

The Annunciation

God

Since I have made all thing of nought 1.1
And Adam with my hands I wrought.
Like to mine image at my devising,
To give them joy in Paradise
To dwell therein as I had planned -
Until they did what I forbade.
Then I put them out of that place.
But yet, I mind, I promised them grace;

Now they have felt their sin full sore 1.11
These five thousand years and more
First on earth, and then in hell:
But long therein shall they not dwell.
Out of pain they shall be brought,
I will not lose what I have wrought.
I will make redemption! 1.17

Righteousness will we make: 1.29
I will that my Son manhood take.
My prophets words are true and loyal
As they have said, it shall befall.

My Son shall in a maiden light, 1.35
Agains' the fiend of hell to fight.
Withouten spot as sun through glass
And she a maiden as she was.
Both God and man shall He be
And she, mother and maiden free.

Rise up, Gabriel, and wend 1.53
[Gabriel approaches]
Unto a maiden that is kind
To Nazareth in Galilee
There she dwells in that city.
To that virgin and to that spouse
To a man of David's house.

Joseph, the man is named by. 1.59
And the maiden named Mary.
On my behalf thou shall her greet
I have her chosen, that maiden sweet,
She shall conceive my darling
Through thy word and her hearing.

She shall of her body clean 1.73
Bear God and man withouten pain.
She shall be blessed withouten end
Prepare thee, Gabriel, and wend!
[Here Gabriel goes to Mary]

Gabriel

Hail Mary gracious 1.77
Hail, maiden and Godes spouse
Onto thee I bow.
Of all virgins thou art queen
That ever was - or shall be - seen,
Withouten doubt.

Hail, Mary, and well thou be; 1.83
My Lord of Heaven is with thee
Withouten end.
Hail, full of grace of God indeed.
Goodly lady, have thou no dread
That I commend.

This is the grace that thee betides: 1.92
Thou shall conceive within thy sides
A child of power.
When he is cornen, this thy son
He shall take circumcision.
Call him Jesus.

Mightful man shall he be indeed 1.98
God's true son he shall be called,
A throne to sit.
He shall be king of David's line;
His kingdom never shall decline
Lady, well thou wit.

Mary

What is thy name? 1.107

Gabriel

Gabriel, Godes strength and his angel 1.108
That comes to thee.

Mary

Wondrous greeting thou me greets 1.110
Of a child to bear thou me speaks -
How should this be?

I came never by man's side 1.113
But have avowed my maidenhood
From fleshly fate.
Therefore I know not how
This may be broken; it is a vow
That I have made.

Nevertheless, well I see 1.119
To work this work as thou has said
God full able is.
But I know not how, of what manner;
Therefore I pray thee, messenger,
That thou me guide and tell.

Gabriel

Lady, this is the mystery: 1.125
The Holy Ghost shall light in thee
God's word to fulfil -
His virtue shall thee overshadow
That thy maidenhood shall never fade
But be ever new.

The child that thou shall bear, madam, 1.131
Shall God's Son be called by name,
And see, Mary,
Elizabeth - thy cousin, who is barren called
She has conceived a son in elde
Of Zachary. *[Elizabeth appears in a vision]*

And this is - now have knowing - 1.137
The sixth month of her conceiving
That barren was called.
No word, lady, that I thee bring
Is impossible to heaven's King
But all shall hold.

Mary

I love my God almighty 1.143
I am his servant here at hand
And at his call.
I believe the promise thou me bring
Be done to me in all thing
As thou has told!

Gabriel

Mary, maiden kind 1.149
My way to God I wend
My leave of thee I take.

Mary

Go to my friend 1.152
Who did thee send
For mankind's sake.

[Gabriel and then Mary withdraw to singing]

[Joseph enters]

Joseph

Almighty God, what may this be! 1.155
Of Mary my wife I marvel me; 1.156
Alas, what has she wrought? 1.157
Ah, her belly is great and she with child! 1.158
By me was she never defiled, 1.159
Therefore mine is it nought. 1.160

Full of sorrow is my life,	1.161
That ever I wed so young a wife:	1.162
That bargain was a bane.	1.163
To me this deed was full of care,	1.164
I might well wot a young girl fair	1.165
would have liking of man.	1.166
I am old, soothly to say,	1.167
Past I am all pleasant play,	1.168
The games from me are gone.	1.169
We are ill coupled, young and old:	1.170
For I could not with her make bold	1.171
some other has she ta'en.	1.172
She is with child, I know never how;	1.173
Now, who would any woman trow	1.174
For wicked ways so wild?	1.175
I wot not in the world, what I should do;	1.176
But now then will I wend her to,	1.177
And learn whose is that child.	1.178
Hail, Mary, and well ye be!	1.179
But why, woman, what cheer with thee?	1.180

Mary

The better, sir, for you.	1.181
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Joseph

So would, I, woman, that ye were;	1.182
But certain, Mary, I rue full sore	1.183
How stand things with thee now.	1.184
And of a thing chide thee I shall:	1.185
Whose is this child, thou go'st withal?	1.186

Mary

Sir, yours, and God's in Heaven.	1.187
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Joseph

Mine, Mary? do way thy din;	1.188
That I should have a part therin	1.189
Thou needs it not to feign.	1.190
Why falsehoods spin'st thou me thereto?	1.191
I had never with thee to do:	1.192
How should it then be mine?	1.193
Whose is that child, so God thee speed?	1.194

Mary

Sir, God's and yours, withouten dread.	1.195
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Joseph

Be still those words of thine,	1.196
For it is nought with me to do.	1.197
And I repent me thou has done so	1.198
These ill deeds I ween.	1.199
And if thou thought thyself to kill,	1.200
It were full sore against my will,	1.201
But better might have been.	1.202

Mary

At God's will, Joseph, must it be,	1.203
For certainly, but God and ye	1.204
I know no other man;	1.205
My flesh has never been defiled.	1.206

Joseph

How should thou thus then be with child?	1.207
Excuse thee well thou can.	1.208
I blame thee not, so God me save,	1.209
Woman's weakness if that thou have;	1.210
But certes I say thee this:	1.211
Well wot thou, and so do I,	1.212
Thy body shames thee openly,	1.213
That thou hast done amiss.	1.214

Mary

I tell you, God knows all my doing.	1.215
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Joseph

Wey! Now, this is a wonder thing:	1.216
I can nought say thereto.	1.217
But my heart does ache full sore,	1.218
And aye the longer more and more,	1.219
For dole what shall I do?	1.220
God's and mine she says it is -	1.221
I will not father it, she speaks amiss.	1.222
It were shame if I should her let,	1.223
To hide her villainy by me.	1.224
With her I can no longer be;	1.225
I rue that ever we met.	1.226
I left her in good peace thought I;	1.275
Into the country I went on high,	1.276
To work with might and main.	1.277
To get our living I must need;	1.278
Of Mary I prayed our friends take heed,	1.279
Till that I came again.	1.280
Nine months was I from Mary mild;	1.281
When I came home she was with child,	1.282
Alas, I said, for shame!	1.283
I asked her women who that had done,	1.284
And they me said an angel came,	1.285
Since that I went from home.	1.286
An angel spake with that wight,	1.287
And no man else, by day nor night,	1.288
“Sir, thereof be ye bold.”	1.289
They excused her thus soothly,	1.290
To make her clean of her folly,	1.291
Mocked like a baby, me that was old.	1.292
Should an angel this deed have wrought?	1.293
Such excuses help nought,	1.294
Nor no cunning that they can.	1.295
A heavenly thing, forsooth, is he,	1.296
And she is earthly; this may not be,	1.297
It is some other man.	1.298

Yet soothly, if it so befall, 1.314
God's son that she be withal, 1.315
If such grace might betide, 1.316
I wot well that I am not he, 1.317
Which that is worthy to be 1.318
That blessed body beside, 1.319
Nor yet be in her company. 1.320

To wilderness I will forth hie 1.321
Alone my fate deplore, 1.322
And never longer with her deal, 1.323
But softly shall I from her steal, 1.324
That meet shall we no more. 1.325

[An Angel appears]

Angel

Go way Joseph, and mend thy thought, 1.326
I warn thee well, so wend thou not, 1.327
To wilderness so wild. 1.328
Turn home to thy spouse again, 1.329
Look thou see in her no shame, 1.330
She never was defiled. 1.331

Wot thou no wicked work here was, 1.332
She has conceived by holy ghost, 1.333
And she shall bear God's son. 1.334
Therefore with her, in thy degree, 1.335
Meek and obedient look thou be, 1.336
And with her make your home. 1.337

Joseph

Ah, Lord, I love thee all alone, 1.338
That vouchsafest I be the one 1.339
To tend that child so young. 1.340
I, that thus have ingrately done, 1.341
And foul falsehood cast upon 1.342
Mary, that dear darling. 1.343

I rue full sore what I have said,	1.344
To of her birthing her upbraid,	1.345
When she not guilty is.	1.346
Forthwith to her now will I wend,	1.347
And pray her for to be my friend,	1.348
And ask of her forgiveness.	1.349
Ah, Mary, wife, what cheer?	1.350

Mary

The better, sir, that ye are here;	1.351
Thus long where have ye went?	1.352

Joseph

Certes, walked about, all wobegone,	1.353
And wrongfully did thee bemoan;	1.354
I wist never what I meant;	1.355
But I wot well, my love so free,	1.356
I have trespassed to God and thee;	1.357
Forgive me, I thee pray.	1.358

Mary

Now all that ever ye said me to,	1.359
God forgive you, and I do,	1.360
With all the might I may.	1.361

Joseph

Gramercy, Mary, thy goodwill	1.362
Forgives so kindly all I said ill,	1.363
When I did thee upbraid.	1.364
But happy who has such a child,	1.365
Ah, gentle wife, he needs not gold,	1.366
But may hold him well paid.	1.367
Ah, I am light as leaf on wind!	1.368
He that may both loose and bind,	1.369
And every ill amend,	1.370
Give me grace, power, and might,	1.371
My wife and her sweet young wight	1.372
To keep, to my life's end.	1.373