

Decus morum, dux minorum

Hymn for the feast of St Francis. Perugia, Biblioteca Comunale Augusta, MS 431 (G 20), fols 150v–151. Edition by Leah Stuttard.

The words are the Lauds hymn from the rhymed Office of St Francis written by Julian of Speyer in the 1230s, only a few years after Francis died. The Perugia manuscript gives a polyphonic setting; in our edition the polyphony (verses 1, 3 and 8) alternates with plainchant sung by the tenors (verses 2 and 6), with organ interludes between. The verses are shown here in the order we sing them. The hymn plays on Francis's 'prize' (bravium, the athlete's crown of 1 Corinthians 9), on the Vine of John 15, and on the stigmata as the 'sign of the King'.

English translation

Latin (as sung)

Verse 1 (polyphony)

Glory of virtues, leader of the Friars Minor,
Francis, who holds the prize,
is given over to life in you, the Vine,
O Christ, Redeemer of all.

*Decus morum, dux minorum,
Franciscus tenens bravium,
In te, vite, datur vitae,
Christe Redemptor omnium.*

Verse 2 (plainchant)

Let the brother clap his hands: the Father reigns,
a fellow citizen with the citizens of heaven.
Let weeping cease, let the company sing,
let heaven exult with praises.

*Plaudat frater, regnat Pater
Concivis celi civibus:
Cedat fletus, psallat cetus,
Exsultet celum laudibus.*

Verse 3 (polyphony)

Taken from the earth, given to heaven:
the working of miracles proves it.
Therefore he lives, for he has entered upon
the eternal gifts of Christ.

*Demptum solo, datum polo,
Signorum probant opera,
Ergo vivit, nam adivit
Eterna Christi munera.*

Verse 6 (plainchant)

The King's sign marks the worthy leader
in his hands and in his side:
light draws near, night retreats,
now that the day-star has risen.

*Regis signum ducem dignum
Insignit manu, latere:
Lux accedit, nox recedit,
Jam lucis orto sidere.*

Verse 8 (polyphony)

Drive your flock, O leader, to the King;
crusher of the cunning enemy,
lead us and bring us in
to the supper of the provident Lamb.

*Mina gregem, dux ad Regem,
Collisor hostis callidi,
Nos conducas et inducas
Ad cenam Agni providi.*