

A selection from *Aquinas at Prayer**

A Commentary on Pange Lingua

Fr. Paul Murray, O.P.

1. Pange lingua gloriosi
Corporis mysterium,
Sanguinisque pretiosi,
Quem in mundi pretium
Fructus ventris generosi,
Rex effudit gentium.

1. Sing, my tongue, the Savior's glory,
of his flesh the mystery sing,
of the blood, all price exceeding,
shed by our immortal king,
destined for the world's redemption,
from a noble womb to spring.

2. Nobis datus, nobis natus
Ex intacta Virgine
Et in mundo conversatus,
Sparso verbi semine,
Sui moras incolatus
Miro clausit ordine.

2. Given for us, and condescending,
To be born for us below,
High with lowly converse blending
Far the seed of truth to sow,
Till he died with wondrous ending,
Bearing all our weight of woe.

3. In supremae nocte coenae
Recumbens cum fratribus,
Observata lege plene
Cibus in legalibus,
Cibum turbae duodenae
Se dat suis manibus

3. At that last great supper lying,
Circled by his chosen band,
Humbly with the law complying
First he finished its command,
Then immortal food supplying
Gave himself with his own hand.

4. Verbum caro, panem verum
Verbo carnem efficit:
Fitque sanguis Christi merum,
Et si sensus deficit,
Ad firmandum cor sincerum
Sola fides sufficit.

4. Word-made-flesh, the bread of
nature,
By his Word to flesh he turns;
Wine into his blood he changes
Though our sense no change
discerns.
But, if inmost heart be earnest,
Faith her lesson quickly learns.

*Paul Murray, O.P., *Aquinas at Prayer: The Bible, Mysticism, and Poetry* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013) pp. 192-202 passim.

5. Tantum ergo Sacramentum
Veneremur cernui:
Et antiquum documentum
Novo cedat ritui:
Praestet fides supplementum
Sensuum defectui.

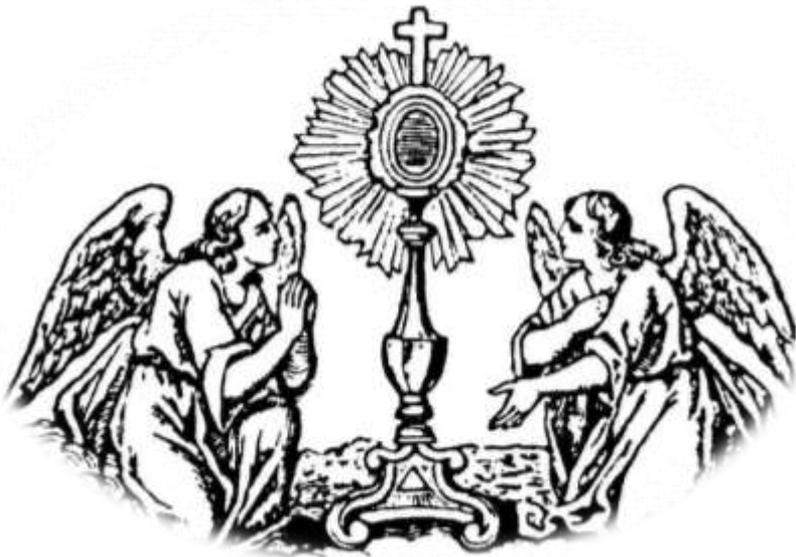
5. Therefore, we, before him
bending,
This great Sacrament revere;
Types and shadows have their
ending,
For the newer rite is here;
Faith, our outward sense
befriending,
Makes our inward vision clear.

6. Genitori, Genitoque
Laus et iubilatio,
Salus, honor, virtus quoque
Sit et benedictio:
Procedenti ab utroque
Compar sit laudatio.
Amen.

6. Glory, let us give, and blessing
To the Father and the Son,
Honour, might, and praise
addressing
While eternal ages run;
Ever, too, his love confessing,
Who, from both, with both is one.

Sing, O tongue the Savior's glory. The first word chosen by Aquinas to open the *Pange lingua*, should alert us at once to the nature of the work before us. Here, Aquinas is no longer engaged in composing one of his philosophical or theological treatises. He is not attempting to write prose. Instead, we find him engaged in writing words for a sacred song. In effect, he is writing a poem. And as readers of Aquinas's work, instead of being, as it were, together in a classroom with a teacher, we find ourselves in a place of worship, in a liturgical context. For in 'this place' we are invited not merely to think about the mystery of the Eucharist, and not merely to pray, but instead, raising our voices in prayer, to sing together, as it were, First Vespers of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

...At the level of ideas, *Pange lingua's*, first four stanzas articulate the actual foundation of Eucharistic devotion, and in particular its history with regard to the work of Christ Jesus: the mystery of a God who, first of all, assumes our human flesh, and then chooses to die on our behalf, offering his life's blood for our redemption (stanzas one and two). After that we have the story of the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper (stanzas three and four). The intended impact of these first four stanzas is not that we should simply reflect intellectually on the history of Eucharistic devotion, and nothing else. But rather, contemplating these things, we should be led to bow with reverence before the great mystery itself.



For further Lectio divina:

John 1: 1-4, 9-14

John 6

John 3:16

John 15