

Silent Night

I was raised in a Christian home,
but not in the same way my high school sweetheart was.
When he spoke of Armageddon,
my eyes widened with disbelief.
How could this be Christianity?
When he tuned in to Rush Limbaugh's voice
I began to question our forever.

Face of Love

At twelve, I had asked my parents to take me to church;
I wanted to be baptized, to belong somewhere.
But the church spoke harsh judgment
against people I loved.
Despite this, I still loved to sing
the church hymns—prayers in the air.
That was the truth I held on to.

O Holy Night

When one of my best friends
barely out of high school
died from an overdose of heroin
I had nightmares that the Westboro Baptist Church
would protest at his grave.

I Wonder as I Wander

I grew up into adulthood with only a child's Bible
until now—
as I read the Catholic Bible
my eyes again widen with disbelief.

I fear it brings me no comfort
knowing the old stories.

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Once they found out my father
was a Jack Mormon, the missionaries
kept coming back to our house
their countenances cheery with determination.
They sat us down one evening
and when I told them I wasn't sure if I believed in God—
Him or Her—
their eyes widened
as if I'd dropped the holy book on their foot.

Joy to the World

Around Christmastime, I loved to sing songs
sweet like holiday dessert
especially Jewel's Christmas album
her voice ringing arias.
I loved the quiet moments baking together with mom,
the glow of Christmas lights,
retelling family stories
and making small presents by hand for loved ones.

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Each Christmas, I took pride in
the task my mom assigned: arranging
the small porcelain nativity scene
set to face the Christmas tree and door—
the barn animals and visitors

watching over all.

Go Tell It on the Mountain

Then Santa would come.

I, too, have one of those awkward Santa photos—
my tiny eyes widen as the jolly man holds me,
his white beard a strange cloud.

He would visit three times during December:

first at the mall, then at Grandma's house
where Mexican Santa, who looked an awful lot like
my uncle Chrissy, would hand out presents
to all the little cousins.

Finally, on Christmas Eve

he'd come to our house,
eat the left out cookies and milk
and leave behind crumbs and magic.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

My husband thinks Santa is an unfair
lie to tell children—
how can you explain
why some kids get more or less
no matter how good they've been?

Winter Wonderland

I hope we teach our children
that the greatest gifts
to receive or give
are any acts of love.

Ave Maria

The lamb, ox, donkey, camels,
wise men, angel on the roof
surround the babe and family;
joy glazes their tired eyes
as though the world could be remade.

