



In Honor of the Holy Cross | In honorem sanctae crucis

Text Information

Author | Rabanus Maurus

Language | Latin

Period | 9th Century

Genre | Devotional poetry

Source | Vatican BAV Reg. Lat. 124 f.35v

Collection | Prayer, Spirituality, and Life after Death: Global Medieval Perspectives

URL | sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/honor-holy-cross/

Translation by May Peterson.

Introduction to the Text

This text is one of a series of figure poems by Rabanus Maurus (c.780-856 CE), a Benedictine monk and prolific writer who rose to become archbishop of Mainz (in what is now western Germany). The speaker in the poem is a Christian kneeling before the cross, praying to the crucified Christ, and this is mirrored by the shape of the poem on the page of the manuscript: words surrounding - and forming - the shape of a cross.

Introduction to the Source

The manuscript source is Vatican. Reg. Lat. 124. f.35v and is available to view [here](#). All images of the text displayed on this site are copyright Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



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Omnipotens virtus, majestas alta, Sabaoth
 Excelsus Dominus, virtutum summe creator,
 Formator mundi: hominum tu vere Redemptor.
 Tu mea laus, virtus, tu gloria cuncta, salusque,
 Tu rex, tu doctor, tu es rector, care magister,
 Tu pastor pascens, protector verus ovilis.
 Portio tuque mea, sancte salvator et auctor,
 Dux, via, lux, vita, merces bona, janua regni es,
 Vox, sensus, verbum, virtutum laeta propago.
 Ad te direxi, et cumulans nunc dirigo verba:
 Mens mea te loquitur, mentis intentio tota,
 Quicquid lingua, manus orat et bucca beate
 Cor humile, et vita justa, sacrata voluntas.
 Omnia te laudant et cantant, Christe serene.
 Namque ego te Dominum pronus et laetus adoro, 15
 Atque cruci demisse tuae hinc dico salutans:
 Spem oro te ramus aram ara sumar, et oro hinc.
 Hoc meus est ardor clarus, hoc ignis amoris,
 Hoc mea mens poscit primum, hoc famen et ora,
 Hoc sitis est animi, mandendi magna cupido: 20
 Ut me tu pie suscipias, bone Christe, per aram
 Oblatum famulum, quod victima sim tua, Hiesus.
 Hostia quod tua sim: memet crucifixio totum
 Jam tua consumat; et passio mitiget aestum
 Carnalem, vitia confringat, deprimat iram,
 Refrenet linguam, pietatis verba reponat.
 Mentem pacificet: vitam deducat honestam.
 Namque tuus quando toto fulgescet Olympo
 Igneus adventus, torrebit et ardor iniquos,
 Tempestas stridet, cornu iam mugit et orbe
 Ante apparebit quando crucis aere signum:
 Tum rogo me eripiat flammis ultricibus ipsa:
 Atque poetam agni proprium defendat ab ira,
 Cui cano: iure canam Hrabanus versibus ore,
 Corde, manu, semper donum memorabile cantu: 35

All powerful strength, high majesty, heavenly host,
 Exalted Lord, greatest creator of angels,
 fashioner of the world: you truly are redeemer of men.
 You are my praise, my virtue, you are all glory and salvation,
 5 You are king, you are teacher, you are leader and dear master,
 You are our feeding shepherd, true protector of your sheepfold.
 You are my earnings, my sacred savior and founder (auctor),
 You are Lord, way, light, life, valuable reward, door to the kingdom;
 Voice, perception, word, joyful offspring of heaven.
 10 To you have I directed and now do I direct my words, piling them up:
 My mind speaks you, the whole extent of my mind,
 Whatever tongue, hand, and mouth happily pray,
 Humble heart, just life, and sacred will,
 All praise and sing you, fair Christ.
 For I worship you, Lord, prone and happy,
 and this I say meekly to your cross in greeting:
 I pray to you, hope, branch and altar, that I may be taken to the altar,
 and I pray for this.
 This is my bright/loud, ardor, this is the fire of my love,
 This my mind asks first, this utterance and speech,
 This is my mind's thirst, the great appetite for a bite:
 So that you might piously receive me, noble Christ,
 a servant offered on your altar, that I may be your sacrifice, Jesus.
 So that I may be your victim: your crucifixion
 25 Now consumes me whole, and your passion soothes
 Worldly agitation, destroys sins, suppresses anger,
 Restrains speech, restores words of piety.
 It pacifies the mind: it encourages honorable life.
 For when from the whole heaven/Olympus your
 fiery approach will glitter, its heat will scorch the unjust,
 30 a storm will shriek, then bellow with its horn, and before the world
 in the air the sign of the cross will appear:
 then I ask [the cross] itself to rescue me from vengeful flames
 and defend its own poet from the anger of the lamb,
 to whom I sing: rightly will I, Hrabanus, sing with verses from my mouth,
 my heart, my hand, from my memorable song always a gift:



Quod dederat vitae memet clementer in ara.
Quando ipsa Hiesus clemens rogo ab eruit imo
Inferni requiem, nunc, o Christe, arce polorum
Da mihi, hoc posco, spero, et vera omnia credo,
Quae promisisti, hoc teneo pietate fideque.
Quod verax facis ordine iudicio omnia vera.
I nunc ad superos, in coelis rite triumphas.
O laus alma crucis semper sine fine valeto.
Hrabanus memet clemens rogo, Christe tuere, o
pie iudicio.
Oro te ramus aram, ara sumar et oro.

which had mercifully given me to the altar of life.
When merciful Jesus from on top of his pyre dug out
relief from hell, now, O Christ, in the arc of the heavens,
give me what I ask and hope for, and all the true things which I trust,
which you have promised: this I preserve with piety and faith.
35 You are truthful; you do all true things according to order and justice.
Now go to the heavens; you triumph well in the sky.
O kind praise of the cross, always and endless, farewell.
I ask that you, O pious and merciful in judgment, keep me, Rabanus,
safe.
40 I pray to you, branch and altar, that I may be taken to the altar, and I
pray.

Critical Notes

Translation

Line 18 This is a translation for the Latin word "*clarus*"