

Editor's Notes for *Letrilla a la Pasión de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo*

Hilarión Eslava was very famous during his lifetime. Not only was he a highly-skilled musician and composer, but he was also a conductor, educator, historian, and priest (with a family to raise). He was a man whose work was in high demand, and he might have sometimes felt the pressure to take a few shortcuts to meet a busy, overcommitted working schedule.

This beautiful piece provides an example of a shortcut that is fairly common among composers then and now – repurposing older compositions with different lyrics. The melody, harmonies, and accompaniment for this piece are basically identical to another piece, a set of *Coplas* I transcribed a few months ago: https://musescore.com/rebecca_rufin/coplas-al-sant-simo-cristo-de-la-conversi-n-del-buen-ladr-n-song-to-the-holy-christ-of-the-conversion-of-the-good-thief (also on <https://hilarioneslava.org/music/>, under *Otras obras religiosas/Other religious works*, “Coplas al Stmo. Cristo de la Conversión del Buen Ladrón”). There are some minor variations in the accompaniment – here a soprano replaces the first tenor voice, and the lyrics are completely different – but musically, it is the same composition.

We know from the documentation kindly provided to us by don José Manuel Delgado and don Antonio Caballero at the Hermandad de Montserrat in Sevilla that the *Coplas al Santísimo Cristo de la Conversión del Buen Ladrón* were commissioned by the Hermandad and written around 1852, although the score I used for that piece was a more modern copy (see the editor's notes for the *Coplas* in hilarioneslava.org). The original used here is a score printed at the Calcografía de Bonifacio Eslava, the composer's nephew's print shop, which did not start operating until 1857. Most of the printed scores of don Hilarión's works in fact date to the late 1860's and early 1870's. The original music thus, with a high degree of probability, must have been for the work commissioned by the Hermandad in Sevilla, and this would have been a “retooled” score.

I have not been able to find a specific attribution for the lyrics, but they appear to be part of popular *coplas* sung during Holy Week throughout Andalucía and beyond.

LYRICS

<p>Mira ingrato pecador, mira a tu amable Jesús, clavado por ti en la Cruz y expirar* por ti de amor.</p> <p><i>(Letrilla)</i> Sube alma mía al Calvario, y verás en un madero, colgado de tres clavos a tu amante Nazareno. Entra en la hoguera divina de su amantísimo pecho y atiende cuanto te dice entre amorosos incendios.</p>	<p>Look ungrateful sinner, look at your kind Jesus, nailed for you on the Cross, and breathe His last for thee out of love.</p> <p><i>(Letrilla)</i> Come up, my soul, to Calvary, and you will see Him on a tree, hung by three nails, your loving Nazarene. Enter the divine bonfire of his loving breast and intently listen to what He tells you among the loving fires.</p>
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* Spelled *expirar* in the original.