Will Kesling, “Day of . . . WHAT?”

Toward a Viable Translation of Verdi’s Requiem

Sigmund Freud claimed to be afraid of music. He conceded to a personal “resistance to the enigmatic power of music.”¹ Freud was not afraid of other artistic forms: he could stand in front of a sculpture and reflect upon what he saw. Freud was moved by literature. But with music it was different. In Freud’s mind music is abstract.² Freud could not comprehend its meaning nor understand how music could have such an emotional impact on him.

So what happens when a text is added to music? Now the music is put into a context which is no longer abstract. The music suddenly becomes related to the meaning of the words, the message of the text, and the intellectual and imaginative depths of the poetry. The words provide a concrete context for the music to relate to. Music can illustrate and even animate the words. Tone-painting and word-painting are cases of illustration.

The text provides impetus to the creation of the music. The music expresses the composer’s emotional reaction to the words. This may be a very romantic notion for we know that in differing stylistic periods various composers demonstrate a more detached approach to the written word. Often Broadway lyric writers have created libretti as inspired by music already composed. In either case textual meaning is further unveiled and enlarged through its musical association.

Freud possessed some level of fear of music. On a more serious note, was the famous opera composer Giuseppe Verdi afraid of death? This conductor is convinced that he was. Even more, he fears the possibility of facing a Final Judgment. Verdi’s Manzoni Requiem is a stirring testament of his personal philosophy of life. Verdi professed no personal belief in God, and often is described as an atheist. In Verdi’s Requiem death is punishment. Was this punishment from God or from some featureless universal fate?

To assert that Verdi feared death is a rather bold declaration that is not inscribed in any musicological treatise nor found in his biographies. However, the answer to this assertion lies in the music; the musically graphic portrayal of the Sequence text of the Requiem Mass. All humans must face the moment of death. Some face this

¹ Oliver Sacks, Musicophilia; Tales of Music and the Brain, Vintage, 2007, 2008, p. 293.
² Ibid.
event having faith in a Supernal Being and hope for a future life in eternal realms. Others may have no further expectations at the moment the heart stops. It is well documented that Verdi is at least a free thinker. Verdi’s wife Giuseppina writes:

He is a jewel among honest men; he understands and feels himself every delicate and elevated sentiment. And yet this brigand permits himself to be, I won’t say an atheist, but certainly very little of a believer, and that with an obstinacy and calm that make me want to beat him. I exhaust myself in speaking to him about the marvels of the heavens, the earth, the sea, etc. It’s a waste of breath! He laughs in my face and freezes me in the midst of my oratorical periods and my divine enthusiasm by saying ‘you’re all crazy,’ and unfortunately he says it with good faith.3

Verdi’s Requiem is a unique work for a number of reasons. To begin, Verdi was first and foremost an operatic composer. For Verdi theatrical expression was his compositional style. His setting of the liturgical text was no less dramatic and picturesque within the musical requiem idiom than any of his operas. The Requiem is not an opera however, because it does not have a plot, dialog, or characters. Nevertheless, it uses the style of Italian opera: dramatic music, big-voiced soloists, a chorus, a strong orchestra presence, and thematic recurrences, textually and musically, to theatrically explore the issues pertaining to death and a final judgement.

Indeed, Hans von Bulow, the world’s first professional conductor, once mockingly referred to the Requiem as Verdi’s “latest opera in church vestments.” Unlike the funeral masses of his most important predecessors, Verdi’s Requiem is not structured around the traditional Catholic Church service, and was never intended to be performed as an integral part of this service. In the latter half of the 19th century massive numbers of performers were required to perform these works. The length of the performance and the virtuosic demands on soloists made it no longer possible to mandate that composers follow church canon literally. For many reasons, large works with liturgical texts had long since left churches for the concert stage in Verdi’s day.

3 http://www.patheos.com/blogs/daylightatheism/2008/05/the-contributions-of-freethinkers-i/#sthash.I2G3e378.dpuf
Verdi’s *Requiem* stands apart from most works of the genre for its vivid theatricality coupled with its expressions of human frailty and fear. Why? Perhaps it was the strict liturgical Latin text that gave the *Requiem* the freedom from operatic clichés. This freedom allowed Verdi to concentrate on the most important thing – human emotions at that fateful instant between life and death. Verdi expresses them in perfect musical form where moments of fiery passion are equaled by moments of heavenly, noble serenity. Verdi’s apprehensions about the great unknown that lay beyond this life and his terror over the possibility of a final judgment for which he might be unprepared are laid bare in the liturgical section of the *Requiem* known as the Sequence, *Dies Irae* (“Day of Wrath”), to which he gave the greatest emphasis.

Mass is one of the names by which the sacrament of the Eucharist is commonly called in the Catholic Church. The *Missa pro defunctis*, “Mass for the dead” is better known as the Requiem Mass and is offered for the repose of the souls of the dead. The Sequence is a liturgical poem; when used during the celebration of the Eucharist is chanted or recited after the Tract or Alleluia, if present, and always before the reading of the Gospel. The most famous Sequence from the Mass is the hymn for Pentecost, *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (“Come Holy Spirit”).

The Sequence text with the *incipit* (meaning “he began”) *Dies Irae* is a poem commonly ascribed to Thomas of Celano, the 13th century Franciscan friar and St. Francis of Assisi’s biographer. This sacred poetry is considered one of the most exquisite treasures of Roman Catholic Church literature. The poem brings out some of the forceful powers of the Latin language and the solemn effect of the triple rhyme scheme. Also, the poet persuasively drives home the universality of his theme; the significance of man in the eternal scheme of things, death, eternal judgment, and the sinner pleading for salvation. The *Dies Irae* and *Veni Sancte Spiritus* hold a foremost place among the masterpieces of sacred song from any age.

In his monumental *Dictionary of Hymnology* (1925), the Rev. John Julian states that “the hold which this Sequence has had upon the minds of men of various nations and creeds has been very great.”

Carefully selected portions of the Sequence appear with great effect in Scene 20 “Cathedral” of Goethe’s *Faust*. Additionally, the Sequence provides a magnificent climax to Canto VI in Sir Walter Scott’s *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. The structure of the original Sequence as used in

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the Roman Catholic liturgy consists of seventeen three-line stanzas in accentual, trochaic meter with two syllabic rhymes followed by three couplets: the first two having two-syllabic rhymes and the last being assonant and catalectic. Scott’s poem is the embodiment of the Latin poem but expressed in only twelve lines.

That day of wrath, that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
What power shall be the sinner’s stay?
How shall he meet that dreadful day?

When, shriveling like a parched scroll,
The flaming heavens together roll;
When louder yet, and yet more dread,
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead:

Oh! on that day, that wrathful day,
When man to judgment wakes from clay,
Be Thou the trembling sinner’s stay,
Though heaven and earth shall pass away!

The Sequence forms the Second Movement of the Requiem. For the sake of dramatizing his death theme, Verdi divides the seventeen verses and five closing rhymes and couplets of the Sequence into ten textual subdivisions and assigns these sections to various musical forces. Only the sections that convince this conductor that Verdi feared death and a final judgment as based on the translation are discussed.

Section 1. Dies irae (“Day of wrath” for chorus & orchestra)

The Sequence commences with the chorus wrathfully ‘screaming’ out the Dies Irae (“Day of wrath”). Verdi gives the full-voiced chorus a demanding ascending chromatic line in octaves. This can barely be heard in the midst of a cataclysm of thundering drums, hammer stroke down bow chords in the strings, and diving and ascending runs in the rest of the orchestra. The uproar abates temporarily for the second stanza, Quantus tremor est futurus (“How great a trembling will be”). Here the orchestra is soft and staccato-like as the chorus, sotto voce (literally “under voice”, but meaning “in a quiet voice”), stutters in fright. Verdi compensates for the lack of a stage plot by deliberately stressing specific aural images.

For the first time in the Requiem we get a hint of Verdi’s fear. Here Verdi repeats this first stanza four times and places a particular emphasis on “Day of wrath” as he repeats that phrase seven times.
Day of wrath . . .
that day . . .
shall dissolve the world into embers,
witness David with Sibyl.

Day of wrath . . .
Day of wrath . . .
that day . . .
shall dissolve . . .
shall dissolve the world into embers,

Day of wrath, that day shall dissolve the world into embers,
witness David with Sibyl.

Day of wrath, that day shall dissolve the world into embers,
witness David with Sibyl.

Day of wrath . . . Day of wrath.

Section 2. *Tuba mirum spargens sonum* (“The trumpet, spreading its wondrous sound” for chorus & orchestra)

Section 3. *Mors stupebit et natura* (“Death will be stunned” for bass soloist & orchestra)

Section 4. *Liber scriptus proferetur* (“The written book shall be brought forth” for mezzo-soprano soloist, chorus & orchestra)

*Liber scriptus proferetur* (“The written book shall be brought forth”) is the fifth stanza of the poem and is a long aria for the mezzo-soprano soloist. It is followed by stanza 6, *Judex ergo cum sedebit* (“When therefore the Judge is seated”). The chorus reacts to the mezzo-soprano’s sobering description of the contents of the great book containing all things to be judged and mutters “*dies irae*” on a single pitch. Spiraling figurative writing in the strings swells up into a breakneck reprise of the opening. The fear of the Final Judgment looms large as is seen in Verdi’s three repetitions of Stanza 5 and the repeated fragment of Stanza 6. Again, note the interjection of *Dies irae*. 
A written book will be brought forth, in which all shall be contained, for which the world will be judged.

Day of wrath . . .

A written book will be brought forth, in which all shall be contained, for which the world will be judged.

Day of wrath . . .

Therefore when the Judge takes His seat, whatever lies concealed will be revealed,

Day of wrath . . .

No wrong shall remain unavenged.

A written book will be brought forth, in which all shall be contained, for which the world will be judged.

Day of wrath . . .

Section 5. *Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?* ("What then am I, a poor wretch going say?" for soprano, mezzo-soprano & tenor soloists & orchestra)

With *Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?* ("What then am I, a poor wretch going say?") is Stanza 7. Here the poetic perspective changes from that of a narrator to the first-person introspective queries made by a penitent sinner. This conductor can imagine Verdi’s barely audible almost wearisome voice saying over and over

What am I then, a wretch, to say? Which protector shall I ask for, even when the just are scarcely secure?

What am I then, a wretch, to say? Which protector shall I ask for?
What am I then, a wretch, to say
even when the just are scarcely secure?

What am I then, a wretch, to say?
Which protector shall I ask for,
even when the just are scarcely secure?

What am I then, a wretch, to say?
Which protector shall I ask for,
even when the just are scarcely secure?

Section 6. *Rex tremendae majestatis* (“King of terrifying majesty” for soprano, alto, tenor & bass soloists, choir & orchestra)

In a striking contrast, the choral basses boom *Rex tremendae majestatis* (“King of terrifying majesty”) which is Stanza 8. The third line of the stanza, *Salva me, fons pietatis* (“Save me, fount of pity”) can be imagined as Verdi’s personal supplication. He uses all four soloists and the full choir singing a soaring melody. The basses interpose their ominous *Rex tremendae*, but the repetitions of *Salva me* continue until the phrase finally blossoms to a stunning climax using the combined forces of soloists and choir. Note the emphasis Verdi gives to “save me”.

King of fearful majesty
who freely saves the saved:
Save me, fount of pity.

King of fearful majesty, save me.

Who freely saves the saved, save me.
Save me, fount of pity.

Save me . . . Save me . . . Save me

Save me, fount of pity.

King of fearful majesty
who freely saves the saved:
Save me, fount of pity.

Save me . . . Save me . . . Save me fount of pity.
Section 7. *Recordare Jesu pie Jesu* ("Remember, merciful Jesus" for soprano & mezzo-soprano soloists & orchestra)

Section 8. *Ingemisco tanquam reus* ("I groan, like one who is guilty" for tenor soloist & orchestra)

Section 9. *Confutatis* ("When the accursed are confounded" for bass soloist, chorus & orchestra)

Sections 7-9 comprising Stanzas 9-17 are still represented from a first-person perspective. A beautiful duet for the soprano and the mezzo, *Recordare Jesu pie Jesu* ("Remember, merciful Jesus"), and a lyrical arioso for tenor, *Ingemisco tanquam reus* ("I groan, like one who is guilty"), all acknowledge the sinner's guilt and continues the plea for salvation. A woeful aria for bass *Confutatis maledictis* ("When the accursed are confounded") brings back the terror of the Final Judgement. But the bass soloist continues with a prayer of contrition in the last stanza of the poem *Oro supplex et acclinis* ("I pray, suppliant and kneeling"). The *Dies irae* returns with all of its original fury, only to dissolve into the beautiful *Lacrymosa dies illa* ("O how tearful that day"). The reader may judge for him/herself if text repetition gives insight to Verdi’s spiritual notions.

When the accursed are confounded,  
consigned to harsh flames,  
call me with the blessed.

I pray, suppliant and kneeling,  
with a heart contrite as ashes:  
take my ending into your care.

I pray, suppliant and kneeling,  
with a heart contrite as ashes:  
take my ending into your care.

When the accursed are confounded,  
consigned to harsh flames,  
call me with the blessed . . .  
call me with the blessed . . .
Call me . . . call me with the blessed . . .

I pray, suppliant and kneeling,
with a heart contrite as ashes:
take my ending into your care.

I pray, suppliant and kneeling,
with a heart contrite as ashes:
take . . . my ending into your care . . .
take . . . my ending into your care.

I pray, suppliant and kneeling,
take me in your care.

Day of wrath . . .
that day . . .
shall dissolve the world into embers,
witness David with Sibyl.

Day of wrath, that day . . . day of wrath, that day.

Section 10. *Lacrymosa dies illa* (“O how tearful that day”) and *Pie Jesu Domine* (“Merciful Lord Jesus” for soprano, alto, tenor & bass soloists, chorus & orchestra)

One would think that existing translations of this Latin poem would be as dramatic as the musical description of Verdi’s setting of it. Published translations of the *Requiem* are numerous and in the case of the Sequence, translations range far from the original character of the poem. Having conducted a dozen performances of this masterpiece both in the United States and Europe, and revisiting this mammoth score, spending many untold hours studying the Latin text, I decided that a more precise translation be prepared for the listener for an April 18, 2015 performance of the work in Gainesville, Florida.

First, most translations available are poetic paraphrases of the Ordinary text. Second, this conductor was moved to provide the audience with supertitles. This is a rather common feature of opera productions but rare for presentations of choral master works. The main objective was to create a literal, word for word translation and then carefully select the precise English word to match its Latin counterpart. The English words were carefully organized to make
grammatical sense. Only for prosaic and poetic exigencies were alternate words chosen, taking the utmost care to ensure the purity of the Requiem text. The Sequence is through-composed. Verdi ignored the poem’s strophic structure and did not use the stanza repeating method of composition where each verse of the hymn is set to the exact same music. Disregarding meter and rhyme scheme; he freely repeated stanzas, phrases, and words all for the sake of dramatizing the text. This translator made no attempt to adhere to the poetic features of the poem and focused completely on meaning.

It is rare that audiences are provided with supertitles for choral master works such as Verdi’s *Requiem*. A translation is normally provided in the concert program. Interestingly, as the stage lights go up on the performers, the house lights go down on the audience. The listeners sit in a darkened concert hall incapable of reading the translation printed in the program.

Here we return to Freud’s concerns about music. Would Sigmund Freud, sitting in a darkened concert hall, find fear and be incapable of gleaning the maximum meaning from hearing the *Requiem* without a translation available? The ancient Sequence text elicits the emotion of fear in this conductor’s opinion. The whole purpose of Verdi’s musical setting of the *Dies Irae* was to dramatize that terror. In the philosophy of the medieval period the best way to prepare for death was to continually remind oneself of its inevitability. One of the ways to remember death was to contemplate the pains of hell in the afterlife the sinner might suffer. Both Thomas of Celano’s text and Giuseppe Verdi’s music dwell on that theme. This was the inspiration for creating supertitles for a performance of this amazing masterwork.

In most opera houses a translated sentence or several sentences of the text being sung are put on a screen above or sometimes to the side of the stage proscenium. No matter how often the sentence(s) or phrases/fragments are repeated by the singer(s), that single slide of the text will remain there, sometimes for several minutes. This conductor was determined to present the text as it unfolds in real time throughout the score. Here the listener can see which words; phrases, etc. are repeated by Verdi for dramatic effect as witnessed above. The translation of the complete *Requiem* fills 287 PowerPoint slides. Verdi’s personal struggle over the fear of death is laid bare when the non-Latin speaker is made privy to Verdi’s exploitation of various portions of the text.

The common problem when translating poetry like the Sequence is attempting to match the original poetic form (rhyme
schemes, etc.) while endeavoring to preserve the original literary meaning. Below the reader will see a charted version of the Sequence placed in four columns to facilitate comparisons. The first column contains the Latin text taken from the Requiem Mass as found in the 1962 *Roman Missal*. The second column shows an English version translated by the Anglican Priest William Josiah Irons in 1849 and is found in the *English Missal*. Although Irons’ version is from a slightly different Latin text, his translation replicates the rhyme and meter of the original. The translation presented in the third column more closely conforms to the official Latin and is approved by the Catholic Church for use as the funeral mass in the liturgy of the Anglican ordinariate. This English version is a more formal equivalence translation but does not replicate the rhyme and meter.

The fourth column contains the writer’s translation. Here the attempt was made to present the most literal representation of the text possible. The literal representation of the poem took president over form, rhyme and meter. In this translation we can see how Verdi made use of the Sequence text for dramatic purposes. The reader can see the dramaturgy of the *Dies Irae* translation even without the enhancement of Verdi’s ultra-dramatic musical score sounding in our ears. Each phrase represents one slide, each slide changing as the music unfolds.

All music is essentially dramatic. Poetry is created to elicit emotions. To Verdi there is no difference. For Verdi there exists drama when pondering death. Will any of this help allay Freud’s ‘fear’ of music? If he could follow the Sequence text as it unfolds with Verdi’s musical score, Freud would know that his fears were justified.

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5The Order of Funerals for use by the Ordinariates erected under the auspices of the Apostolic Constitution Anglicantorum coetibus (PDF) United States: US Ordinariate.
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<tr>
<td><em>Dies irae, dies illa,</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Solvet sæculum in favilla:</em>&lt;br&gt;Teste David cum Sibylla.</td>
<td>Day of wrath and doom impending.&lt;br&gt;David’s word with Sibyl’s blending,&lt;br&gt;Heaven and earth in ashes ending.</td>
<td>The day of wrath, that day will dissolve the world in ashes&lt;br&gt;As foretold by David and the Sibyl!</td>
<td>Day of wrath . . .&lt;br&gt;that day . . .&lt;br&gt;shall dissolve the world into embers,&lt;br&gt;witness David with Sibyl.</td>
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<td><em>Quantus tremor est futurus,</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Quando Judex est venturus,</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Cuncta stricte discussurus!</em></td>
<td>Oh, what fear man’s bosom rendeth,&lt;br&gt;When from heaven the Judge descendeth,&lt;br&gt;On whose sentence all dependeth.</td>
<td>How much trembling there will be,&lt;br&gt;when the Judge will come,&lt;br&gt;investigating everything strictly!</td>
<td>How great the trembling will be,&lt;br&gt;when the Judge shall come,&lt;br&gt;the strict investigator of all things!</td>
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<td><em>Tuba mirum spargens sonum,</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Per sepulchra regionum,</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Coget omnes ante thronum.</em></td>
<td>Wondrous sound the trumpet flingeth;&lt;br&gt;Through earth’s sepulchres it ringeth;&lt;br&gt;All before the throne it bringeth.</td>
<td>The trumpet, scattering a wondrous sound through the sepulchres of the regions,&lt;br&gt;will summon all before the Throne.</td>
<td>The trumpet, scattering a marvelous sound . . . through the tombs of every land,&lt;br&gt;will summon all before the throne.</td>
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<td><em>Mors stupebit et natura,</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Cum resurget creatura,</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Judicanti responsura.</em></td>
<td>Death is struck, and nature quaking,&lt;br&gt;All creation is awaking,&lt;br&gt;To its Judge an answer making.</td>
<td>Death and nature will marvel,&lt;br&gt;when the creature arises,&lt;br&gt;to respond to the Judge.</td>
<td>Death will be stunned,&lt;br&gt;likewise nature,&lt;br&gt;When all creation shall rise again,&lt;br&gt;to answer to the One judging.</td>
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*Note: William Josiah Irons is an English translation of the Roman Missal.*
Liber scriptus proferetur, 
In quo totum continetur, 
Unde mundus judicetur

Lo, the book, exactly worded, 
Wherein all hath been recorded, 
Thence shall judgement be awarded.

The written book will be brought forth, 
in which all is contained, 
from which the world shall be judged.

A written book will be brought forth, 
in which all shall be contained, 
for which the world will be judged.

Day of wrath . . .

Judex ergo cum sedebit, 
Quid quid latet apparebit: 
Nil inultum remanebit.

When the Judge his seat attaineth, 
And each hidden deed arraigneth, 
Nothing unavenged remaineth.

When therefore the Judge will sit, 
whatever hides will appear: nothing will remain unpunished.

Therefore when the Judge takes His seat, 
whatever lies concealed will be revealed,

Day of wrath . . .

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus? 
Quem patronum rogaturus, 
Cum vix justus sit securus?

What shall I, frail man, be pleading? 
Who for me be interceding, 
When the just are mercy needing?

What am I, miserable, then to say? 
Which patron to ask, 
when [even] the just may [only] hardly be sure?

What am I then, a wretch, to say? 
Which protector shall I ask for, 
even when the just are scarcely secure?

What am I then, a wretch, 
to say? 
Which protector shall I ask for?

What am I then, a wretch, 
to say even when the just are scarcely secure?

What am I then, a wretch, 
to say? 
Which protector shall I ask for,
Juste Judex ultionis,
Redemisti Crucem passus:
Quærens me, sedisti lassus:
Ne me perdas illa die.
Quod sum causa tuæ viæ:
Recordare, Jesu pie,
Salva me, fons pietatis.
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,
Donum fac remissionis,
Quærens me, sedisti lassus:
Ne me perdas illa die.
Rex tremendæ majestatis,
Salva me, fons pietatis.
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,
Donum fac remissionis,
Quærens me, sedisti lassus:
Ne me perdas illa die.
Incarnation;
Think, kind Jesu, my
us!

Ante diem rationis.

donum fac remissionis,
Juste Judex ultionis,
Tantus labor non sit cassus.

Just Judge of revenge,
grant the gift of
remission . . .
before the day of
reckoning.

Remember, merciful Jesus,
that I was the reason for
your sojourn:
Remember, merciful Jesus,
that I was the reason for
your sojourn:
do not cast me out on that
day.

Remember, merciful Jesus,
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that I was the reason for
your sojourn:
do not cast me out on that
day.
Ingemisco, tamquam reus:  Grant the gift of 
Culpa rubet vultus meus: 
Supplicanti parce, Deus. 

I sigh, like the guilty one:  before the day . . . before 
The suppliant groaning! 
Spare the suppliant, O 
God.

Qui Mariam absolvesti, Through the sinful woman 
Et latronem exaudisti, shaven, 
Qui Mariam absolvisti, Through the dying thief 
Supplicanti parce, Deus. 

Thou who absolvedst Mary, 
And heeded the Robber, 
Gavest hope to me, too. 
You, who absolved Mary 
Magdalen, 
And heeded the thief, 
Have given me hope also.

Preces meæ non sunt 
Worthless are my prayers 
digne; and sighing, 
Sed tu bonus fac benigne, 
Ne perenni cremer igne. 

My prayers are not worthy: 
However, Thou, Good [Lord], do good, 
Lest I be burned up by 
Eternal fire.

Et ab hædis me sequestra, 
Inter oves locum præsta. 

Grant me a place of 
Eminence among the 
Sheep, 
And separate me from the 
Goats.

Statuens in parte dextra. 
Et ab hædis me sequestra, 
Statuens in parte dextra.

Grant me a place of 
Eminence among the 
Sheep, 
And separate me from the 
Goats.

Confutatis maledictis, 
Flammis acribus addictis, 
Voca me cum benedictis 

Wind of curses is confounded, 
Doomed to flames of woe 
Unbounded, 
Call me with Thy Saints 
Surrounded.

Once the cursed have been 
Rebuked, sentenced to acrid flames: 
Call Thou me with the 
Blessed.

When the accursed are 
Confounded, consigned to harsh flames, 
Call me with the blessed.
Oro supplex et acclinis,  
Cor contritum quasi cinis,  
Gere curam mei finis.

Low I kneel, with heart’s submission,  
See, like ashes, my contrition,  
Help me in my last condition.

I meekly and humbly pray,  
[m]y heart is as crushed as the ashes:  
perform the healing of mine end.

I pray, suppliant and kneeling,  
with a heart contrite as ashes:  
take my ending into your care.

I pray, suppliant and kneeling,  
with a heart contrite as ashes:  
take my ending into your care.

When the accursed are confounded,  
consigned to harsh flames,  
call me with the blessed . . .

call me with the blessed . . .

call me . . . call me with the blessed . . .

I pray, suppliant and kneeling,  
with a heart contrite as ashes:  
take my ending into your care.

I pray, suppliant and kneeling,  
with a heart contrite as ashes:  
take . . . my ending into your care . . .

take . . . my ending into your care.

I pray, suppliant and kneeling,  
take me in your care.

Day of wrath . . .  
that day . . .  
shall dissolve the world into embers,  
witness David with Sibyl.

Day of wrath, that day . . .  
day of wrath, that day.

Lacrymosa dies illa,  
Qua resurget ex favilla,  
Judicandus homo reus.  
Huic ergo parole, Deus:

Ah! that day of tears and mourning,  
From the dust of earth returning  
Man for judgement must prepare him,  
Spare, O God, in mercy spare him.

Tearful will be that day,  
on which from the ash arises  
the guilty man who is to be judged.  
Spare him therefore, God.

O how tearful that day,  
on which shall rise from those embers . . .  
the guilty to be judged.  
Therefore, spare this one, O God.
Delos

Pie Jesu Domine,
Dona eis requiem. Amen.

Lord, all-pitying, Jesus blest,
Grant them Thine eternal rest. Amen.

Merciful Lord Jesus,
grant them rest. Amen.

O how tearful that day,
on which shall rise from those embers . . .
the guilty to be judged.
Therefore, spare this one,
O God.

O how tearful that day,
on which shall rise from those embers . . .
the guilty to be judged.
Therefore, spare this one,
O God.

Merciful Lord Jesus, grant them rest.
. . . rest . . . rest . . .
grant them rest.

Amen.