

# The *Lauda Sion* of Saint Thomas Aquinas

trans. Stephen C. Córdova

**L**AUDA SION SALVATOREM,  
lauda ducem et pastorem,  
in hymnis et canticis.  
Quantum potes, tantum aude:  
quia maior omni laude,  
nec laudare sufficis.

Laudis thema specialis,  
panis vivus et vitalis  
hodie proponitur.  
Quem in sacrae mensa cenae,  
turbae fratrum duodenae  
datum non ambigitur.

Sit laus plena, sit sonora,  
sit iucunda, sit decora  
mentis iubilatio.  
Dies enim solemnus agitur,  
in qua mensae prima recolitur  
huius institutio.

In hac mensa novi Regis,  
novum Pascha novae legis,  
phase vetus terminat.  
Vetustatem novitas,  
umbram fugat veritas,  
noctem lux eliminat.

Quod in coena Christus gessit,  
faciendum hoc expressit  
in sui memoriam.  
Docti sacris institutis,  
panem, vinum in salutis  
consecramus hostiam.

Dogma datur christianis,  
quod in carnem transit panis,  
et vinum in sanguinem.  
Quod non capis, quod non vides,  
animosa firmat fides,  
praeter rerum ordinem.

Sub diversis speciebus,  
signis tantum, et non rebus,  
latent res eximiae.  
Caro cibus, sanguis potus:  
manet tamen Christus totus  
sub utraque specie.

ZION, PRAISE YOUR SAVIOR,  
praise your shepherd and leader,  
in chants and hymns.  
Dare to praise him as much as you are able:  
for he is greater than any praise,  
and you cannot praise him enough.

A special theme of praise  
is proclaimed today,  
the living and life-giving bread.  
He was given most certainly  
to the twelve brothers gathered  
at the table of the sacred meal.

Let the praise be full, let it resound,  
let it be joyous, let it be a beautiful  
rejoicing of the soul.  
For a solemn day has been declared,  
on which the founding of this meal  
is recalled.

On this table of the new King,  
the new sacrifice of the new law,  
brings the old sacrifice to an end.  
The new passes over the old,  
truth puts shadow to flight,  
light drives away night.

Christ ordained that what he accomplished at  
the supper must be done  
in his memory.  
Well-informed by sacred teaching,  
we consecrate bread and wine into  
the host of salvation.

A teaching is given to Christians,  
that bread passes into flesh,  
and wine into blood.  
What you do not grasp, what you do not see,  
living faith affirms  
beyond expectations.

Under different appearances,  
simply signs, and not realities,  
priceless things lay hidden.  
His flesh is food, his blood is drink:  
nevertheless Christ remains whole  
in both forms.

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A sumente non concisus,  
non confractus, non divisus:  
integer accipitur.  
Sumit unus, sumunt mille:  
quantum isti, tantum ille:  
nec sumptus consumitur.

Sumunt boni, sumunt mali:  
sorte tamen inaequali,  
vitae vel interitus.  
Mors est malis, vita bonis:  
vide paris sumptionis  
quam sit dispar exitus.

Fracto demum sacramento,  
ne vacilles, sed memento  
tantum esse sub fragmento,  
quantum toto tegitur.  
Nulla rei fit scissura:  
signi tantum fit fractura,  
qua nec status, nec statura  
signati minuitur.

Ecce Panis Angelorum,  
factus cibus viatorum:  
vere panis filiorum,  
non mittendus canibus.  
In figuris praesignatur,  
cum Isaac immolatur,  
agnus Paschae deputatur,  
datur manna patribus.

Bone pastor, panis vere,  
Iesu, nostri miserere:  
Tu nos pasce, nos tuere,  
Tu nos bona fac videre  
in terra viventium.  
Tu qui cuncta scis et vales,  
qui nos pascis hic mortales:  
tuos ibi commensales,  
coheredes et sodales  
fac sanctorum civium.  
Amen. Alleluia.

And wholly is he received  
by the recipient: not cut,  
not fragmented, not divided.  
One man eats, a thousand eat:  
as much to them, so much to him:  
and the one eaten is not diminished.

The good eat, the wicked eat  
however with unequal destinies  
of life or destruction.  
There is death for the wicked, life for the good:  
see that of a similar reception,  
how dissimilar may be the result.

When the sacrament is broken,  
do not doubt, but remember that  
there is as much in one fragment  
as is contained in the whole.  
Nothing of the reality is lost:  
only the sign is broken,  
while neither the status nor the stature  
of the one signified is diminished.

Behold the bread of angels  
made the food of pilgrims:  
truly the bread of children,  
must not be cast to dogs.  
It was prefigured in types,  
when Isaac was offered up,  
the paschal lamb was sacrificed,  
the manna given to the fathers.

Good shepherd, true bread,  
Jesus, have mercy on us:  
feed us, guard us,  
make us see good things  
in the land of the living.  
You know all things, you can do all things,  
you feed us mortals here:  
there make us table-mates,  
co-heirs, and companions  
of the holy citizens.  
Amen. Alleluia.

**Translator's Note:** Why another translation of *Lauda Sion*? This translation has its origins in a series of lectures given on behalf of the Saint Anthony of Padua Institute for the recent Year of Saint Paul. In my presentation on "Reading Saint Paul with Saint Thomas Aquinas" I wanted to focus on Paul's sense of Christ as the one *mysterion* or *sacramentum* and Thomas's exquisite eucharistic poetry. It was my intention to present my listeners with a close reading of *Lauda Sion* in both Latin and English. At first I was going to present one of the older translations available, but I found none appropriate for my presentation. I went back to the Latin and rendered it into English, word by word and line by line, with a mind towards explication and clarification. I wanted English readers and listeners, whether or not they knew Latin, to see the precision, clarity and beauty of thought in Thomas's work and to see it as an exceptional work of poetry. A great lesson to be learned from *Lauda Sion*, and all of the eucharistic poetry of Thomas Aquinas, is that a human artifice can be at the same time a sound theological explication, a good source for catechesis, and a beautiful work of art. I hope that this translation inspires readers and listeners to read more Thomas Aquinas and more poetry and to yearn to be filled with the wonder of the Being who is the Source of all that is beautiful, true, and good.

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