

Editor's Notes for CPE-679 *O Salutaris Hostia*

The lyrics of *O Salutaris Hostia* are from the last two verses of *Verbum Supernum*, one of the five Eucharistic Hymns written by St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) at the request of Pope Urban IV (1261-1264), when the Pope first instituted the Feast of Corpus Christi in 1264. The prayer is still used today, often at the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. It has been set to music by many composers, and this appears to be the third musical setting we have encountered by Hilarión Eslava. We are grateful to the music archive of the Catedral de Mallorca in Palma, Spain, which we recently had the privilege of visiting, for providing the source manuscript.

We say “appears to be by Eslava” because in fact, there is no indication of Eslava’s authorship (nor any other composer) on any of the pages of the source manuscript. Rather, this manuscript motet was in a file that included a keyboard accompaniment for another motet we know to be Eslava’s (“*Bone Pastor*”, see CPE-369, the second motet of a set of six). The “*Bone Pastor*” accompaniment was written in the same hand as “*O Salutaris*” accompaniment, but unlike “*O Salutaris*”, it clearly indicated Eslava as the composer.

It is possible that these pieces were filed together because they were by the same composer, but it also possible that they were combined due to their shared Sacramental theme.

We have now found numerous versions of Eslava’s other Sacramental motets from multiple sources. However, this is the first time we have run across this particular setting for “*O Salutaris*”, so until we find corroborating evidence, we are showing this as attributed to Eslava.

That said, it is still a beautiful motet and stylistically could indeed have been written by Eslava. Musically, this piece is scored for a men’s chorus (TTBB) accompanied by organ, and truly showcases a rich, sonorous tonality especially well-suited to male voices.

LATIN LYRICS	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
O! Salutaris Hostia Quæ cæli pandis ostium. Bella premunt hostilia; Da robur, fer auxilium.	O! Saving Victim opening wide The gate of heaven to all below. Our foes press on from every side; Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow.