



# “Sinners and Saints in Dante’s *Commedia*”

Anthony Nussmeier (University of Dallas)  
Online Course: Archdiocese of San Francisco

Week Five: *Paradise* 1-2, 6, 11-12

23 August 2022

"O Padre nostro, che ne' cieli stai,  
non circunscritto, ma per più amore  
ch' ai primi effetti di là sù tu hai,  
**laudato sia 'l tuo nome** e 'l tuo valore  
**da ogne creatura**, com' è degno  
di render grazie al tuo dolce vapore.  
Vegna ver' **noi la pace** del tuo regno,  
ché noi ad essa non potem da noi,  
s' ella non vien, con tutto nostro ingegno.  
Come del suo voler li angeli tuoi  
fan sacrificio a te, cantando osanna,  
così facciano li uomini de' suoi.  
Dà oggi a noi la cotidiana manna,  
senza la qual per questo aspro deserto  
a retro va chi più di gir s' affanna.  
E come noi lo mal ch' avem sofferto  
perdoniamo a ciascuno, e tu perdona  
benigno, e non guardar lo nostro merto.  
Nostra virtù che di legger s' adona,  
non spermentar con l' antico avversaro,  
ma libera da lui che sì la sprona.  
Quest' ultima preghiera, signor caro,  
già non si fa per noi, ché non bisogna,  
ma per color che dietro a noi restaro". (*Purg.* 11.1-24)

Our Father, who are in Heaven,  
circumscribed only by the greater love  
you have for your first works on high,  
'praised be your name and power  
by every creature, as is fitting  
to render thanks for your sweet breath.  
'May the peace of your kingdom come to us,  
for we cannot attain it of ourselves  
if it come not, for all our striving.  
'As your angels make sacrifice to you  
of their free wills, singing *hosanna*,  
so let men make an offering of theirs.  
'Give us this day the daily manna  
without which he who labors to advance  
goes backward through this bitter wilderness.  
'And, as we forgive those who have wronged us,  
do you forgive us in your loving kindness--  
measure us not as we deserve.  
'Do not put to proof our powers,  
which yield so lightly to the ancient foe,  
but deliver us from him who tempts them.  
'This last petition, our dear Lord, is made  
now not for ourselves--for us there is no need--  
but for the ones whom we have left behind

## Recapitulation of Week One

- Dante is the father of Italian, though not the inventor of Italian, nor is he the first Italian poet. He is part of a “fourth wave” of Italian poets ([1] the first Italian poets write in Old Occitan, [2] Sicilian poets at the court of Federico II, [3] *siculo-toscani* and Bolognesi in the Communes of northern Italy, [4] Dante & Company])
- Dante writes the *Comedy* while in exile and amidst a fractured and divisive political background
- both Liberal Italy and the Church claim Dante
- Italy’s literary unification precedes and perhaps supercedes its political unification (1861)
- The Church calls Dante “ours” (Pope Paul VI, Pope Benedict XV) despite Dante’s willingness to condemn popes and others to hell in the *Comedy*, and despite Dante’s argument, in the *De monarchia*, that the pope ought to concentrate on being Christ’s vicar on earth (“the two suns [Emperor and Pope]”)
- the *Comedy* presents a unified cosmos, consisting of “death, love, and God” that ends with God himself, who has “bound the universe in a single volume” (see also *Letter to Cangrande*)
- the *Inferno* is not enough - we must read on through *Purgatory* and *Paradise*
- “From the abyss of crimes punished, through the serene realms where human spirits purify themselves, toward the arduous summits of perfection, to which a multiplicity of ways lead to holiness and splendor, there are those who model the many different forms that holiness takes -- panegyrics woven for St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Peter Damian, St. Benedict of Norcia, St. Romuald, St. Bernard -- all rising toward a summit.” (*motu proprio* of Pope Paul VI, 1965, VII centenary of Dante’s birth)

## Recapitulation of Week Two

- the formal structure of the *Commedia* (canti, canticles, *terza rima*, hendacasyllables)
- The division and circles of *Inferno*
- Dante's careful attention to each word, each phoneme in the poem
- “Vertical readings”
- Description of sinners and Hell in *Inferno*
- *Inferno* 1 and 2: prologue, invocation, meeting with Virgil
- *Inferno* 3: the first sinners (neutrals)
- *Inferno* 5: Francesca and Paolo
- The first saints of Hell (St. Paul, St. Lucy)
  - “Io non Enea, io non Paolo sono”, he says (*Inferno* 2.32) (‘I am not Aeneas, nor am I Paul.)
  - [Beatrice speaks, reported by Virgil to Dante] “She [Mary] summoned Lucy and made this request: / “Your faithful one is now in need of you and I commend him to your care.” / Lucy, the enemy of every cruelty arose and came to where I [Beatrice] sat at venerable Rachel’s side” (*Inferno* 2.97-102)

## Recapitulation of Week Three

- Inferno and its structure
- *Inferno* 26
- Primo Levi and *Se questo è un uomo*
  - the influence of Dante's poem on Levi's book
  - Dante's *Commedia* as means of survival
  - Primo Levi's memory of *Inferno* 26
- Varying interpretations of Ulysses/Odysseus in Hell
- *Inferno* 33 and Conte Ugolino

## Recapitulation of Week Four

- move from Inferno to Purgatory
- structure of Purgatory (Ante-Purgatory, Purgatory)
  - Seven terraces mirroring - more or less - the seven deadly sins
- changed environs of Purgatory (“better waters”)
- distinctive characteristic of Purgatory: prayer
  - Inferno: blasphemy, discordant sounds
  - Purgatory: prayer and more polyphonic music, **movement** towards unity
- Jacques Le Goff’s history of the concept in *The Birth of Purgatory* (1984)
  - spatialization of Purgatory
  - Purgatory’s concretization in the century before Dante (1150-1200)
  - the ascension of Purgatory reflected in Dante’s poetry (*salire* et al)
  - Purgatory: individual responsibility and free will (in Dante “libero arbitrio”, an expression found at the literal center of the poem)
  - Purgatory as an intermediary between Hell and Heaven that is closer to Heaven than to Hell
- *Purgatory* 11 and Dante’s *Our Father*

# From Hell to Purgatory

- We are moving from punishment, punishment that is extrinsic, to an *internal transformation towards greater unity in the Communion of Saints* (Paraphrase of Ratzinger from *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, p. 230).
- **Purgatory is better. One of the earliest vernacular commentaries, Jacopo della Lana's (1324-1328),** says simply, “here [the author] intends to treat Purgatory, **which is better.**” Why is it better? For one, it is about the living, or rather at least about those who, if and when they make it out of Purgatory, will ascend to heaven and have “life without end” and will thus be eternally living. Tellingly, Dante’s invocation to the Muses in *Purgatorio* 1 uses the jussive subjunctive “resurga” – that is, “may the poetry of the dead” – up until now we have talked about *Inferno*, the realm of the not-living – “may the poetry of the dead rise up.” That subjunctive, that exhortation, comes from the verb *risorgere*, meaning “to resurrect.” And so I also like to think of the liturgical bent of *Purgatory*, its hopefulness, its promise of what is to come – if there is hope, it is here. From the death and blasphemy of *Inferno*, to the love and hope and intercessory prayer of Purgatory:
  - o Per correr mighor acque alza le vele  
omai la navicella del mio ingegno,  
Che lascia dietro a sé mar sì crudele. (*Purgatorio* 1.1-2)

(To run its course through smoother water  
The small bark of my wit now hoists its sail  
Leaving that cruel sea behind.)

## The *Commedia* (and especially *Purgatorio*) as an ethical treatise

Beatrice to Dante:

«Qui sarai tu poco tempo silvano;  
e sarai meco senza fine cive  
di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano.

Però, in pro del mondo che mal vive,  
al carro tieni or li occhi, e quel che vedi,  
ritornato di là, fa che tu scrive». (*Purg.* 32. 100-105)

(‘Here for a time you shall be a woodsman  
and then forever a citizen with me  
of that Rome where Christ Himself is Roman.  
‘Therefore, to serve the world that lives so ill,  
keep your eyes upon the chariot and write down  
what now you see here once you have gone back.’)



“To ascend, to raise oneself, to move higher—the direction in which the compass of moral and spiritual life pointed was up, whereas in social life the norm was to stay in one’s proper place, where God had placed one on this earth, guarding against ambition to escape one’s condition while at the same time taking pains not to lower oneself, not to fail.” (*The Birth of Purgatory*, p. 3)

“...perhaps the crucial point in the history of [Purgatory]: its spatialization, which first found expression in the appearance of the substantive [the noun *purgatorium*] sometime between 1150 and 1200.” (p. 4)

“Furthermore, belief in Purgatory is associated with the idea of **individual responsibility** and **free will**. Though guilty by nature because of original sin, man is judged for the sins he himself is responsible for committing.” (p. 5)

Or ti piaccia gradir la sua venuta:  
his arrival,  
Libertà va cercando, ch'è sì cara,  
which is so dear,  
Come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta.  
his life for it.  
(*Purg.* 1.70-72)

Voi che vivete ogne cagion recate  
each cause  
pur suso al cielo, pur come se tutto  
they drew  
movesse seco di necessitate.  
upon their necessary path.  
Se così fosse, in voi fora distrutto  
would be denied you.  
**libero arbitrio**, e non fora giustizia

May it please you to welcome  
since he's in search of liberty,  
As he well knows who gives

You who are still alive assign  
only to the heavens, as though

All things along

If that were so, **free choice**

and there would be no justice

“The last important characteristic of Purgatory to be mentioned is this: Purgatory is an intermediary other world in which the trial to be endured by the dead may be abridged by the intercessory prayers, the ‘suffrages’, of the living.” (p. 11)

“Purgatory is clearly a ‘second kingdom’ between Hell and Heaven. But Dante’s idea of this intermediate zone is dynamic and imbued with spirituality. Purgatory is not a neutral intermediary but an intermediary with an orientation. It points from the earth, where the future elect are when they die, to Heaven, their eternal abode. As they proceed on their way they are purged and become more and more pure as they come closer and closer to the summit, to the spiritual heights to which they are destined.” (p. 337)

## MAP OF DANTE'S PURGATORY

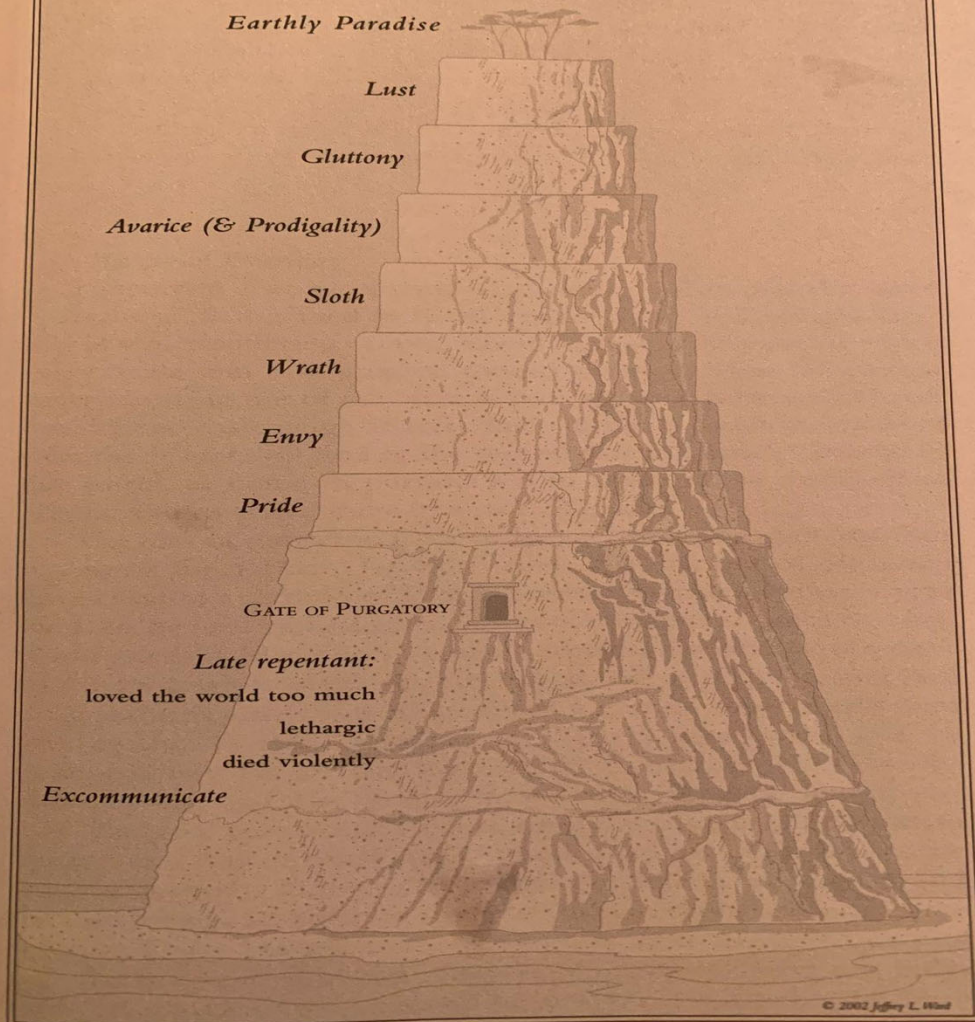


Image: Jeffrey L. Ward 2002 (in Holland and Hollander, trans., *Dante's Purgatorio*)

## Typical structure of a purgatorial terrace

1. Physical description
2. Exemplars of the virtue that counters the sin repented
3. Description of the penitents
4. Penitents recite their sins
5. Exemplars of the vice
6. Angel representing the countering virtue appears to Dante

(Hollander and Hollander, "Introduction", p. xxvii)

## *Purgatorio* 1

- Dante and Virgil arrive in the “secondo regno” (or at least leave Hell)
- Dante and Virgil meet Cato, a sort of *figura Christi* (vv. 31-51)
- Seeking of liberty (vv. 70-75)

*Purgatory 30*: climax of the Church triumphant in the Garden

- Virgil leaves
- Beatrice arrives

*Altissimi Cantus* (motu proprio of Pope Paul VI, 1965)

**From the lowest realms to the vision of the Most Holy Trinity. The Saints, and the Queen of Saints**

9. From the abyss of crimes punished, through the serene realms where human spirits purify themselves, toward the arduous summits of perfection, to which a multiplicity of ways lead to holiness and splendor, there are those who model the many different forms that holiness takes -- panegyrics woven for St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Peter Damian, St. Benedict of Norcia, St. Romuald, St. Bernard -- all rising toward a summit. One hundred cantos, for whoever would understand their salutary meaning, one hundred rungs of a ladder, as that seen in the dream of Jacob, which, from abysmal darkness rises to the light of the Trinity. But before the last and highest step is taken, invoked by Bernard to be the gracious advocate on behalf of the new and inexperienced pilgrim, in order that his ultimate desire might be fulfilled, is the Virgin Mother Mary.



## *Paradise 1-2*

1. “O you, eager to hear more,  
who have followed in your little bark  
my ship that singing makes its way,  
turn back if you would see your shores again.” (*Par.* 2)

1. “Voialtri pochi che drizzaste il collo  
per tempo al pan de li angeli, del quale  
vivesi qui ma non sen vien satollo,  
metter potete ben per l'alto sale  
vostro navigio, servando mio solco  
dinanzi a l'acqua che ritorna equale. (*Par.* 2.10-15)

(You other few who craned your necks in time  
reach for angels' bread, which gives us life on earth,  
yet never leaves us satisfied,  
you may indeed set out, your ship afloat  
upon the salty deep, keeping to the furrow  
I have made, before the sea goes smooth again.)

1. “He who comes down from there [the highest heaven]  
can neither know nor tell what he has seen,  
for, drawing near to its desire,  
so deeply is our intellect immersed,  
that memory cannot follow it” (*Par.* 1.5-9).

1. “Devoid of its principal reason of increasing closeness to God, prayer in paradise needs to find creative forms of expression. It is a manifestation of the souls’ gratitude for their salvation and for God’s goodness, an exaltation for their communion as heavenly souls, for the pilgrim’s miraculous visit, and for their ability to escort him to the utmost revelation of the Trinity in the Empyrean.” (Alessandro Vettori, *Dante’s Prayerful Pilgrimage*, Brill, 2019, p. 12)

“If prayer is a tension toward the divine and an expressed desire to be closer to God or even to become like God, what is the sense of its presence in heaven? In Dante’s *Paradiso*, prayer loses its basic quality of being an attempt to reestablish lost contact with God, of being a more or less successful “dialogue with divinity,” which were some of its fundamental qualities on earth and in purgatory. Since heavenly souls enjoy full communion with God, they no longer need prayer to increase their closeness to him, and theologically prayer has no reason to exist. The blessed souls of heaven have accomplished what they were striving to achieve with prayer in their lives; in a way, they have become the object of their prayer. In Dante’s *Paradiso*, prayer becomes a purely poetic device that serves the purpose of describing in human words the beauty and harmony of eternal life in full communion with divinity. It also creates a rhetorical continuum with *Purgatorio*, since for the purging souls and certainly for the pilgrim, heaven represents the goal of their purgatorial journey, which they have achieved in part also through prayer. The poet transforms the previous types of prayer into a thankful song of joy for being in paradise, and a general glorification of God’s love, beauty, and goodness.” (Vettori, *Dante’s Prayerful Pilgrimage*, p. 175)

## Reading “key” to *Paradiso*

In *Paradise 2*, *Dante* asks *Beatrice* about the Moon with a constellation of words that recalls his conversation with *Casella*: “Io rispuosi: “Madonna, sì devoto com’esser posso più, ringrazio lui lo qual dal **mortal mondo** m’ ha remoto. Ma ditemi: che son li segni bui di **questo corpo**? *Par.* 2.46-50) - ‘I replied: My Lady, with absolute devotion I offer thanks to Him who has removed me from the world of death. But tell me, what are the dark spots on this **body**?’ Both *Purgatory 2* and *Paradise 2*, then, are concerned with **materiality**. The question of materiality and bodies also brings us back to earlier moments in the *Inferno*—think about the astonishment of the shades when they realize that *Dante* possesses a human body. So how does *Dante* understand the materiality of the Moon in *Paradise*? *Dante*-character, following *Aristotle*, first proposes that the dark spots on the moon are the fruit of the relative differences in the weight of matter: “The different shadings,” he tells *Beatrice*, “here are caused, I think, by bodies rare or dense.” *Beatrice* chides him. She is unequivocal. She doesn’t take on the role of supportive teacher who says, “well, that’s a good start, but not quite right.” Instead: “No doubt but you shall see that this belief lies deep in error” (v. 62). The moon’s dark spots, she counters, cannot be due to “rare matter”, for if they were, light from the sun would shine through the “rare matter” during the eclipse (v. 81). She then takes down his argument by way of the “mirror experiment” in vv. 94-105. If “dense” and “rare” matter determined the “dark” and “bright”, she says, then the light generated by two equidistant mirrors and a third one behind and in the middle of them would not be equal. *Beatrice* ultimately resolves *Dante*’s question by turning to theology. Whereas *Dante*-character had tried to account for the Moon’s dark spots from a purely physical point of view, *Beatrice* argues that observation and physical science are not enough. “[R]agione ha corti le ali,” ‘reason’s wings fall short’ when dependent on the senses alone, she says to him (v. 57). Forget about density of matter; the differentiations on the moon’s surface have their origins in theology: it is angelic intelligence that determines light and dark. **Metaphysics, not physics**. The “bread of the angels,” and not bread in substance. The Angels of the Ninth Sphere are responsible for the varying shades on the Moon: the nature of each star—*Dante* refers to the Moon alternately as “star”, “planet”, and “body”—marries its angelic partner, and this creates dark and light: “so angelic intelligence unfolds its bounty...[and] makes a different alloy with each precious body. [...] From this power is derived the difference seen from light to light, and not from dense and rare” (vv. 136-146). In the end, in all its laboriousness, this canto, *Paradiso 2*, is significant: In it, *Dante* says, we have the key to *Paradise*: **theology**. Later, in *Paradiso 25*, *Dante* will cement this reading-key when he calls his epic the “**poema sacro**”, ‘sacred poem, / to which Heaven and earth have set their hand’ (*Par.* 25.1-2).

# Heaven of the Sun

- *Par.* 10. 64-81:

Io vidi più **folgór vivi e vincenti**  
far di noi centro e di sé far corona,  
più **dolci in voce che in vista lucenti:**

66

così cinger la figlia di Latona  
vedem talvolta, quando l'aere è pregno,  
sì che ritenga il fil che fa la zona.

69

Ne la corte del cielo, ond' io rivegno,  
si trovan **molte gioie care e belle**  
tanto che non si posson trar del regno;

72

e 'l **canto di quei lumi era di quelle;**  
chi non s'impenna sì che là sù voli,  
dal muto aspetti quindi le novelle.

75

Poi, **sì cantando,** quelli ardenti soli  
si fuor girati intorno a noi tre volte,  
come stelle vicine a' fermi poli,

78

I saw many living lights of blinding brightness  
make of us a center and of themselves a crown,  
their voices sweeter than the radiance of their faces.  
Thus ringed we sometimes see Latona's daughter  
when the air has grown so heavy  
that it retains the thread that forms her belt.  
In the court of Heaven, from which I have returned,  
there are many gems of such worth and beauty  
that they may not be taken from the realm.  
These lights were singing of those jewels.  
He who fails to wing himself to fly there  
might as well await the dumb to tell the news.  
When, with just such songs, those blazing suns  
had three times made their way around us,  
like stars right near the still and steady poles,  
they seemed to me like ladies, poised to dance,  
pausing, silent, as they listen,  
until they have made out the new refrain.

## St. Thomas, St. Francis, and St. Dominic

La provedenza, che governa il mondo  
con quel consiglio nel quale ogni aspetto  
creato è vinto pria che vada al fondo, 30  
però che andasse ver' lo suo diletto  
la sposa di colui ch'ad alte grida  
disposò lei col sangue benedetto, 33  
in sé sicura e anche a lui più fida,  
due principi ordinò in suo favore,  
che quinci e quindi le fosser per guida. 36  
L'un fu tutto serafico in ardore;  
l'altro per sapienza in terra fue  
di cherubica luce uno splendore. 39  
De l'un dirò, però che d'amendue  
si dice l'un pregiando, qual ch'om prende,  
perch' ad un fine fur l'opere sue. (*Par.* 11.28-42)

The providence that rules the world  
With such deep wisdom that any God-created eye  
must fail before it reaches to the very depth --  
'so that the bride of Him who, crying out  
in a loud voice, espoused her with His sacred blood,  
should go in joy to her beloved  
'sure of herself and now to Him more faithful --  
ordained in her behalf two princes,  
one on this side, one on that, to serve as guides.  
'One was all seraphic in his ardor,  
the other, by his wisdom, was on earth  
resplendent with cherubic light.  
'I shall speak of one, since praising one,  
whichever one we choose, is to speak of both,  
for they labored to a single end.

## Dante's "Life of St. Francis" in *Paradise* 11

Non era ancor molto lontan da l'orto,  
ch'el cominciò a far sentir la terra  
de la sua gran virtute alcun conforto;  
ché per tal donna, giovinetto, in guerra  
del padre corse, a cui, come a la morte,  
la porta del piacer nessun diserra;  
e dinanzi a la sua spirital corte  
et coram patre le si fece unito;  
poscia di dì in dì l'amò più forte.  
Questa, privata del primo marito,  
millecent' anni e più dispetta e scura  
fino a costui si stette senza invito;  
né valse udir che la trovò sicura  
con Amiclate, al suon de la sua voce,  
colui ch'a tutto 'l mondo fé paura;  
né valse esser costante né feroce,  
sì che, dove Maria rimase giuso,  
ella con Cristo pianse in su la croce. (*Par.* 11.55-72)

57 'Not much time as yet had passed  
when he first lent his comfort to the earth  
by the greatness of his virtuous power.  
60 'For, still a youth, he fought against his father's wish  
for the favor of a lady to whom, as to death,  
no one unlocks the door with gladness,  
'and before his spiritual court *et coram patre*  
he joined himself to her and, from then on,  
63 each passing day, he loved her more.  
'She, bereft of her first husband, scorned and unknown  
one thousand and one hundred years and more,  
66 remained without a suitor till he came.  
'Nor did it profit her when men heard that she stood  
unmoved, with Amyclas, despite the voice  
69 of him who put the whole wide world in fear.  
'Nor did it profit her when, being fiercely loyal  
and undaunted, while Mary stayed below,  
she wept with Christ upon the cross.

## Dante's "Life of St. Francis" in *Paradise* 11

Ma perch' io non proceda troppo chiuso,  
Francesco e Povertà per questi amanti  
prendi oramai nel mio parlar diffuso.  
La lor concordia e i lor lieti sembianti,  
amore e meraviglia e dolce sguardo  
facieno esser cagion di pensier santi;  
tanto che 'l venerabile Bernardo  
si scalzò prima, e dietro a tanta pace  
corse e, correndo, li parve esser tardo.  
Oh ignota ricchezza! oh ben ferace!  
Scalzasi Egidio, scalzasi Silvestro  
dietro a lo sposo, sì la sposa piace.  
Indi sen va quel padre e quel maestro  
con la sua donna e con quella famiglia  
che già legava l'umile capestro.

87

Né li gravò viltà di cuor le ciglia  
per esser fi' di Pietro Bernardone,  
né per parer dispetto a meraviglia;  
ma regalmente sua dura intenzione  
ad Innocenzio aperse, e da lui ebbe

But, lest I make my meaning dark,  
let it be understood, in all that I have said,  
75 that these two lovers are Francis and Poverty.  
'Their happy countenances and their harmony,  
their love and wonder and sweet contemplation  
78 made them a cause for holy thoughts,  
'so that the venerable Bernard was the first  
to shed his shoes and run, pursuing such great peace,  
81 and, running, thought himself too slow.  
'O unknown riches and prolific good\_ Barefoot goes Giles,  
barefoot goes Sylvester, following the groom,  
84 so greatly pleasing is the bride.  
'Then that father and teacher went his way  
in company of his lady and that family,  
each one girt with the same humble cord.  
'Nor did an unworthy shame weigh on his brow  
for being Pietro Bernardone's son,  
nor for being an object of amazed contempt,  
90 'but he regally laid bare his stern resolve  
to Innocent and, from him, he received  
the first seal of his order.



## Dante's "Life of St. Francis" in *Paradise* 11

Poi che la gente poverella crebbe  
dietro a costui, la cui mirabil vita  
meglio in gloria del ciel si canterebbe, 96  
di seconda corona redimita  
fu per Onorio da l'Etterno Spiro 99  
la santa voglia d'esto archimandrita.  
E poi che, per la sete del martiro,  
ne la presenza del Soldan superba 102  
predicò Cristo e li altri che 'l seguio,  
e per trovare a conversione acerba  
troppo la gente e per non stare indarno, 105  
redissi al frutto de l'italica erba,  
nel crudo sasso intra Tevere e Arno  
da Cristo prese l'ultimo sigillo, 108  
che le sue membra due anni portarno.  
Quando a colui ch'a tanto ben sortillo  
piacque di trarlo suso a la mercede 111  
ch'el meritò nel suo farsi pusillo,  
a' frati suoi, sì com' a giuste rede,  
raccomandò la donna sua più cara,  
e comandò che l'amassero a fede; (Par. 11.94-114)

When his followers, sworn to poverty,  
increased their number, he, whose admirable life  
were better sung in the glorious realm of Heaven,  
'was affirmed with a second crown  
by the eternal Breath, through Honorius,  
in his holy purpose as shepherd of this flock.  
'And when, in his thirst for martyrdom,  
he preached Christ and the Apostles who came after  
in the proud presence of the Sultan,  
'finding the people unripe for conversion  
and unwilling to remain to no good purpose,  
he returned to reap the harvest of Italian fields.  
'On the harsh rock between the Tiber and the Arno  
from Christ he had the final seal, then for two years  
he bore His wounds upon his limbs.  
'When He who had chosen him for so much good  
was pleased to take him to the high reward  
that he had won with his devoted meekness,  
'he recommended his most cherished lady  
to his brothers, as to his rightful heirs,  
commanding them to love her faithfully.

## Dante's "Life of St. Francis" in *Paradise* 11

e del suo grembo l'anima preclara  
mover si volle, tornando al suo regno,  
e al suo corpo non volle altra bara. 117  
Pensa oramai qual fu colui che degno  
collega fu a mantener la barca  
di Pietro in alto mar per dritto segno; 120  
e questo fu il nostro patriarca;  
per che qual segue lui, com' el comanda,  
discerner puoi che buone merce carica. 123  
Ma 'l suo pecuglio di nova vivanda  
è fatto ghiotto, sì ch'esser non puote  
che per diversi salti non si spanda; 126  
e quanto le sue pecore remote  
e vagabunde più da esso vanno,  
più tornano a l'ovile di latte vòte.

129

Ben son di quelle che temono 'l danno  
e stringonsi al pastor; ma son sì poche,  
che le cappe fornisce poco panno. (*Par.* 11.115-132)

From his lady's bosom the illustrious soul  
chose to set forth, returning to its kingdom,  
and for its corpse would have no other bier.  
'Now think what kind of man it took  
to be a fit companion to maintain  
the steadfast course of Peter's bark upon the sea,  
'and just such was our patriarch. From this  
you may perceive that he who follows him  
as he commands is freighted with good cargo.  
'But his flock has grown so greedy  
for new sustenance that it is forced  
to scatter through remote and distant pastures,  
'and the farther his sheep go wandering off  
from him, the emptier of milk  
do they at last come back into the fold.  
'There are some, indeed, who, fearing harm,  
huddle near the shepherd, but these are so few  
that a tiny piece of cloth can furnish all their cowls.

## *Laudes creaturarum* di San Francesco d'Assisi (c. 1224)

Altissimu, onnipotente bon Signore,  
Tue so le laude, la gloria e l'honore et onne benedictione.

Ad Te solo, Altissimo, se konfano,  
et nullu homo ène dignu te mentouare.

**Laudato sie**, mi Signore cum tucte le Tue creature,  
spetialmente messor lo frate Sole,  
lo qual è iorno, et allumini noi per lui.

Et ellu è bellu e radiante cum grande splendore:  
de Te, Altissimo, porta significatione.

**Laudato si**, mi Signore, per sora Luna e le stelle:  
in celu l'ài formate clarite et pretiose et belle.

**Laudato si**, mi Signore, per frate Uento  
et per aere et nubilo et sereno et onne tempo,  
per lo quale, a le Tue creature dà sustentamento.

**Laudato si**, mi Signore, per sor'Acqua,  
la quale è multo utile et humile et pretiosa et casta.

Laudato si, mi Signore, per frate Focu,  
per lo quale ennallumini la nocte:  
ed ello è bello et iucundo et robustoso et forte.

Laudato si, mi Signore, per sora nostra matre Terra,  
la quale ne sustenta et gouerna,  
et produce diuersi fructi con coloriti fior et herba.

Laudato si, mi Signore, per quelli ke perdonano per lo Tuo amore  
et sostengono infirmitate et tribulatione.

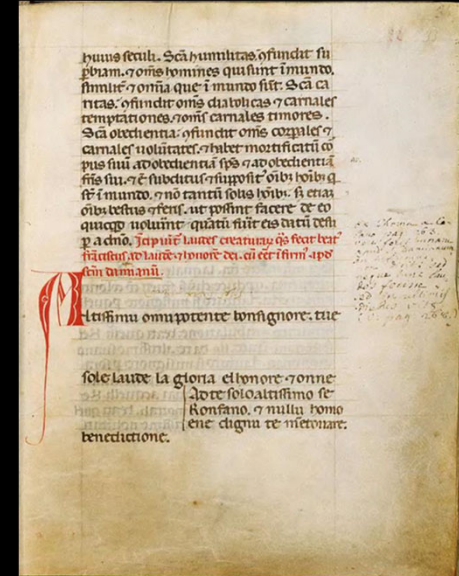
Beati quelli ke l' sosterranno in pace,  
ka da Te, Altissimo, sirano incoronati.

Laudato si mi Signore, per sora nostra Morte corporale,  
da la quale nullu homo uiuente pò skappare:

guai a quelli ke morrano ne le peccata mortali;  
beati quelli ke trouarà ne le Tue sanctissime uoluntati,  
ka la morte secunda no l' farrà male.

Laudate et benedicete mi Signore et rengratiate  
e seruiteli cum grande humilitate.

"O Padre nostro, che ne' cieli stai,  
non circunscritto, ma per più amore  
ch' ai primi effetti di là sù tu hai,  
**laudato sia 'l tuo nome** e 'l tuo valore  
**da ogne creatura**, com'è degno  
di render grazie al tuo dolce vapore.  
(Dante, *Purg.* 11.1-6)



*Paradiso* 12: Dante's "Life of St. Dominic"



Basilica di San Domenico in Bologna.

The *arca* of St. Dominic in Bologna.





## *Paradiso* 12: Dante's "Life of St. Dominic"

Poi che 'l **tripudio** e l'**altra festa** grande,  
sì **del cantare** e sì del fiammeggiarsi  
luce con luce gaudiose e blande,  
**insieme** a punto e a voler quietarsi,  
pur come li occhi ch'al piacer che i move  
conviene insieme chiudere e levarsi;  
del cor de l'una de le luci nove  
**si mosse voce**, che l'ago a la stella  
parer mi fece in volgermi al suo dove;  
e cominciò: [...] (*Par.* 12.22-31)

When the dance and all the other celebration --  
the singing and the brilliant blaze of flames,  
light with light blent in ardent joy --  
came to a stop together and of one accord,  
as eyes, when beauty moves them,  
must open wide or close as one,  
from the core of one of these new lights,  
as the north star makes a compass needle veer,  
rose a voice that made me turn to where it came from.  
And it began: [...]