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Erasmus of Rotterdam, the man of modernity and of Europe, wrote “Moriae encomium” in 1509 at the dawn of the modern era. It is a satire on scholastic theology and the immoral clergy, and a eulogy to the folly of the true Christian who possesses faith and love for humanity.

Below is a “Cantzoni a curbas” intended to honour him. The Jury of the Logudoro Ozieri Prize has decided to award it the Sardidade Prize in the ‘Salvatore Bertulu’ section, Poetry on a Free Theme.

In Praise of Folly
“Cantzoni a curba”

1. Let us praise the great Erasmus, beloved for his wisdom.
He wanted the whole world to live in friendship.
Away with the Pharisees, those horrible people,
for he was moved by Christian charity.

2. Christian charity was the yearning of his life,
which he spent travelling in serenity.
The age of darkness was drawing to a close;
the time had come to work for peace.
Gutenberg’s printing press was spreading,
Columbus was discovering the Americas,
Copernicus was moving beyond Ptolemy’s ideas.
Countless people were seeking new paths.

3. New paths to free themselves from bad teachers,
who take no pleasure in others, puffed up with their own virtue
and supreme wisdom. But the new authority
behold, it is the fool, who teaches us joy,
ready to have fun. Madness is a goddess,
the madwoman of life. Like a fine comedy,
which seems a tragedy, until the actor,
who portrays sorrow, removes his mask.

4. He removes his mask. But away with stupidity,
daughter of Fury, the madness of war
and of every crime. It is reckless folly
to frighten students, heedless of their talents.
The dishonest lawyer muddles the dispute.
The prodigal king, together with the wicked cleric,
demands the tithe, whilst the Pope himself,
along with cardinals and nobles, shows no love for one’s neighbour.

5. They do not love him. Epicurus praised her,
beautiful Folly. Jeremiah spoke of her
in reference to the foolish man. Away from the darkness,
‘I speak as a fool’, Paul guides us.
Christ’s teaching is far from the scholars,
but amongst the simple folk, to whom heaven is promised.
With Erasmus’s help, and with fine enthusiasm,
let us set out as disciples of Folly.