



Frigescente karitatis

(13th c.)

Edited by Helen Deeming

F rigescente kari ta tis

Fri - ges - cen - te ka - ri - ta - tis in - ter - ris ig - ni - cu - lo

u - ni - ver - se pra - vi - ta - tis fons - in - un - dat se - cu - lo

bre - vi sub ar - ti - cu - lo

au - di - e - tur va - ni - ta - tis ge - mi - tus in - po - pu - lo.

2. Ecce florent venditores
spiritalis graciae
Antichristi precursores
pastores ecclesie
fures eucharistie
novi Iude successores
Christum vendunt hodie.

3. Silent leges iura tacent
nullo fulta stipite
luxus et ruina placent
in hoc mundi tramite
errat plebs cum milite
lapides [ce] sancti iacent
in viarum capite.

The song and its source

Frigescente karitatis is found with musical notation uniquely in a thirteenth-century English manuscript of Latin poetry, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 79. It is one of only two poems in the manuscript to be set to music: the other is *Dolorum solatium*, the famous *planctus* (lament) of David over Saul and Jonathan, thought to be by Abelard. The two musical items are somewhat out of keeping with the overall contents of the collection, which overwhelmingly focus on the Saints and the Blessed Virgin, but nonetheless seem to have been deliberately included as they are placed at the centre of the book. *Frigescente karitatis* is also preserved in a manuscript at Santa Croce, which provides two additional stanzas explicitly admonishing Christian Rome as well as some alternative readings adopted here.

In *Frigescente karitatis*, the poet laments the spiritual decline of his time, fitting in with a trend of social critique and moral upbraiding in contemporary learned Latin verse, but relatively unusual among such verses to survive with a musical setting. Set largely one note per syllable, and with its first two lines set to broadly the same musical phrase, its musical style is similar to much Latin and vernacular song of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but its habit of placing relatively long melismas on the penultimate syllable of the line resembles some of the pieces in the *'Later Cambridge Songbook'* (Cambridge, University Library, Ff.1.17(1)), now available in John Stevens' posthumous edition (Oxford, 2005).

Translation

1. As the spark of charity freezes on the earth
The fountain of universal wickedness floods over mankind.
In a brief moment
The groan of vanity will be heard in the people.

2. Lo, the sellers of spiritual grace flourish,
Precursors of Antichrist are the shepherds of the church,
Thieves of the Eucharist,
The new successors of Judas sell Christ today.

3. The laws are silent, rights fall mute, supported by no prop,
Luxury and ruin give delight in this footpath of the world,
The common people stray along with the knights,
Like stones do the saints lie at the head of the ways.

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