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Libretto, *Vesperae pro Serveto*, Orion Project

*Vesperae pro Serveto*

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*Dedication—J and MFJ Dearman*

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*Orion Project—Vesperae pro Serveto*

*1. Phos Hilaron ~ O Gladsome Light*

Nox in caelis stellatis pallia sapphirina tendit.

Ostendit noctifer ignes.

In cellis pisces, bacae et terrena dona.

Afflavit boreas, folium periit.

Dormit tellus sub centone niveo.

Gratias agamus.

*Night is stretching her sapphire cloak in the starry heavens.*

*The night-star shows his fires.*

*In the storehouses are fish and berries and the gifts of the earth.*

*The north wind has blown, and the leaf is no more.*

*The land sleeps beneath a snowy blanket.*

*Let us give thanks.*

*2. Preces pro vigilantibus ~ Prayers for the wakeful*

Navigat nauta per mare stellatum, pecus pastor custodit,

vigiles tecta in urbe defendunt, magna cum cura.

Nutriuntur infantes. Curantur lapsi in morbum. Mortui maerentur.

Curantes aegri dolentes sustineantur.

*The sailor steers his ship through a starry sea, the shepherd guards his flock,  
the night watch guard well the peace of the city.*

*Infants are suckled. The sick are tended. The dead are mourned.*

*Those who tender care, those who suffer, those who sorrow—  
may they be comforted and supported.*

### 3. *Ambulatio*

Vesper adest. Liberi alendi, lavandi, fabulae narrandae ante horam somni.  
Et canis exercendus. Ambulemus per agros summum ad collem.

Ortus est Orion, venator siderum. Ningit. Silescit nox.  
Amnem transeuntes gelatum audimus sub glacie aquam fluere.  
Sub pedibus crepitat nix.  
Semper virens suspirat arbustum turis odorem.

Lucet luna ex ferarum oculis.  
Saltat lepus albescens, cervus somnit ramosus in dumetis. Ululat strix.

Olim in silvis ululavit lupo, et pantherae stridor auditus.

*Twilight is at hand. There are children to be fed and washed, and stories to be told before bed time. And a dog to be walked. Let us walk through the fields to the top of the hill.*

*The constellation Orion has risen, the hunter of stars. It's snowing. The night grows quiet. As we cross the frozen stream, we hear water flowing beneath the ice.*

*The snow squeaks under our feet.*

*The grove of evergreen trees breathes the fragrance of incense.*

*The moon shines out from the eyes of the wild beasts.*

*The hare is dancing, his coat grown snowy white.*

*The deer with his branching antlers dreams in the thickets. The owl shrieks.*

*Once long ago the wolf howled in our forest  
and the scream of the mountain cat was heard through the woods.*

#### 4. Miserere

Modo quid faciam, cogitare non possum. Tum in silva ambulo.

Sedeamus nunc paullulum, stellarum cursum observemus.

Tot homines in egestate sunt, tot nihil habent quod edant, vitam inopem sustentant.

Scio casum non aequum. Fieri sentio et irascor.

Quantulumcumque, aliquid tentare debeo.

*Sometimes I can't think what to do. Then I walk in the woods.*

*Let us sit for a little while, and watch the journey of the stars.*

*So many live in extreme poverty, so many have nothing to eat, they only just get by.*

*I know that life is not fair. I feel it to be so, and it makes me angry.*

*However small a thing, I must try to do something.*

#### 5. Magnificat

Dominus meus me vocat ad justitiam et magnificat anima mea Dominum  
ut orbem terrarum medeamur.

Sanctum nomen eius et sancta sua terra,  
et caelum et mare et omnia animalia.

*The Holy calls me to justice and my spirit rejoices in my God  
that we might heal the world.*

*Holy is the name of the holy one, and holy the earth,  
and the sky and the sea, and all living things.*

*6 Nunc Dimittis*

Nunc me dimittis in quietem noctis, ut vivam sicut astrum, sicut verbum in ore Dei.

*You send me now into the quiet of the night, to live like a star, like a word in the mouth of God.*

*7. Lullaby*

Trans caela stellata nox pallia tetendit.

Foveamini omnes abundanter.

Gratam quietam habeamus.

Amen.

*Night has stretched her cloak across the starry heavens.*

*May you all be cherished warmly, abundantly.*

*May we have pleasant rest.*

*Amen*

## PARAPHRASE

The speaker notes the signs of imminent nightfall with awe, thanks, and reverence, with gratitude for peace and plenty. As rest and sleep approach, the speaker is mindful of those who will not rest this night, of those who sacrifice their sleep to care for others. The speaker walks into nature in the gathering darkness to a place of observation. Observation leads to reflection, recognition of the harshness life can bring, as well as life's beauty. Mindful of the inequities of life, the speaker pledges action towards the healing of the world. The speaker praises and responds to the interconnected world, commits to a life of purpose, surrenders to the blessings of sleep.

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## ABSTRACT

Day is done. What comes will come. Orion hunts a crisp midwinter sky. The purpose of this project is to generate Latin words for an evening prayer—a Vespers—that a Unitarian Universalist choir could sing with a whole heart and minimal accompaniment. Something simple, reverent, to voice awe and gratitude. Something mindful of those who close each day more likely to meet hunger, illness, and violence, than plenty, peace, and restful sleep. This version of an ancient form—original use of traditional material—is offered with utmost respect for the simplicity, flexibility, and depth of the ancient prayer forms. As with the *Missa Brevis pro*

*Serveto*, this *Vesperae pro Serveto* is generated in Latin because that language is beloved for its open vowels and expressive economy by choirs and composers worldwide, ancient and modern.

7      Alpha Version, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2016.

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