

Chi vuol lo mondo disprezare

Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Magliabechiano II.I.122 (Banco Rari 18), fols 134v–135v. SATB arrangement of the refrain by Leah Stuttard.

A lauda on the universality of death, from the great Florentine laudario known as Banco Rari 18, copied in the early fourteenth century. The same text also appears in the Cortona manuscript. It belongs to the 'memento mori' strand of Franciscan preaching: Francis himself called death 'Sister Death' in the Canticle of the Creatures. The refrain returns after every stanza; our score sets the refrain in four parts and the stanzas can be sung to the manuscript's melody. Two lines of stanza 5 are lost where the page was trimmed; the words in square brackets are supplied from another manuscript of the same lauda.

English translation

Italian (as sung)

Ripresa (refrain)

Whoever wishes to despise the world
must always keep death in mind.

*Chi vuol lo mondo disprezare
sempre la morte de' pensare.*

Stanza 1

Death is fierce and hard and strong;
it breaks down walls and passes through gates;
it is so common a fate
that no one can escape it.

*La morte è fiera et dura e forte,
rompe mura e passa porte;
ell'è sì comune sorte
che verun ne può campare.*

Stanza 2

All people, in great trembling,
live always in fear,
because they are certain
to cross this sea.

*Tutta gente in gran tremore
vive sempre con timore,
in perciò che son sicure
di passar per questo mare.*

Stanza 3

Pope and emperor,
cardinals and great lords,
the just and the holy and sinners:
death makes them all equal.

*Papa co imperadore,
cardinali et gran signori,
giusti et sancti et peccatori
fa la morte raguagliare.*

Stanza 4

Death comes like a thief,
strips a man like a robber;
the well-fed and fresh-faced it makes fast
and changes their very skin.

*La morte viene come furone,
spoglia l'uomo come ladrone,
satolli et freschi fa digiuni
et la pelle rimutare.*

Stanza 5

[It accepts no gifts,
riches] it counts as nothing;
it wants neither friends nor kin
when it comes to the parting.

*[Non riceve donamenti,
le ricchezze] à per neente;
amici non vuole nè parenti
quando viene al seperare.*

Stanza 6

Against it no strength avails,
nor wisdom nor beauty:
towers and palaces and greatness,
it makes us abandon them all.

*Contra lei non vale forteça,
sapientia nè belleça:
torri et palagi et grandeça
tutte le fa abandonare.*

English translation**Italian (as sung)**

Stanza 7

To you, Lord, be commended
the soul that has passed over,
and may the blessed Virgin
present it before you.

*A te, signore, sia raccomandata
l'anima ch'è trapassata,
e la vergine beata
a te la deggia rapresentare.*