
Joins with the Downs so gay
To sing their anthems bold!
And bells in towers 'cross the land
Announce the Lord is now at hand!

Gusset and Posset folk,
From Drool to Overcamp,
Over to Badger's Poke,
Then down to Hoskin's Dump;
Each village voice, each hamlet choir
Will raise their spirits of desire!

(Tune: Little Cornard 66 66 88)

2 A Great Almighty Blunder

A great almighty blunder
Seen by a candle's flame.
The choir torn asunder,
The crucifer's to blame.
Let's start the mass again.
And get it right for certain,
Then we can all say 'Amen.'

When he approached the rood screen,
Rather than walking straight.
He took a sudden right turn,
Which made the choir irate.
Let's start the mass again...

The tenors sat in protest
The basses roared with ire.
The trebles simply whimpered,
One set his cotta on fire.
Let's start the mass again...

(Tune: German carol melody)

3 Hark! The Verger's Voice

Hark! The verger's voice is sounding:
"Close the door" he's heard to cry;
"There's a howling draught a-blowing,
Bringing tears to every eye."

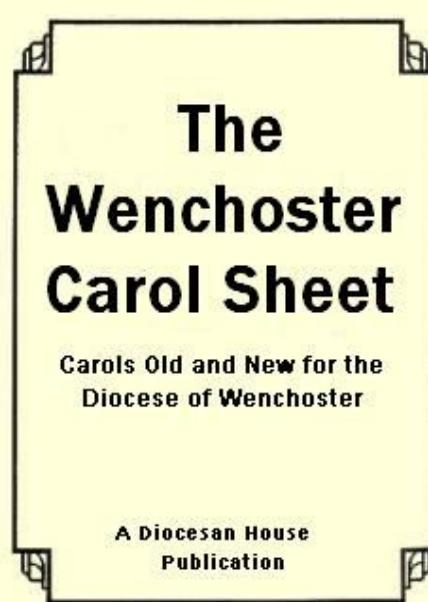
Startled by the solemn warning,
Sidesmen get up from their seat;
Close the door and pull the curtain,
Making sure it hangs quite neat.

But before the hymn is ended,
Comes a banging at the porch;
It's the ancient spinster sisters,

Who've arrived without a torch.
Every time they come to service,
Wrapped up warm in shawl and hat;
One of them is heard to comment,
That the other's singing flat.

Holy ritual, prayer and anthem,
Mark the days of Advent strife;
But the solemn feast is tempered,
By the sacred of real life.

(Tune: Merton 8.7.8.7.)



4 Away in the "Nine Bells"

Away in the "Nine Bells",
no room at the bar,
We sit in the "Snug" with
our pipes and a jar.
The logs in the fireplace
all crackle and hiss,
As we laze in the warmth and
give Compline a miss.

The Choirboys are singing
their carols so sweet,
Whilst outside the window,
snow falls in the street.
Our ancient cathedral is
glowing with light,
And shines like a beacon
through the depths of the night.

"Another, dear landlord!
Come fill up my cup,
With the nutty brown liquid
that I love to sup!"
A Wenchoster Christmas
is a time of good cheer,
If I get all my stuffing,
and a firkin of beer.

(Tune: Away in a manger)

5 Bishop holy

Bishop holy.
Deacon lowly,
Walking with the choir at night;
Candles glowing,
Trousers showing
'neath the albs all clean and white.
Bells all ringing,
Trebles singing,
Incense swinging,
Eyes all stinging,
This is Mass on Christmas night.
This is Mass on Christmas night.

Folks were sleeping,
Children weeping,
Thinking Santa wouldn't come;
Heard the jingle,
Of Kris Kringle,
And were then no longer glum.
In the morning,
Daylight dawning,
Priests still yawning,
Bells are warning,
There are carols still to hum.
There are carols still to hum.

(Tune: Traditional Polish Melody)

6 The Carol of the Feast

Tomorrow shall be my feasting day;
With slices of goose and a turkey fair
With trimmings, gravy and bread sauce,
And chipolatas if I dare.

(Refrain)

Sing, more! Yes please!
More, yes please, yes please!
I'll take some more, with carrots and peas

No sermons to write, no people to see;
No masses to celebrate, incense to swing,
Just food and gifts and ruby port wine,
Preceded possibly by some gin.

(Refrain)

I'll push back the chair at five minutes to three,
And slowly digest the plum pudding supreme;
I'll hold a glass of Calvados cheer,
And watch the message from the Queen.
(Refrain)

(Tune: Traditional English)

7 Father, awake

Father, awake, for now it's Christmas morn!

It is still dark outside, before the dawn.
Four hours since you came home to rest
your head;

One glass of ruby wine and then to bed.
Sleep after midnight mass was so divine,
Now you must rise and get to church on time.

Six-thirty mass, attended by just two;
Over in fifteen minutes - good for you!
Home then to sip some tea and meditate,
For it's expected that you preach at eight.
Sun has now risen, shining watery rays
On this most sacred of the winter's days.

Back to the church, and vestments on again,
For there's a choral Eucharist at ten.
Children galore, all full of Santa's smiles,
Waving new toys and playing in the aisles.
Parents attend, with weary, bloodshot eyes;
Thoughts turn to sherry, turkey and mince pies.

Home in your chair, a glass of gin is poured,
You can relax and quietly thank the Lord,
For all the given strength of heart and mind,
That has been needed for the Christmas grind.
But when all's said and done this day of days,
It's for the new born King that all must praise!

(Tune: Yorkshire, aka Stockport)

8 Good choristers rejoice

Good choristers rejoice
and sing your Christmas choice;
People sit down on the oak pews, pews,
wanting music without croak;
Four-part scores you love to bring,
unto Christ our Saviour King;
Sing you faithful folk!
Sing you faithful folk!

For tenor, bass combine
with higher voices fine;
Trebles, you may pick your art;
choose, choose;
some may sing the descant part;
Counter-tenors add your lilt,
and the harmony is built.
Lifting every heart!
Lifting every heart!

(Tune: In Dulci Jubilo)

9 God rest you merry, Sacristan

God rest you merry, Sacristan,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Mass is said at midnight,
And not on Christmas Day.
The Dean is at his mother's
And our Bishop is away:
So put out the candles and the lights,
Candles and lights,
So put out the candles and the lights.

In Wenchoster at Christmas
A festive spirit reigns,
And deep within the Nine Bells,
The smell of smoke remains,
For every year they burn a tree
Till only ash remains:
So put out the candles ...

From out the Bishop's office,
A Christmas message comes,
Proclaiming peace and latitude
To us and all his chums.
Whilst at our door the new Youth Band
Play carols on the drums:
So put out the candles ...

But do not fear, this merry tide
Doth last but a few days;
And soon we will be able to
Return to our old ways.
With wine and women, mirth and song,
And alcoholic haze;
So put out the candles ...

So whilst it's here, we'll play our part
And sing those merry tunes;
And play the silly party games,
And blow up those balloons;
And eat the turkey, ham and beef,
And breakfast on dried prunes;
So put out the candles ...

(Tune: God rest ye merry, Gentlemen)

10 Four more days

Four more days until it's over,
Only five engagements today.
Carol service in the church school,
Followed by a cup of Earl Grey.
Sick communions follow after,
Then it's off to church to pray.
Evermore and evermore.

Three more days until it's over,
Four more sermons to inspire,
One for "Carols with the Youth Group,"
One for Compline with the choir.
One for children with Christingle,
One for Midnight Mass acquire.
What a bore! Oh, what a bore!

Two more days until it's over,
Just my luck to catch a cold.
Christmas Fayre to host this morning,
Hoping that our wares are sold.
Carol service in the evening,
For the people who are old.
Then withdraw. Yes, then withdraw.

One more day until it's over,
Check the bread and check the wine.
Check the heating. Ah, a pipe's burst.
Hope we get it fixed on time.
All the services now are ready,
Altar steps two times to climb,
Furthermore, O furthermore.

Now my Christmas work is over,
And I lounge in comfortable chair.
Collar's loosened, glass is cradled,
Filled with fav'rite vin ordinaire.
Smell of goose floats from the table,
Roast potatoes, food to share.
Have some more, O have some more!

Tune: *Divinum mysterium*
87, 87, 87 with Refrain

11 In the church each winter

In the church each winter,
Doors are opened wide.
Holly, flowers and ivy,
Decorate inside.
Choirs have long since practiced
Carols French and old.
Candles beckon strangers in
From the cold.

"Welcome all, it's Christmas,
Come and spend a while,
Listening to the music,
Telling of a child,
Born this day in Jewry,
Come to cast out fear.
No, the story hasn't changed
Since last year."

Come they, in their dozens,
Wrapped in fashions rare.
Masked by mints and perfume,
Their post-dinner stare.
Fumbling with the Prayer Book,
"Do we sit or kneel?"
Yet they come each year
So worship can appeal.

(Tune: Cranham. IRREGULAR)

12 I saw three priests

I saw three priests come walking in,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
I saw three priests come walking in,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And who was with those priests all three?
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And who was with those priests all three?
On Christmas Day in the morning.

The servers and the choir were there,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
The servers and the choir were there,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Pray, where then was the Bishop fine?
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Pray, where then was the Bishop fine?
On Christmas Day in the morning.

O, he had gone to southern France,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
O, he had gone to southern France,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Then ring the bells in merry glee,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Then ring the bells in merry glee,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And let the incense rise up high,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And let the incense rise up high,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And let the choir sing "Gloria!"
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And let the choir sing "Gloria!"
On Christmas Day in the morning.

(Tune: Traditional English Melody)

13 See amid the rural snow

See amid the rural snow,
Hands are frozen, cheeks aglow,
Tramping in from off the land,
Comes the merry carol band.

*Every year you sing the same,
Every year there's one who's lame,
As you move from place to place,
Murdering the Christmas grace.*

Lo, within the Nine Bells bar,
Each can find a foaming jar,
Filled with ale all gleaming bright,
Bringing cheer to this cold night.
Every year you sing the same,...

Say, ye wandering minstrels, say,
Will ye sing in tune today?
Or will one voice sound quite flat,
Like a cornered screeching cat?
Every year you sing the same,...

As we listen in the night,
Lo, we get a nasty fright;
Voices screech down every lane,
Sounding like a dog in pain.
Every year you sing the same,...

In our homes, beside the fire,
Still we hear this awful choir;
Lights go out, we sit secure,
As the knock comes on our door.
Every year you sing the same,...

"ark the 'erald angels sing"
Has a quite distinctive ring.
Every Christmas we all pray
For the peace of Boxing Day.
Every year you sing the same,...

(Tune: Humility. John Goss)

14 Silent night

Silent night, holy night,
In the bar all is bright,
Tinsel dangles from every pump,
Blow-up Santa makes regulars jump!
And we party 'til dawn.
And we party 'til dawn.

Silent night, holy night,
Locals beam at the sight,
Hot mulled wine is in every glass,
Have too many, you fall on your arse,
And we party 'til dawn.
And we party 'til dawn.

Silent night, holy night,
With the hour, comes the light,
Have a "snowball", it's really quite nice,
Eggs and lemon, but hold on the ice,
And we party 'til dawn.
And we party 'til dawn.

(Tune: Stille Nacht. Franz Gruber)

15 The Cotta Carol

Put the cottas on the servers,
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.
Check their cassocks, don't be nervous.
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.
Trim their wicks once you are vested.
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.
Yet no more – you'll get arrested.
Fa, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.

(Tune: Deck the Halls. Traditional)

16 The Cottaging Carol

He we come a-cottaging
Along the country lanes.
We bang on doors and sip your wine,
And fall into the drains!

CHORUS:
*Raise a glass, one or two,
And to you your cottage too!
May your Christmas be merry,
And may your head be clear!
May your Christmas be merry with cheer!*

First we run to number three,
There's rumour of a still;
We shake some hands and sit awhile,
'Cause John looks rather ill. (Chorus)

Next we find the spinsters who
Keep house beside the stream.
We use the loo, a gin or two,
Or Harvey's Bristol Cream. (Chorus)

Down the hill we saunter
To the Rectory so dark.
We knock and yell, and ring the bell,
But Father's in the park! (Chorus)

Up the High Street, past the church
Where useful trees abound.
We water sod with thanks to God,
For this is holy ground. (Chorus)

(Tune: The Wassail Song)

17 The Server and the Boat boy

The server and the boat boy
To choose between the twain,
Of all the boys that we ever saw,
The boat boy has the grains.
*O, the sweetness of the incense,
Be it Prinknash or Dumont;
The smoke will swirl on Christmas Eve
From altar to the font.*

The thurifer's behind him,
With hand on shoulder slight,
To guide him towards the Rector
Who waits to start the rite!
O, the sweetness ...

(Tune: Holly and the Ivy Traditional)

18 Rejoice and be merry

Rejoice and be merry
in choir and in nave,
For this is the season
to spend, not to save!
And so to the markets
and stores we shall run,
To spend all our wages
until we are done.



We sing about angels
who told of a birth
To shepherds relaxing
with wine and with mirth,

And we shall sing
of that glorious day,
And echo the chorus
with a hearty "Wa-hay!"

The cloisters are lit
with a flickering flame,
The chancel and chantry
are likewise the same,
And over the scent
of the beeswax so nice,
Arises the glories of
wine mixed with spice.

Nine lessons and Carols
are heard through the land,
And after, refreshments
are placed in the hand,
A pie made with fruits
in a mixture so sweet,
All served on a napkin
that keeps it quite neat.

Good wishes are given
to each at the door,
Though few of the people
will come any more;
Behind in the pews
are left leaflets and crumbs,
And home goes the vicar
who merrily hums.

(*To the tune of "Rejoice and be merry"*)

19 What choir is this

What choir is this that sings so sweet
Along the city's roads so dim?
Who light the way with candles bright,
Chanting the Yuletide hymn.
These, these are all the boys,
Who put away their childish toys:
Wearing their robes so gay,
They sing the Christmas story.

Why leave your beds so warm and snug,
To tread the cold and darkened street?
In cassock red and whitened ruff,
And buckles on your feet.
Morning Prayer and Evensong,
Are sung each day the whole year long;
This night makes quite a change,
They sing the Christmas story.

So bring them wine that's spiced and
hot,
And mincemeat pies in shortened crust,
And place a coin into the tin,
To show you're worthy of trust.
They'll sing the song on high,
A four-part choral lullaby;
In perfect harmony,
They sing the Christmas story.

(*Tune: Greensleeves. 16th C.*)

20 Carol of the Gifts

Come, thou long expected presents!
On your shelves for me to see!
Santa's here, it's time for shopping,
Please reveal yourself to me.

Christmas? No - such sentimental
Thoughts of seasons must decease.
This is now a time for selling,
So our profits can increase.

Tie it in with things like Kwanza,
Hannakah, all things with lights.
Snowmen, tinsel, ice-clad grottoes
Must become the High Street sights.

Sound our music, worship snowbells,
Let the children dance and play.
Let's forget the Church's season,
In our retail holiday!

(*Tune: Cross of Jesus, John Stainer*)



21 Lo, he comes

Lo, he comes, the steps descending,
From the ancient western door;
Four young boys in white attending,
Sway along the flagstone floor:
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
Father's here, our spirits soar.

Every eye is turned upon him
To admire his jovial face;
Those who sold the ancient vestments,
See these new clothes in their place,
Whippal's finest, Whippal's finest,
Whippal's finest,
Rich brocade and lots of lace!

Clouds of incense drift around the altar,
Candles burn before the shrine,
Holy words are sung from Parish
Psalter,
Whilst he takes the bread and wine.
Blessing everybody, blessing everybody,
blessing everybody!
As the Bishop makes the sign!

Yea, Amen, the Mass is ended,
Go in peace, the final phrase is sweet.
Hymns and prayers have all ascended,
Vergers turn off all the heat.
Nine bells now are sounding; Nine bells
now are sounding; Nine bells now are
sounding;
Head for the bar in Privy Street.

(*Tune: Helmsley 8.7.8.7.8.7*)

22 Astray with a stranger

Astray with a stranger,
poor Father's adrift,
He took a girl's word
when she offered a lift.
The service was over,
the car broken down,
And he needed to get
to the centre of town.

"Dear Father," she proffered,
and gave a look rare,
"I can help you to get there,
if you have a care.
"Just sit in my Mini
and we'll drive away.

What? Stop on the wayside?
Whatever you say."

"O Father!" She halted,
beside the great tree,
"I had no means of knowing
that you had to pee.
"Let's go, if it means that
I get off my ass,
"As a good catholic girl
I'll get you to your mass."

(*Tune: Cradle Song*)

23 Whose ale is this?

Whose ale is this upon the bar
Overflowing my pewter jar?
I saw it foaming from afar
As I came in from the cold.
This, this is my own jug
That hangs securely in the Snug.
My lips alone can glug
Out of this vessel old.

Who took it down and filled it up
So they could have a crafty sup?
That metal tankard is my cup
And has been many a year.
All the usual bar staff know
Come rain or hail, wind or snow,
No one else may have a go
And drink from my pot their beer.

So now I wait to see who comes
To take my cup between their thumbs,
And fore they raise it to their gums
I'll wish them a Merry old Yule.
Be they peasant, king or priest,
Or if they've travelled from the East,
They'll know that at the least
They cannot take me for a fool.

(*Tune: Greensleeves. 16th C.*)

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