

# Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming



The celebrations of Advent and Christmas are about expecting the unexpected, every moment pregnant with possibility in God's wonder and grace. Christmas Eve, the night of wonder when the everyday world is cloaked in mystery gives us the symbol of the rose for Christ. The Christmas rose, according to legend, sprung from the frozen soil of Bethlehem in the midnight hush that attended the Nativity. Especially in Germany, the place of origin of this lovely hymn, the rose is an emblem of Christ. Legend has it that a shepherd woman, too poor to give a gift to the Christ child, was visited by an angel who caused an herb to appear and burst into bloom—the Christmas Rose. The woman then offered the rose to the infant Jesus. The legend is also echoed in the carol, 'Behold a Branch is Growing.'

In recent times, the children's book, The Donkey's Dream, by Barbara Helen Berger, imagines the dreams of the donkey that carried Mary and her unborn child to Bethlehem. The donkey dreams "he is carrying a rose, soft as a mother's touch and sweet as the sleep of a baby." The donkey of Christmas also reminds us of Christ's bittersweet ride into Jerusalem at the end of his life as he approached his cross.

Like the shoot that "springs from Jesse's race and bears one little flow'r in the midst of coldest winter, at deepest midnight hour," Christmas asks us to remember to expect the unexpected. God is a God of surprises and the birth of Jesus was the most wonderful surprise of all to those who were present and all of those who have come since and found beauty and hope in the miracle of Bethlehem.

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