

Feo Belcari

Play of the Ascension

Translation of *Rappresentazione dell'Ascensione composta per Feo Belcari*.

For a full discussion of this play, and for the Italian text, see Nerida Newbigin, *Feste d'Oltrarno: Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, 2 vols. (Florence: Olschki, 1996).

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Feo Belcari

To Cosimo de' Medici in the name of the *Festaiuoli* of the Ascension

Father of your most noble, worthy *patria*
conservator of temples and of chapels,
most singular safe haven of all those
who wear the pauper's badge upon their breasts,

the piety that reigns within your breast
brings us to kneel before you on your stool
to ask on the behalf of these poor men
that you should quench their thirst with your good wine.

And when Christ goes to Paradise, we all
will pray to him with greatest love and say:
Grant us we pray, O Lord, this final grace,

that Cosimo should live in joy and fun and laughter,
and give him what his noble heart desires,
and satisfying all of his desires.

Deo gratias

Play of the Ascension

AN ANGEL *announces the Representation with these words:*

1. For that eternal God who rose to Heaven,
upon this day returning to his Father,
and for that flesh that he did take from Mary
by which he gave to you his fairest grace,
and for that love extended from the cross
that was the source and mother of salvation,
be silent now, and with greatest devotion
come fix your gaze on the holy Ascension.

Then CHRIST, having supped with the Apostles, comes out of Jerusalem and all the Apostles are carrying their symbols, and at the foot of the Mount CHRIST says to them:

2. To show you that I am a perfect man
I have just eaten something with you now.
Be careful to obey my final teaching,
and stay here in Jerusalem until
the promise of my most beloved Father
comes to bestow on you the Holy Spirit,
baptizing you and filling all your hearts
with his eternal, noble, endless love.

ONE APOSTLE *on behalf of them all says these words to Christ:*

3. By many signs, O true Christ and Messiah,
we know that you are both our God and Man,
and whosoever of us with true heart
believes surely in you, he hopes indeed
to satisfy all things that he desires.
When will we come to your kingdom of joy?
And will we live to see within our days
O Lord, that Israel's kingdom is restored?

CHRIST *replies to them:*

4. It is not up to you to know these things
because the times, the hours and the moments
are in the power of Father's own
most mighty good, but this I'll grant to you:
that you will never fear the pain of death,
by virtue of these shining rays of light
the will descend on you, and you will bear
witness to me in every land on earth.

Then CHRIST goes up onto the mount and says to the Apostles:

5. And as you go throughout the whole wide world,
go preach my gospel unto all mankind.
And he who in my joyful name believes

and is baptized with true devotion, will
be saved from all the cruel burden of hell,
but he who does not perfectly believe
will be condemned to Hells eternal pain,
surrounded by great wails and gnashing teeth.

6. The mark of those who truly do believe
will banish demons in my holy name;
they'll speak in tongues unheard of to all men;
they'll have no fear of serpents or of dragons;
and even if they drink a deadly poison,
it will not do them any harm at all:
and just by laying hands upon the sick
without delay they will be whole again.

7. And may my Father, nourisher of all,
bless you and cleanse you all and wash you clean.
O Peter, the first shepherd of my flock,
with righteous fear come take these blessed keys
and open Heav'n to those who make amends,
repenting fully of their wicked ways.
And you, O John, as Mary's loving son,
8. grant her your aid and comfort and advice.

*And when Christ has risen into Heaven, two ANGELS descend
from Heaven and say to the Apostles who are gazing up into
Heaven:*

8. O men of Galilee, why do you stand
and gaze in such amazement into Heaven.
This Jesus, who just now did eat with you
and take the food you shared with fervid zeal,
just as you saw him rise, engarlanded
by holy angels, without mortal veil,
so you will see him descend in like wise
to judge, with glory circumfused around.

THE VIRGIN MARY *replies to those two Angels:*

9. When you return to take your place again,
beseech eternal God, the highest father,
to send upon us soon his divine fire
of the most sweet and sacred Holy Ghost.
We all are very slowly being consumed
by the thought, sweet my Son, that we will not
see you again, and so we ask that that you
will come to teach, console and defend us all.