

O sacred head, now wounded

Salve, caput cruentatum

ARNULF OF LEUVEN (ca. 1200–1250)

translated into German by PAUL GERHARDT (1607–1676)

translated from German by JAMES W. ALEXANDER (1804–1859)

*Oh sacred Head, now wounded!
With grief and shame weighed down;
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, thy only crown:
Oh sacred Head, what glory,
What bliss till now was thine!
Yet though despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine.*

Oh noblest brow and dearest,
In other days the world
All feared when thou appearedst;
—What shame on thee is hurled!
How art thou pale with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn,
How does that visage languish,
Which once was bright as morn!

Thy cheeks once “fair and ruddy,”
Thy lips, whose balmy breath
Was heavenly and gracious,
Are now despoiled by death.
For ghastly death has taken
My Saviour’s strength away,
And how thou seem’st forsaken
In this thy woful day.

What thou, my Lord, hast suffered,
Is all for sinners’ gain:
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But thine the deadly pain.
Lo here I fall, my Saviour!
’Tis I deserve *thy* place,
Look on me with thy favor,
Vouchsafe to me thy grace!

Receive me, my Redeemer,
My Shepherd make me thine;
Of every good the fountain,
Thou art the spring of mine.
Thy lips with love distilling,
With milk of truth sincere,
With heaven’s bliss are filling
The soul that trembles here.

Here, where I find salvation,
My place oh let me take;
Nor drive me from my station
Ev’n when thy heart-strings break.
Ev’n when thy face is paling
In death’s last agony,
With arms of faith unfailing
Oh let me cling to thee.

Latin text: “Ad Faciem” in Mabillon, D. Joannis and Migne, Jacques-Paul, eds., *S. Bernardi Abbatis Primi Claræ-Vallensis Opera Omnia*. Voulumen Tertium. Patrologiæ Cursus Completus. Series Latina (Paris: Ramos, 1862), 184:1319–1324.

English text: *New York Observer*, 24 April 1830, p. 68, via *Hymnology Archive*.

Original Latin:

*Salve, caput cruentatum,
Totum spinis coronatum,
Conquassatum, vulneratum,
Arundine verberatum,
Facie sputis illita.*

*Salve, cujus dulcis vultus,
Immutatus et incultus,
Immutavit suum florem,
Totus versus in pallorem
Quem cæli curia.*

*Omnis vigor atque viror
Hinc recessit, non admiror,
Mors apparet in aspectu
Totus pendens in defectu,
Attritus ægra macie.*

*Sic affectus, sic despectus,
Propter me sic interfectus,
Peccatori tam indigno
Cum amoris intersigno
Appare clara facie.*

*In hac tua passione,
Me agnosce, Pastor bone,
Cujus sumpsi mel ex ore,
Haustum lactis cum dulcore,
Præ omnibus deliciis.*

*Non me reum asperneris,
Nec indignum dedigneris,
Morte tibi jam vicina,
Tuum caput hic inclina,
In meis pausa brachiis.*

The joy can ne'er be spoken
 —Above all joys beside,
 When in thy body broken
 I thus with safety hide.
 My Lord of life, desiring
 Thy glory now to see,
 Beside thy cross expiring
 I'd breathe my soul to thee.

What language shall I borrow
 To thank Thee, dearest Friend,
 For this thy dying sorrow,
 Thy pity without end!
 Oh make me thine forever,
 And should I fainting be,
 Lord let me never, never
 Outlive my love to thee.

If I, a wretch, should leave thee,
 Oh Jesus leave not me;
 In faith may I receive thee,
 When death shall set me free.
 When strength and comfort languish,
 And I must hence depart,
 Release me then from anguish,
 By thine own wounded heart!

Be near when I am dying,
 Oh show thy cross to me!
 And for my succor flying,
 Come Lord, to set me free.
 These eyes new faith receiving,
 From Jesus shall not move;
 For he who dies believing,
 Dies safely—through thy love.

Ob sacred Head: This first stanza was added to the Latin text “late in the 15th century” and is not by Arnulf (*Hymnology Archive*).

Tuæ sanctæ passioni
 Me gauderem interponi,
 In hac cruce tecum mori:
 Præsta crucis amatori,
 Sub cruce tua moriar.

Morti tuæ tam amaræ
 Grates ago, Jesu chare;
 Qui es clemens, pie Deus,
 Fac quod petit tuus reus,
 Ut absque te non finiar.

Dum me mori est necesse,
 Noli mihi tunc deesse;
 In tremenda mortis hora
 Veni, Jesu, absque mora,
 Tuere me et libera.

Cum me jubes emigrare,
 Jesu chare, tunc appare:
 O amator amplexende,
 Temetipsum tunc ostende
 In cruce salutifera.

George Faithful writes of this Latin text: “Although not a critical edition, this most closely approximates the version of the text that Gerhardt translated.” (George Faithful. ‘A More Brotherly Song, a Less Passionate Passion: Abstraction and Ecumenism in the Translation of the Hymn “O Sacred Head Now Wounded” from Bloodier Antecedents.’ *Church History*, Volume 82, Issue 4, December 2013, pp. 779 - 811.)