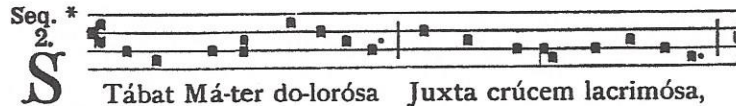


STABAT MATER



Quis est hómo qui non fléret,
Who is man who not would weep,

Mátrem Chrísti si vidéret
Mother of Christ if he should see

15 In tánto supplicio?
in so much distress?

Quis non pòsset contristári,
Who not can be saddened,

Chrísti Mátrem contemplári
of Christ Mother to behold

Doléntem cum Fílio?
suffering with Son?

Who is the man who would not weep
If he should see the Mother of Christ
In such great distress?

Who could not be saddened
If he should behold the Mother of Christ
Suffering with her only Son?

Pro peccátis súae géntis
For sins of his people

20 Vídit Jésum in torméntis,
she saw Jesus in torments,

Et flagéllis súbditum.
and whips subjected to.

Vídit súum dúlcem nátum
She saw her sweet begotten

Moriéndo desolátum,
(by)dying forsaken,

Dum emísit spíritum.
while he sent forth spirit.

For the sins of his people,
She saw Jesus in torments
And subjected to stripes.

She saw her own sweet Son,
Whose dying caused his desolation,
While he yielded up his Spirit.

25 Eja Mátér, fons amóris,
Oh Mother, fount of love,

Me sentíre vim dolóris
me to feel force of grief

Fac, ut técum lúgeam.
Make, that with you I may mourn.

Fac, ut árdeat cor méum
Grant, that may burn heart my

In amándo Chrístum Déum,
in loving Christ God,

30 Ut síbi compláceam.
that to him I may be pleasing.

Sáncta Mátér, ístud ágas,
Holy Mother, this may you do,

Crucifíxi fíge plágas
of Crucified fix stripes

Córdi méo válíde.
in heart my firmly.

Túi náti vulneráti,
Of your begotten wounded,

35 Tam dignáti pro me páti,
so deigned for me to suffer,

Poénas mécum dívide.
pains with me share.

Oh Mother, fount of love,
Make me feel the force of your grief,
So that I may mourn with you,

Grant that my heart may burn
In loving Christ my God,
So that I may be pleasing to him.

Holy Mother, may you do this:
Fix the stripes of the Crucified
Deeply into my heart.

Share with me the pains
Of your wounded Son
Who deigned to suffer so much for me.

Fac me tēcum pīe flēre,
Make me with you lovingly to weep,

Crucifixo condolēre,
with Crucified to suffer,

Donec ēgo vixēro.
as long as I shall live.

40 Juxta cruce[m] tēcum stāre,
Next to cross with you to stand,

Et me tibi sociāre
and myself with you to join

In plānctu desidēro.
in lament I desire.

Virgo vīginum praeclāra,
Virgin of virgins most excellent,

Mihi jam non sis amāra,
to me now not be bitter,

45 Fac me tēcum plāngere.
cause me with you to mourn.

Fac, ut pōrtem Christi mortem,
Grant, that I may bear of Christ death,

Passiōnis fac consōrtem,
of passion make sharer,

Et plāgas recōlere.
And stripes to be mindful of.

Make me lovingly weep with you,
To suffer with the Crucified
So long as I shall live.

To stand with you beside the cross,
And to join with you in deep lament:
This I long for and desire.

O Virgin all virgins excelling,
Be not inclement with me now;
Cause me to mourn with you.

Grant that I may bear the death of Christ;
Make me a sharer in His Passion
And ever mindful of his wounds.

- Fac me plágis vulnerári,
Make me by wounds to be wounded,
- 50 Fac me crúce inebriári,
cause me by cross to be inebriated,
- Et cruóre Fílii.
and by blood of Son.
- Flámmis ne úrar succénsus
By flames lest I burn enkindled
- Per te, Vírgo, sim defénsus
through thee, Virgin, may I be defended
- In díe júdíci.
on day of judgement.
- 55 Chríste, cum sit hinc exíre,
Christ, when it is hence to go,
- Da per Mátrem me veníre
grant through Mother me to come
- Ad pálmam victóriæ.
to palm of victory.
- Quándo córpus moriétur,
When body shall die,
- Fac, ut ánimæ donétur
Grant, that to soul be given
- 60 Paradísi glória.
of Paradise glory.

Let me be wounded by His wounds,
Cause me to be inebriated by the Cross
And the Blood of your Son.

Lest I burn in flames enkindled,
May I, through thee, O Virgin,
Be defended on Judgement Day.

O Christ, when from here I must depart,
Grant that, through your Mother,
I may obtain the palm of victory.

When my body perishes,
Grant that my soul be given
the glory of Paradise.

The question of the authorship of this great sequence is still unresolved. It has been variously ascribed to Pope Gregory the Great (d.604), to St. Bernard of Clairvaux (d.1153), to Pope Innocent III (d.1216), to St. Bonaventura (d.1274), to Jacobus de Benedictus (Jacopone - d.1306), to Pope John XXII (d.1334), to Pope Gregory XI (d.1378), etc. James Mearns carefully considers the two most probable candidates, Innocent III and Jacopone, in his article in Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology* (1915). Mearns feels that the ascriptions to Innocent III by Pope Benedict XIV, F.E. von Hurter, and Mone are strengthened by the "the great probability" that Innocent III was also the author of *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, and therefore capable of such depth of expression and pathos as is found in the *Stabat Mater dolorosa*; but recent scholarship has shown that the "most probable" author of *Veni Sancte Spiritus* is Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1228) [see *Veni Sancte Spiritus*]. Mearns also points out that "certain of the expressions in stanzas vi-ix of the *dolorosa* have been thought to refer to the Stigmatisation of St. Francis of Assisi, the inference being drawn that the hymn was by a Franciscan. This, if true, would make it impossible that at least the current form should be by Pope Innocent III, for he died in 1216, and the date commonly assigned to the conferring of the Stigmas on St. Francis is Sept. 15, 1224."

The candidacy of Jacopone is more complex [the reader is again referred to Mearns' article]; but in summary one can say that (1) Mearns' conclusion that it is more likely that Jacopone wrote the *Stabat Mater speciosa* and not the *Stabat Mater dolorosa*, if indeed he wrote any Latin hymns at all [!], and (2) Mone's opinion that "the original form was by Pope Innocent III and that Jacopone may have made alterations and additions [i.e., those stanzas that are thought to refer to the Stigmatisation of St. Francis, being as Jacopone was a Franciscan] seem to be distinct possibilities.

In any case, the *Stabat Mater* was popularized by the 14th century when the Flagellants used to sing it on their travels from town to town, but it was much later that it found its way into the Roman liturgy. It was the Servites ("Servants of Mary") who in 1239 first devoted themselves to the sorrows of Mary standing under the Cross; later, a synod in Cologne (1413) established the *Compassio*, or *Commendatio, Lamentatio B.M.V.*, a devotion to the sorrows of Mary during the Crucifixion and Death of Christ, to atone for the crimes of the Hussites. This feast of the Compassion gradually spread over Europe until, in 1727, Pope Benedict XIII extended it to the universal Church under the title *Septem Dolorum BMV* ("The Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary") which was celebrated on the Friday after Passion Sunday. It was at this time that the singing of the *Stabat Mater* was added to both the Mass and Office of this feast. Later, in 1814, Pius VII established a second feast of the Dolours on the third Sunday of September, now September 15.

The enumeration of the Seven Sorrows of Mary's life is said to have evolved from the devotions of the Servites. They are: Simeon's prophecy (Luke 2:34-35), the flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15), the three days' loss of the Holy Child at Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-50), meeting Christ carrying the Cross to Calvary, standing at the foot of the Cross (John 19:25-27), the descent of Christ from the Cross, and the entombment of Christ.

"The *Stabat Mater* is universally recognized as the tenderest and most pathetic hymn of the Middle Ages. In simple and vivid language, which cannot always be reproduced in prose, it represents the Mother of the Redeemer plunged in grief and weeping beneath the Cross on which He was suffering an unmerited and agonizing death. The historical event is narrated in the first, second, and fourth stanzas. The remaining strophes are made up of reflections, affections, petitions, and resolutions arising from the contemplation of Our Lord's bitter sufferings and death" (Britt, *Hymns of the Breviary and Missal*).

The early Notkerian sequences (Notker Balbulus, c.840-912) were basically unrhymed and of irregular meter. The *Stabat Mater*, however, has the verse form of the later metrical sequence which was brought to perfection by Adam of St. Victor: a regular meter (double versicles or couplets of 887 trochaic meter) and a consistent rhyme scheme of *aab ccb* which scholars date as coming from the latter half of the 12th century.

But it is its "pathos, its vividness of description, its devotional sweetness and unction" (H.T. Henry) that secures "the queen of sequences" (Daniel) its place in hearts and history. Schaff (*Literature and Poetry*) suggests that "the secret of the power of *Mater dolorosa* lies in the intensity of feeling with which the poet identifies himself with his theme, and in the soft, plaintive melody of its Latin rhythm and thyme, which cannot be transferred to any other language." And, in summation, James Mearns (in Julian, *Dictionary of Hymnology*) states that "this noble poem . . . has been, not unjustly, styled the most pathetic hymn of the Middle Ages. The vividness with which it pictures the weeping Mother at the Cross, its tenderness, its beauty of rhythm, its melodious double rhymes almost defying reproduction in another language, and its impressiveness when sung either to the fine plainsong melody or in the noble compositions which many of the great masters of music have set to it, go far to justify the place it holds, and has long held, in the Roman Catholic Church."

Notes: The text of the *Stabat Mater* is based on various passages from the Holy Scriptures: John 19:25, Luke 2:35, Zacharias 13:6, II Corinthians 4:10, and Galatians 6:17.

1. *Stabat Mater.*

"Now there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother and the disciple standing by, whom he loved [John; see John 13:23], he said to his mother: Woman, behold, thy son" (John 19:25-26).

6. *Pertransivit gladius.*

In accordance with the Law of Moses (Leviticus 12:1-8) Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple to present him and their sacrifice to the Lord. There they met Simeon, who was told by the Holy Spirit "that he should not see death before he had seen Christ the Lord." Mary, "marvelling" at the prophecy of Simeon's canticle (the *Nunc dimittis*, Luke 2:29-32), is then told by him: "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted. *And thine own soul a sword shall pierce*, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Is not this last phrase the effect of the pathos of this great poem and its musical settings?

19. *Pro peccatis suae gentis.*

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

20. *tormentis et flagellis.*

All four Gospels record the history of Christ's Passion. See Matthew 26-27, Mark 14-15, Luke 22-23, and John 18-19.

23. *desolatum.*

Betrayed by Judas, thrice denied by Peter, scourged and beaten by his captors, mocked and crucified, forsaken by all, even his Father: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) "Despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3).

24. *emisit spiritum.*

See Matthew 27:50 and John 19:30. Christ "gave up" or yielded up his spirit willfully. "The Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down myself."

32. *plagas.*

Zacharias foretold of these wounds: "And they shall say to him: What are these wounds in the midst of thy hands? And he shall say: With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved me" (Zacharias 13:6). And Isaiah spoke of their healing power: "And with these stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). "Henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body" (Galatians 6:17).

46. *portem Christi mortem.*

"We endure persecution, but we are not forsaken; we are cast down, but we do not perish; always bearing about in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame" (II Corinthians 4:9-10).

50. *inebriari.*

Literally, "inebriated," filled to overflowing, "spiritually intoxicated"; said of the abundant goodness of God: "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house: and thou shalt make them to drink of the torrent of thy pleasure" (Psalm 35 [36]:9).

52. *Flammis ne urar succensus.*

The translation retains the fervor of the redundant repetition of this pleonasm. This is the reason for the plea to the sorrowful Mother for intercession on Judgement Day.

55. *Christe.*

A dramatic change of address. Up to now the sorrows of the Mother and the suffering and torments of her Son have been described and she has been the object of address and appeal; and now, mindful of the *flammis* and *die iudicii*, the penitent poet addresses Christ himself, considers the final moment of his mortality and asks that, through the Blessed Mother's intercession that his soul be given the *palnam victoriae*, eternal life in *gloria Paradisi*.

Liturgical context: *Stabat Mater dolorosa* is one of the five great sequences [the others being *Dies irae*, *Lauda Sion*, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, and *Victimae paschali laudes*]. It was not one of the four to survive the reforms of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), but it was restored to the Mass in 1727. It is the sequence for the Mass for the two feasts of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Septem Dolorum BMV*): the first on the Friday after Passion Sunday (the feast of the Compassion) and the second on September 15; it follows the Tract *O vos omnes* ("O all you that pass by the way, behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."). In Divine Office it is appointed as the "Hymn of the Compassion of the Blessed Virgin Mary" for use in Lent and as a hymn for the Friday after Passion Sunday, divided into three parts: *Stabat Mater dolorosa* (Vespers), *Sancta Mater, istud agas* (Matins), and *Virgo virginum praeclara* (Lauds).