

Ordo Virtutum - text and translation

(based on translation by Peter Dronke, 1981 and 1997)

Incipit Ordo Virtutum

Patriarche et Prophete
Qui sunt hi, qui ut nubes?

Virtutes
O antiqui sancti, quid admiramini in nobis?
Verbum dei clarescit in forma hominis, et
ideo fulgemus cum illo, edificantes membra
sui pulchri corporis.

Patriarche et prophete
Nos sumus radices et vos rami, fructus
viventis oculi, et nos umbra in illo fuimus.

Querela Animarum in carne positarum
O nos peregrine sumus. Quid fecimus, ad
peccata deviantes? Filie Regis esse
debuimus, sed in umbram peccatorum
cecidimus. O vivens sol, porta nos in
humeris tuis in iustissimam hereditatem
quam in Adam perdidimus! O rex regum, in
tuo prelio pugnamus.

Felix Anima
O dulcis divinitas, et o suavis vita, in qua
perferam vestem preclaram, illud accipiens
quod perdidit in prima apparitione, ad te
suspiro, et omnes Virtutes invoco.

Virtutes
O felix Anima, et o dulcis creatura dei, que
edificata es in profunda altitudine sapientie
dei, multum amas.

Felix Anima
O libenter veniam ad vos ut prebeatis michi
osculum cordis.

Virtutes
Nos debemus militare tecum, o filia regis.

Sed, gravata, Anima conqueritur
O gravis labor, et o durum pondus quod
habeo in veste huius vite, quia nimis grave
michi est contra carnem pugnare.

Virtutes ad Animam illam
O Anima, voluntate dei constituta, et o felix
instrumentum, quare tam flebilis es contra
hoc quod deus contrivit in virginea natura?
Tu debes in nobis superare diabolum.

Anima illa
Succurrite michi, adiuvando, ut possim stare!

Scientia Dei ad Animam illam
Vide quid illud sit quo es induta, filia
salvationis et esto stabilis, et numquam
cades.

Infelix, Anima

Here begins the Play of the Virtues:

Patriarchs and Prophets:
Who are these, who seem like clouds?

Virtues:
O ancient holy ones, why do you marvel at
us? The Word of God grows bright in the
form of a man, and thus we shine with him,
building the limbs of his beautiful body.

Patriarchs and prophets:
We are roots, and you are branches, the fruit
of the living eye, of which we were the
shadow.

Lament of embodied Souls:
We are strangers here! What have we done,
straying to realms of sin? We should have
been daughters of the King, but we have
fallen into the shadow of sins. Living Sun,
carry us on your shoulders back to that most
just inheritance we lost in Adam! O king of
kings, we are fighting in your battle.

Soul, joyful:
Oh sweet divinity, o gentle life, in which I
shall wear a bright robe, accepting that
which I lost in my first formation - I cry to you
and invoke all the Virtues.

Virtues:
Oh happy Soul, oh sweet creature of God,
fashioned in the great height of the wisdom
of God, you show much love.

Soul, joyful:
Oh let me come to you freely, that you may
give me the kiss of your heart!

Virtues:
We must fight with you, oh royal daughter.

Soul turns to sadness:
Oh heavy toil, oh harsh weight that I bear in
the dress of this life: it is too heavy for me to
fight against my body.

Virtues to Soul:
Anima, you that were given your place by
the will of God, you instrument of bliss, why
are you so tearful in the face of the evil God
crushed in a maidenly being? You must
overcome the devil in our midst.

Soul:
Support me, help me to stand firm!

Knowledge-of-God to Soul:
See the dress you are wearing, daughter of
salvation: be steadfast and you will never
fall.

Soul, sadly:

michi, non possum perficere hoc quod sum induta. Certe illud volo abicere!

Virtutes

O infelix conscientia, o misera Anima, quare abscondis faciem tuam coram creatore tuo?

Scientia Dei

Tu nescis, nec vides, nec sapis illum qui te constituit.

Anima illa

Deus creavit mundum: non facio illi iniuriam sed volo uti illo!

Streptus Diaboli ad Animam illam

Fatue, fatue quid prodest tibi laborare? Respice mundum, et amplectetur te magno honore.

Virtutes

O plangens vox est hec maximi doloris! Ach, ach, quedam mirabilis victoria in mirabili desiderio dei surrexit, in qua delectatio camis se latenter abscondit, heu, heu, ubi voluntas crimina nescivit et ubi desiderium hominis lasciviam fugit. Luge, luge ergo in his, Innocentia, que in pudore bono integritatem non amisisti, et que avariciam gutturis antiqui serpentis ibi non devorasti.

Diabolus

Que est hec Potestas, quod nullus sit preter deum? Ego autem dico, qui voluerit me et voluntatem meam sequi, dabo illi omnia. Tu vero, tuis sequacibus nichil habes quod dare possis, quia etiam vos omnes nescitis quid sitis.

Humilitas

Ego cum meis sodalibus bene scio quod tu es ille antiquus dracho qui super summum volare voluisti - sed ipse deus in abyssum proiecit te.

Virtutes

Nos autem omnes in excelsis habitamus.

Humilitas

Ego, Humilitas, regina Virtutum, dico: venite ad me, Virtutes, et enutriam vos ad requirendam perditam dragmam et ad coronandum in perseverantia felicem.

Virtutes

O gloriosa regina, et O suavissima mediatrix, libenter venimus.

Humilitas

Ideo, dilectissime filie, teneo vos in regali talamo.

Karitas

Ego Karitas, flos amabilis - venite ad me, Virtutes, et perducam vos in candidam lucem floris virge.

is me, I cannot perfect this dress I have put on! Indeed I want to cast it off!

Virtues:

Unhappy state of mind, oh poor Anima, why do you hide your face in the presence of your Creator?

Knowledge of God:

You do not know or see or taste the One who has set you here.

Soul:

God created the world: I'm doing him no injury - I only want to enjoy it!

Devil, shouting at Soul:

What use to you is toiling foolishly? Look to the world: it will embrace you with great honour.

Virtues:

Is this not a plangent voice of the greatest sorrow? Ah, a certain marvellous victory already rose in that Soul, in her wondrous longing for God, in which a sensual delight was secretly hidden, alas, where previously the will had known no guilt and the desire fled man's wantonness. Mourn for this, mourn, Innocence, you who lost no perfection in your fair modesty, who did not devour greedily, with the belly of the serpent of old.

Devil:

What is this Power - as if there were no one but God? I say, whoever wants to follow me and do my will, I'll give him everything. As for you, Humility, you have nothing that you can give your followers: none of you even know what you are!

Humility:

My comrades and I know very well that you are the ancient dragon who wanted to fly higher than the highest one: but God himself hurled you in the abyss.

Virtues:

As for us, we dwell in the heights.

Humility:

I, Humility, queen of the Virtues, say: come to me, you Virtues, and I'll give you the skill to seek and find the drachma that is lost and to crown her who perseveres blissfully.

Virtues:

Oh glorious queen, most gentle mediator, we come gladly.

Humility:

Because of this, beloved daughters, I'll keep your place in the royal wedding-chamber.

Charity:

I am Charity, the flower of love - come to me, Virtues, and I'll lead you into the radiant light of the flower of the rod.

Virtutes
O dilectissime flos, ardenti desiderio
currimus ad te.

Timor Dei
Timor Dei, vos felicissimas filis preparo ut
inspiciatis in deum vivum et non pereatis.

Virtutes
O Timor, valde utilis es nobis: habemus
enim perfectum studium numquam a te
separari.

Diabolus
Euge! euge! quis est tantus timor? et quis
est tantus amor? Ubi est pugnator, et ubi est
remunerator? Vos nescitis quid colitis.

Virtutes
Tu autem exterritus es per summum
iudicem, quia, inflatus superbia, mersus es
in gehennam.

Obedientia
Ego lucida Obedientia - venite ad me,
pulcherrime filie, et reducam vos ad patriam
et ad osculum regis.

Virtutes
O dulcissima vocatrix, nos decet in magno
studio pervenire ad te.

Fides
Ego Fides, speculum vite: venerables filie,
venite ad me et ostendo vobis fontem
salientem.

Virtutes
O serena, speculata, habemus fiduciam
pervenire ad verum fontem per te.

Spes
Ego sum dulcis conspectrix viventis oculi,
quam fallax torpor non decipit - unde vos, o
tenebre, non potestis me obnubilare.

Virtutes
O vivens vita, et o suavis consolatrix, tu
mortifera mortis vincis et vidente oculo
clausuram celi aperis.

Castitas
O Virginitas, in regali thalamo stas. O quam
dulciter ardes in amplexibus regis, cum te
sol perfulget ita quad nobilis flos tuus
numquam cadet. O virgo nobilis, te
numquam inveniet umbra in cadente flore!

Virtutes
Flos campi cadit vento, pluvia spargit eum.
O Virginitas, tu permanes in symphoniis
supernorum civium: unde es suavis flos qui
numquam aresces.

Virtues:
Dearest flower, we run to you with burning
desire.

Fear-of-God:
I, Fear-of-God, can prepare blissful
daughters to gaze upon the living God and
not die of it.

Virtues:
Oh Fear, you can help us greatly: we are
filled with the longing never to part from you.

Devil:
Bravo! Bravo! What is this great fear, and
this great love? Where is the champion?
Where the prize-giver? You don't know what
you are worshipping!

Virtues:
But you, you were terrified at the supreme
Judge, for, swollen with pride, you were
plunged into Gehenna.

Obedience:
I am shining Obedience - come to me, lovely
daughters, and I'll lead you to your
homeland and to the kiss of the King.

Virtues:
Sweetest summoner, it is right for us to
come, most eagerly, to you.

Faith:
I am Faith, the mirror of life: worthy
daughters, come to me and I shall show you
the leaping fountain.

Virtues:
Oh Serene one, mirror-like, we trust in you:
we shall arrive at that fountain through you.

Hope:
I am the sweet beholder of the living eye, I
whom no dissembling torpor can deceive.
Darkness, you cannot cloud my gaze!

Virtues:
Living life, gentle, consoling one, you
overcome the deadly shafts of death and
with your seeing eye lay heaven's gate
open.

Chastity:
O Virginitas, you remain within the royal
chamber. How sweetly you burn in the
King's embraces, when the Sun blazes
through you, never letting your noble flower
fall. Gentle maiden, you will never know the
shadow over the falling flower!

Virtues:
The flower of the fields fails in the wind, the
rain splashes it. But you, Virginitas, remain in
the symphonies of heavenly habitants: you
are the tender flower that will never grow
dry.

Innocentia
Fugite, oves, spurcias Diaboli!

Virtutes
Has te succurrente fugiemus.

Contemptus Mundi
Ego, Contemptus Mundi, sum candor vite. O misera terre peregrinatio in multis laboribus - te dimitto. O Virtutes, venite ad me et ascendamus ad fontem vite!

Virtutes
O gloriosa domina, tu semper habes certamina Christi, o magna virtus, que mundum conculcas, unde etiam victorose in celo habitas.

Amor Celestis
Ego aurea porta in colo fixa sum: qui per me transit numquam amaram petulantiam in mente sua gustabit.

Virtutes
O filia regis, tu semper es in amplexibus quos mundus fugit. O quam suavis est tua dilectio in summo deo!

[Disciplina]:
Ego sum amatrix simplicium morum qui turpia opera nesciunt; sed semper in regum regem aspicio et amplector eum in honore altissimo.

Virtutes
O tu angelica socia, tu es valde ornata in regalibus nuptiis.

Verecundia
Ego obtenebro et fugo atque conculco omnes spurcias Diaboli.

Virtutes
Tu es in edificatione celestis Ierusalem, florens in candidis liliis.

Misericordia
O quam amara est illa duricia que non cedit in mentibus, misericorditer dolori succurrens! Ego autem omnibus dolentibus manum porrigere volo.

Virtutes
O laudabilis mater peregrinorum, tu semper erigis illos, atque ungis pauperes et debiles.

Victoria
Ego Victoria velox et fortis pugnatrix sum - in lapide pugno, serpentem antiquum conculco.

Virtutes
O dulcissima bellatrix, in torrente fonte qui absorbit lupum rapacem - o gloriosa coronata, nos libenter militamus tecum contra illusorem hunc.

Innocence:
My flock, flee from the Devil's taints!

Virtues:
We shall flee them, if you give us aid.

Contempt-for-the-World:
I, Contempt-for-the-World, am the heat life. Oh wretched, exiled state on earth, with all your toils - I let you go. Come to me, you Virtues, and we will climb up to the fountain of life!

Virtues:
Glorious lady, you that always fight the battles of Christ, oh great power that treads the world under your feet, you thereby dwell in heaven, victoriously.

Heavenly Love:
I am the golden gate fixed in heaven: whoever passes through me will never taste bitter rebelliousness in her mind.

Virtues:
Royal daughter, you are held fast in the embraces the world shuns: how tender is your love in the highest God!

Discipline:
I am one who loves innocent ways that know nothing ignoble; I always gaze upon the King of kings and, as my highest honour, I embrace him.

Virtues:
Angelic comrade, how comely you are in the royal nuptials!

Modesty:
I cover over, drive away or tread down all the filths of the Devil.

Virtues:
Yours is a part in the building of heavenly Jerusalem, flowering among shining lilies.

Mercy:
How bitter in human minds is the harshness that does not soften and mercifully ease pain! I want to reach out my hand to all who suffer.

Virtues:
Matchless mother of exiles, you are always raising them up and anointing the poor and the weak.

Victory:
I am Victory, the swift, brave champions I fight with a stone, I tread the ancient serpent down.

Virtues:
Oh gentlest warrior, in the scorching fountain that swallowed up the voracious wolf - glorious, crowned one, how gladly we'll fight against that deceiver, at your side!

Discretio

Ego Discretio sum lux et dispensatrix
omnium creaturarum, indifferentia dei, quam
Adam a se fugavit per lasciviam morum.

Virtutes

O pulcherrima mater, quam dulcis et quam
suavis es, quia nemo confunditur in te.

Pacientia

Ego sum columpna que molliri non potest,
quia fundamentum meum in deo est.

Virtutes

O firma que stas in caverna petre, et o
gloriosa bellatrix que suffers omnia!

Humilitas

O filie Israhel, sub arbore suscitavit vos
deus, unde in hoc tempore recordamini
plantationis sae. Gaudete ergo, filie Syon!

Virtutes

Heu, heu, nos Virtutes plangamus et
lugeamus, quia ovis domini fugit vitam!

*Querela Anime penitentis et Virtutes
invocantis*

O vos regales Virtutes, quam speciose et
quam fulgentes estis in summo sole, et
quam dulcis est vestra mansio - et ideo, o ve
michi, quia a vobis fugi.

Virtutes

O fugitive, veni, veni ad nos, et deus
suscipiet te.

Anima illa

Ach! ach! fervens dulcedo absorbit me in
peccatis, et ideo non ausa sum intrare.

Virtutes

Noli timere nec fugere, quia pastor bonus
querit in te perditam ovem suam.

Anima illa

Nunc est michi necesse ut suscipiatis me,
quoniam in vulneribus feteo quibus antiquus
serpens me contaminavit.

Virtutes

Curre ad nos, et sequere vestigia illa in
quibus numquam cades in societate nostra,
et des curabit te.

Penitens Animo ad Virtutes

Ego peccator qui fugi vitam: plenus ulceribus
veniam ad vos, ut prebeat michi scutum
redemptionis. O tu omnis militia regine, et o
vos, candida lilia ipsius, cum rosea purpura,
incline vos ad me, quia peregrina a vobis
exulavi, et adjuvate me, ut in sanguine filii
dei possim surgere.

Discretion:

I am Discretion, light and moderator of all
creatures - the impartiality of God, that Adam
drove away by acting wantonly.

Virtues:

Fairest mother, how sweet you are, how
gentle - in you no one can be confounded.

Patience:

I am the pillar that can never be made to
yield, as my foundation is in God.

Virtues:

You that stay firm in the rocky cavern, you
are the glorious warrior who endures all.

Humility:

Daughters of Israel, God raised you from
beneath the tree, so now remember how it
was planted. Therefore rejoice, daughters of
Jerusalem.

Virtues:

Alas, alas, let us lament and mourn,
because our master's sheep has fled from
life!

*Soul, lamenting, penitent and calling to the
Virtues:*

You royal Virtues, how graceful, how brilliant
you look in the highest Sun, and how
delectable is your home, and so, what woe is
mine that I fled from you!

Virtues:

You who escaped, come to us, and God will
take you back.

Soul:

Ah, but a burning sweetness swallowed me
up in sins, so I did not dare come in.

Virtues:

Don't be afraid or run away: the good
Shepherd is searching for his lost sheep - it
is you.

Soul:

Now I need your help to gather me up - I
stink of the wounds that the ancient serpent
has made gangrenous.

Virtues:

Run to us, follow those steps where you'll
never falter, in our company; God will heal
you.

Soul, penitent, to the Virtues:

I am the sinner who fled from life: covered in
sores I'll come to you - you can offer me
redemption's shield. All of you, warriors of
Queen Humility, her white lilies and her
crimson roses, stoop to me, who exiled
myself from you like a stranger, and help
me, that in the blood of the Son of God I
may arise.

O Anima fugitiva, esto robusta, et indue te arma lucis.

Anima illa

Et o vera medicina, Humilitas, prebe michi auxilium, quia superbia in multis viciis fregit me, multas cicatrices michi imponens. Nunc fugio ad te, et ido suscipe me.

Humilitas

O omnes Virtutes, suscipite lugentem peccatorem, in suis cicatricibus, propter vulnera Christi, et perducite eum ad me.

Virtutes

Volumus te reducere et nolumus te deserere, et omnis celestis milicia gaudet super te - ergo decet nos in symphonia sonare.

Humilitas

O misera filia, volo te amplecti, quia magnus medicus dura et amara propter te passus est.

Virtutes:

O vivens fons, quam magna est suavitas tua, qui faciemi istorum in te non amisisti, sed acute previdisti quomodo eos de angelico casu abstraheres qui se estimabant illud habere quod non licet sic stare; unde gaude, filia Syon, quia deus tibi multos reddit quos serpens de te abscidere voluit, qui nunc in maiori luce fulgent quam prius illorum causa fuisset.

Diabolus

Que es, aut unde venis? Tu amplexata es me, et ego foras eduxi te. Sed nunc in reversione tua confundis me - ego autem pugna mea deiciam te!

Penitens Anima

Ego omnes vias meas malas esse cognovi, et ideo fugi a te. Modo autem, o illusor, pugno contra te. Inde tu, O regina Humilitas, tuo medicamine adiuva me!

Humilitas ad Victoriam

O Victoria, que istum in cela superasti, curre cum militibus tuis et omnes ligate Diabolum hunc!

Victoria ad Virtutes

O fortissimi et gloriosissimi milites, venite, et adiuuate me istum fallacem vincere.

Virtutes

O dulcissima bellatrix, in torrente fonte qui absorbit lupum rapacem - o gloriosa coronata, nos libenter militamus tecum contra illusorem hunc.

Humilitas

Ligate ergo istum, o Virtutes preclare!

Virtutes

Fugitive Anima, now be strong: put on the armour of light.

Soul:

And you, true medicine, Humility, grant me your help, for pride has broken me in many vices, inflicting many scars on me. Now I'm escaping to you - so take me up!

Humility:

All you Virtues, lift up this mournful sinner, with all her scars, for the sake of Christ's wounds, and bring her to me.

Virtues:

We want to bring you back - we shall not desert you, the whole host of heaven will rejoice in you: thus it is right for us sound our music.

Humilty:

Oh unhappy daughter, I want to embrace you: the great surgeon has suffered harsh and bitter wounds for your sake.

Virtues:

Living fountains, how great is your sweetness: you did not reject the gaze of these upon you - no, acutely you foresaw how you could avert them from the fall the angels fell, they who thought they possessed a power which no law allows to be like that. Rejoice then, daughter Jerusalem, for God is giving you back many whom the serpent wanted to sunder from you, who now gleam in a greater brightness than would have been their state before.

Devil:

Who are you? Where are you coming from? You were in my embrace, I led you out. Yet now you are going back, defying me - but I shall fight you and bring you down!

Soul, penitent:

I recognised that all my ways were wicked, so I fled you. But now, you deceiver, I will fight you face to face. Queen Humility, come with your medicine, give me aid!

Humility:

Victory, you who once conquered this creature in the heavens, run now, with all your soldiery, and all of you bind this fiend!

Victory:

Bravest and most glorious warriors, come, help me to vanquish this deceitful one!

Virtues:

Oh sweetest warrior, in the scorching fountain that swallowed up the voracious wolf glorious, crowned one, how gladly we'll fight against that deceiver, at your side!

Humility:

Bind him then, you shining Virtues!

Virtues:

tua in omnibus adimplebimus.

Victoria
Gaudete, a socii, quia antiquus serpens
ligatus est!

Virtutes
Laus tibi, Christe, rex angelorum!

Castitas
In mente altissimi o Satana, Caput tuum
conculcavi, et in virginea forma dulce
miraculum colui, ubi filius dei venit in
mundum; unde delectus es in omnibus
spoliis tuis, et nunc gaudeant omnes qui
habitant in celis, quia venter tuus confusus
est.

Diabolus
Tu nescis quid colis, quia venter tuus vacuus
est pulchra forma de viro sumpta - ubi
transis preceptum quod deus in suavi copula
precepit; unde nescis quid sis!

Castitas
Quomodo posset me hoc tangere quod tua
suggestio polluit per immundiciam incestus?
Unum virum protuli, qui genus humanum ad
se congregat contra te; per nativitatem
suam.

Virtutes
O deus, quis es tu, qui in temet ipso hoc
magnum consilium habuisti, quod destruxit
infernalem haustum in publicanis et
peccatoribus, qui nunc lucent in superna
bonitate! Unde, O rex, laus sit tibi. O pater
omnipotens, ex te fluit fons in igneo amore,
perduc filios tuos in rectum ventum velorum
aquarum, ita ut et nos eos hoc modo
perducamus in celestem Ierusalem.

In principio omnes creature viruerunt, in
medio flores floruerunt; postea viriditas
descendit. Et istud vir preliator vidit et dixit:

Hoc scio, sed aureus numerus nondum est
plenus. Tu ergo, patrem speculum aspice:
in corpore meo fatigationem sustineo, parvuli
etiam mei deficiunt.

Nunc memor esto, quod plenitudo que in
primo facta est arescere non debuit, et tunc
te habuisti quod oculus tuus numquam
cederet usque dum corpus meum videres
plenum gemmarum. Nam me fatigat quod
omnia membra mea in irrisionem vadunt.
Pater, vide, vulnera mea tibi ostendo.

Ergo nunc, omnes homines, genua vestra
ad patrem vestrum flectite, ut vobis manum
suam porrigat.

out your orders to the full.

Victory:
Comrades, rejoice: the ancient serpent
snake is bound!

Virtues:
Praise be to you, Christ, King of the angels!

Chastity:
In the mind of the Highest, Satan, I trod on
your head, and in a virgin form I nurtured a
sweet miracle when the Son of God came
into the world; therefore you are laid low,
with all your blunder, and now let all who
dwell in heaven rejoice, because your belly
has been confounded.

Devil:
You don't know what you are nurturing, for
your belly is devoid of the beautiful form that
woman receives from man; in this you
transgress the command that God enjoined
in the sweet act of love; so you don't even
know what you are!

Chastity:
How can what you say affect me? Even your
suggestion smirches it with foulness. I did
bring forth a man, who gathers up mankind
to himself, against you, through his nativity.

Virtues:
Who are you, God, who held such great
counsel in yourself, a counsel that destroyed
the draught of hell in publicans and sinners
who now shine in paradisaal goodness!
Praise to you, King for this! Almighty Father,
from you flowed a fountain in fiery love:
guide your children into a fair wind, sailing
the waters, so that we too may, steer them in
this way into the heavenly Jerusalem.

[Processional]

In the beginning all creation was verdant,
flowers blossomed in the midst of it; later,
greenness sank away. And the champion
saw this and said:

"I know it, but the golden number is not yet
full. You then, behold me, mirror of your
fatherhood: in my body I am suffering
exhaustion, even my little ones faint.

Now remember that the fullness which was
made in the beginning need not have grown
dry, and that then you resolved that your eye
would never fall until you saw my body full of
jewels. For it wearies me that all my limbs
are exposed to mockery: Father, behold, I
am showing you my wounds."

So now, all you people, bend your knees to
the Father, that he may reach you his hand.