

Venite a laudare

Laudario di Cortona (Cortona, Biblioteca Comunale, MS 91), fols 1–3v. SATB arrangement of the refrain by Leah Stuttard.

The very first lauda in the Cortona manuscript, and an invitation to sing: 'Come and praise.' Each stanza is linked to the next by a chain, the last word of one stanza becoming the first word of the next (laudata / preghiam; cortesia / Cortese; villania / Villani, and so on), a device the troubadours called coblas capfinidas. The refrain returns after every stanza. Our score sets the refrain in four parts with the first stanza as a solo line; the whole poem is given here.

English translation

Italian (as sung)

Ripresa (refrain)

Come and praise,
sing for love
of the loving Virgin Mary!

*Venite a laudare,
per amore cantare
l'amorosa Vergene Maria!*

Stanza 1 (in our score)

Glorious Mary, blessed,
may you always be greatly praised:
we pray that you will plead for us
with your son, gentle virgin!

*Marìa gloriosa, biata,
sempre sia molto laudata:
preghiam ke ne si' avvocata
al tuo filioli, virgo pia!*

Stanza 2

Merciful sovereign queen,
comfort the mind that is empty;
great medicine that heals,
help us, of your courtesy.

*Pietosa regina sovrana,
conforta la mente ch'è vana,
grande medicina ke sana,
aiutane per tua cortisia.*

Stanza 3

Courteous one, who gives great gifts,
let your love not abandon us:
we pray you to forgive us
all our baseness.

*Cortese, ke fai grandi doni,
l'amor tuo non ci abbandoni:
pregante che tu ne perdoni
tutta la nostra villania.*

Stanza 4

Base sinners we have been,
loving the flesh and our sins;
we see that the world has deceived us:
let your great power defend us.

*Villani peccatori semo stati
amando la carne e li peccati;
vidén ke n'à 'l mondo engannati:
defendane la tua gran bailia.*

Stanza 5

Give us the power and the strength,
O mother, to do penance:
we wish to give you our obedience
and to live under your rule.

*Bailia ne dona e potentia,
o madre, de far penitentia:
volemo a te fare obedientia
e stare a la tua signoria.*

Stanza 6

A rule that sets the heart free
is yours, mother of love!
If the sinner only knew it,
he would come back to you, lady!

*Signoria k'afanchi lo core
è la tua, madre d'amore!
Se 'l sapesse lo peccatore
a te, donna, retornaria!*

English translation

Italian (as sung)

Stanza 7

Let man come back and trust in you,
with great hope
that you will grant him more forgiveness
than he would know how to ask.

*Retorni a tua gran fidaŋça
l'omo, cum grande sperança
ke tu li farai perdonança
più k'adomandar non saperia.*

Stanza 8

If Christian people,
who are ungrateful and base,
knew how to drink from you, sweet fountain,
they would thirst all the more to love you.

*Sapesse la gente cristiana,
k'è sconoscente e villana,
gustar da te, dolçe fontana,
d'amarte più gran sete avarea.*

Stanza 9

We hold you as our riches,
we want you, sovereign beauty:
whoever does not feel your sweetness,
too wretched is his life.

*Avénte per nostra richeça,
volénte, sovrana belleça:
ki tua non sente dolceça,
tropp'è la sua vita ria.*

Stanza 10

Wretched is the life of sinners
who do not think in their hearts:
they are shut out from such joy
as no tongue could describe.

*Ria vita dei peccatori
che non pensano nelli lor cori:
de tanto gaudio son fuori
ke lingua contar nol porrea.*

Stanza 11

They could have you as their beloved
and feel every delight,
those who bore you true allegiance
in their heart, as they should.

*Potrebber' aver per amança
e tutta sentir delectança
chi ben ti portasse liança
nel cuor, sì come dovrea.*

Stanza 12

Everyone ought to refuse,
for your sake, to love the whole world,
and praise you, sweet mother,
together with the sweetest son there is.

*Dovrebbe ciascun rifrutare,
per te, tutto 'l mondo d'amare,
a te, dolçe madre, laudare
col più dolçe filioli che sia.*

Stanza 13

May it please you, glorious one,
for whoever sings your loving lauda,
to make his mind eager
so that he praises you well, night and day.

*Siate a piacere, gloriosa,
ki canta tua lauda amorosa
de farli la mente studiosa
ke läudi ben, nocte e dia.*

Stanza 14

Shining morning star,
joy of all people,
the whole world is lost
without your strength.

*Diana stella lucente,
letitia de tutta la gente,
tutto 'l mondo è perdente
sença la tua vigoria.*

English translation**Italian (as sung)**

Stanza 15

Strong, powerful, blessed one,
for you this lauda is sung:
you are our advocate,
the most faithful there ever was.

*Vigorosa potente beata,
per te è questa laude cantata:
tu se' la nostra avvocata,
la più fedel ke mai sia.*