

UNIT 19

HOW TO READ THE COLLECT, SECRET and POSTCOMMUNION

The traditional Orations

These prayers of the Proper of the Mass have been singled out for special consideration in this Unit because they are virtually all constructed around the use of the **Present Subjunctive** (See Units 6 and 7). Their technical name is 'Orations', a term which comes from *oratio*, meaning a 'prayer' or 'speech'. They constitute a substantial part of the prayer formularies found in the old Missal, and were the primary expression in the Mass of the Church's *lex orandi* (law of prayer), each one being an integral part of the Church's *lex credendi* (law of belief). Those who are not familiar with the traditional Missal, will be unaware of their value as a *locus theologicus* (a theological source) and consequently must fail to appreciate how their virtual elimination from the Mass of the Roman rite has led to the disappearance from current worship, preaching and catechesis of the doctrinal realities to which they bore witness during the course of the liturgical year.

Vanishing doctrines

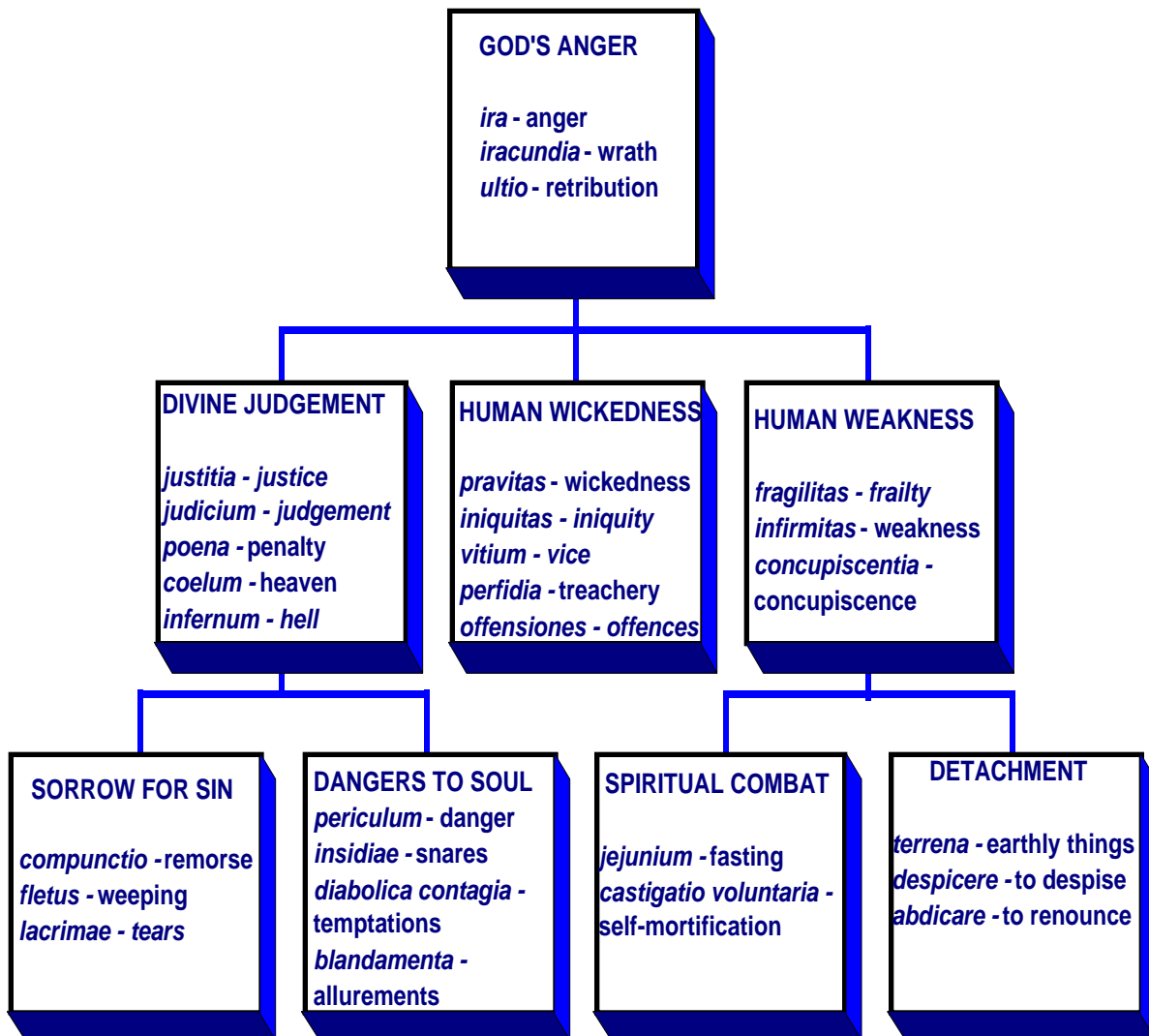
There is much more involved in reading these Orations than understanding the Latin expressions and coping with the Subjunctive. For some it may mean a re-adjustment to the patrimony of the Faith as it has been handed down to us in all its integrity and proclaimed unerringly in the orations. This would involve coming to terms with a whole array of doctrinal realities which are no longer given liturgical expression. Although they remain part of the deposit of Faith, they tend in modern times to be either shrouded in obscurity or reinterpreted in such a way as to empty them of their Catholic content. These include :

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| • JUDGEMENT | • HUMAN DANGERS |
| • THE PUNISHMENT OF HELL | • THE ENEMIES OF THE SOUL |
| • DIVINE ANGER | • CHRIST'S KINGSHIP ON EARTH |
| • THE WICKEDNESS OF SIN AS THE
GREATEST EVIL | • THE CHURCH MILITANT |
| • DETACHMENT FROM THE WORLD | • MORTIFICATION OF THE FLESH |
| • HUMAN FRAILTY | • THE CONVERSION OF NON-CATHOLICS |
| • PURGATORY | • THE EVILS OF HERESY, SCHISM AND
ERROR |
| • THE SOULS OF THE DEPARTED | • THE ONE TRUE FAITH |
| • PERSONAL GUILT AND THE SPIRIT OF
COMPUNCTION | • THE MERITS OF THE SAINTS |
| • SPIRITUAL COMBAT | • MIRACLES |
| | • GRACE |

'Linguistic Cleansing'

The Orations abound in words and phrases which are no longer heard in our times, having been consciously and systematically 'purged' from the liturgy. In order to understand these prayers, you will need to be familiar with expressions which have been used continuously in the Church's liturgy until recent times.

The following words, together with the doctrinal content which they embody, represent concepts of the Faith which have been believed by Catholics of all times. They have an impressive pedigree which dates back to primitive Christian times. Jesus Himself used some of them, as did the Apostles and St Paul, the early Church Fathers, St Augustine, St Ambrose and St Jerome before they became firmly established as the traditional language of Christianity. In fact they have become so interwoven with the Faith and sanctified by continual use by countless holy people that they have become part of the patrimony of every Catholic. They can be grouped under various headings according to their themes :



Setting the Tone

Even the most cursory glance through this vocabulary list would give the newcomer to the old rite of Mass a profound and lasting impression of the essentially *supernatural* nature of the traditional liturgy. For the prayers treat of the rights of God and His Church founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of souls. Therefore in the traditional Orations the Church prays for the conversion of all people to the one true Faith and the reign of Christ the King over all nations, families and individuals. Priority is given to

the supernatural life of grace as the means offered to man, who is not at home in this world, to achieve everlasting life. Those who remain attached to the prayers of the old rite of Mass do so not out of nostalgia, sentimentality or an obstinate refusal to be up to date, but because they love and appreciate the traditional forms and see in them the face of the eternal and unchanging Faith to which they wish to be bound for all time.



Initial difficulties

The Orations can present a problem to the uninitiated because of the style in which they were written which is redolent of the eloquent Latin style of the great Roman orators such as Cicero. Not only are they among the most ancient of prayers in the traditional Missal, but their rigidly stylised and tightly compact formulas, whilst being masterpieces of rhetorical beauty, are difficult to understand for the beginner.

Cracking the code

The unique style and complexion of these noble prayers differentiate them from the rest of the Proper and make them instantly recognisable. Once these characteristics are analysed, it will not be difficult to follow the predictable pattern of these prayers and get them to yield their meaning.

If we examine their structure we will find that they are divided into three distinct parts, as shown below :

Part 1 This contains the formulation of a request to Almighty God which most commonly contains the expression *quaesumus* (we beseech). Note that the terminology used sets the tone of reverence which characterises these prayers and gives explicit expression to the appropriate relationship between the creature and the Creator.

In particular look out for phrases such as these :

*Concede, quaesumus,
misericors Deus -
Grant, we beseech Thee,
Almighty God*

*Praesta nobis,
quaesumus,
omnipotens Deus -
Grant us, we beseech
Thee, Almighty God*

*Domine, quaesumus,
intende placatus -
Look down favourably,
O Lord, we beseech
Thee*

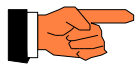
Part 2 Next follows a statement of the *purpose* (introduced by *-ut* and the **Subjunctive**) for which the request was made and an anticipation of a favourable outcome.

Part 3 Using the following formula, the Church prays that we may receive our request through the merits of Jesus Christ :

<i>Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat, in unitate Spiritus Sancti Deus</i>	Through Jesus Christ Thy Son Our Lord Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost
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Vocabulary

<i>quaesumus</i> - we beseech	<i>gratus, -a, -um</i> - pleasing
<i>pariter</i> - equally, alike	<i>purifico, -are</i> (1) - to purify
<i>hujus</i> - of this	<i>fragilitas, -atis</i> - frailty
<i>purgo, -are</i> (1) - to cleanse	<i>hostia, -ae</i> - host, Victim
<i>munio, -ire</i> (4) - fortify, strengthen	<i>sino, -ere, sivi, situm</i> (3) - to let, allow
<i>tribuo, -ere, -ui, -utum</i> (3) - to give, allot	<i>participatio, -ionis</i> - partaking
<i>subjaceo, -ere, -ui</i> (2) - to lie under, be subject to	<i>vegetatio, -ionis</i> - vigour, growth
<i>effectus, -us</i> - effect, consequence	



In the following examples look out for the Verb in the **Present Subjunctive** (See 6.5) usually found at the end of Part 2 of the oration. The Subjunctive may be separated by several lines of text from its antecedent *ut*.

Reading Practice

Collect of the Mass for Ascension Day



conscious of the weakness of our human nature we ask Almighty God to protect us from evil and cleanse us from our sins

Concede, quaesumus, omnipotens Deus: ut hujus sacrificii munus oblatum fragilitatem nostram ab omni malo purget semper, et muniat

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God that the offering of the gifts of this Sacrifice may ever cleanse us, and in our frailty protect us from all evil

Postcommunion of the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost



we ask God in His mercy to deliver us from human dangers and enable us to rejoice in His saving mysteries

Quaesumus, omnipotens Deus : ut, quos divina tribuis participatione gaudere, humanis non sinas subjacere periculis

We beseech Thee, Almighty God, that Thou wouldst not permit us to be subject to human dangers, to whom Thou givest to rejoice in the participation of divine mysteries

Collect of Saturday of the 2nd week in Lent



we ask God to bless our Lenten fast so that the mortification of our flesh may bring health to our souls

Da, quaesumus, Domine, nostris effectum jejuniis salutarem : ut castigatio carnis assumpta, ad nostrarum vegetationem transeat animarum

Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, a salutary effect to our fasts : that the chastisement of the flesh, which we have taken upon us, may promote the vigour of our souls.

Vocabulary

hodiernus, -a, -um - of today
vito, -are, -avi, -atum (1) - to avoid, withstand
culmen, -inis - top, peak
imperium, -ii - empire

illecebra, -ae - allurement, enticement
supero, -are, -avi, -atum (1) - to overcome
imitatio, -ionis - imitation
pervenio, -ire, -veni, -ventum (4) - to arrive

ubertas, -atis - fertility, abundance, fullness
transfero, -ferre, -tuli, -latum (3) - to remove
saeculum, i- - the world
doceo, -ere, -ui, doctum (2) - to teach
periturus, -a, -um - transitory, perishable
calco, -are (1) - to trample underfoot
adversantia - things which oppose, obstacles

supplex, -icis - humbly entreating, supplicating
pompa, -ae - display, pomp
sequela, -ae - a following
disco, -ere, didici (3) - to learn
deliciae, -arum - pleasure, charm
amplexus, -us - embrace

Collect of 17th Sunday after Pentecost



we ask God to deliver us from the assaults
of the devil and enable us to adore the one
true God with complete purity of heart

*Da, quaesumus, Domine, populo tuo diabolica
vitare contagia : et te solum Deum pura mente
sectari*

Grant unto Thy people, O Lord, to withstand the
temptations of the devil : and pure in heart, to
follow Thee, Who alone art their God

Collect of the Feast of St Henry, Emperor and Confessor, 15th July



detachment from the world and
purity of heart

*Deus, qui hodierna die beatum Henricum
Confessorem tuum e terreni culmine imperii ad
regnum aeternum transtulisti : te supplices
exoramus : ut, sicut illum, gratiae tuae ubertate
praeventum, illecebras saeculi superare fecisti, ita
nos facias, ejus imitatione, mundi hujus
blandamenta vitare, et ad te puris mentibus
pervenire*

O God, Who on this day didst remove blessed Henry,
Thy Confessor, from the government of an earthly
empire and raise him to the kingdom of heaven : we
humbly beseech Thee that, even as by the fullness of
Thy preventing grace Thou didst give him strength to
overcome the enticements of this life, so Thou wouldst
enable us, through his example, to shun the
blandishments of this world, and come to Thee with
clean hearts

Collect of the Feast of St Hedwige, Widow, 17th October



despising the things of this world
and embracing the Cross as the
way to salvation

Deus, qui beatam Hedwigem a saeculi pompa ad humilem tuae crucis sequelam toto corde transire docuisti : concede, ut ejus meritis et exemplo discamus perituras mundi calcare delicias, et in amplexu tuae crucis omnia nobis adversantia superare

O God, Who didst teach blessed Hedwige to renounce the pomps of this world with her whole heart, so that she might humbly follow Thy cross ; grant that, through her example and merits, we may learn to trample under foot the perishable delights of this world, and by cleaving to Thy cross overcome whatever may withstand us

Vocabulary

vitium, -i - vice

supplicium, -ii - punishment, torture

deputo, -are (1) - to estimate, judge

nexus, -us - bond, attachment

castigatio - chastisement

voluntarius, -a, -um -voluntary

hostis, -is - enemy

pravus, -a, -um - evil

Exercise 1 Before tackling the Orations in this Unit, first look at the Vocabulary above, and match the following expressions with their English equivalents in the list below :

**ab hostibus
mentis et
corporis**

**suppliciis
aeternis**

**vitia
nostra**

**castigatione
voluntaria**

**remedia
aeterna**

**a peccatorum
nexus**

**a pravis
cogitationibus**

**ab omnibus
adversitatibus**

1. from the bonds of sin
2. eternal salvation
3. from the enemies of mind and body
4. self-mortification

5. our sins
6. from evil thoughts
7. from all adversities
8. eternal punishment

Exercise 2 Consider the following Verbs which you will need a little later on :

curo, -are (1) - to heal, purify, subdue

libero, -are (1) - to set free

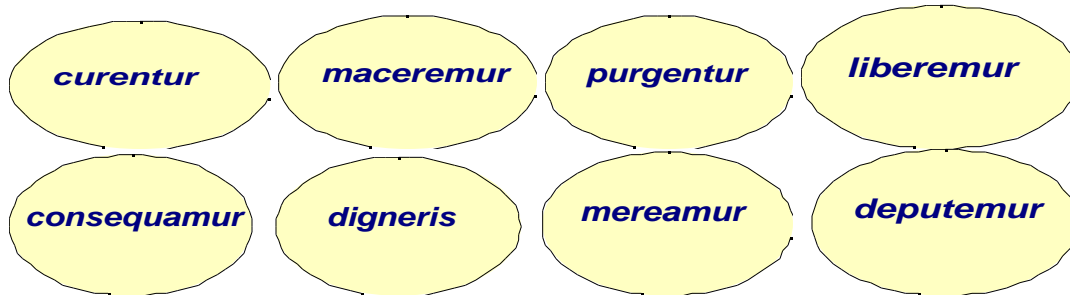
macero, -are (1) - to afflict, weaken

purgo, -are (1) - to cleanse

deputo, -are (1) - to cut off, condemn
consequor, consequi - to obtain, achieve

dignor, -ari (1) - to disdain
mereor, -eri (2) - to deserve

Here they are again in the form of the **Present Subjunctive Passive** and **Deponent** (see 7.2 and 7.3) as they appear in the following orations. Now match them to those underlined in the numbered list below :



1. that we may be delivered (from the bonds of sin)
2. that we may be afflicted (in this life)
3. rather than that we may be condemned (to eternal punishment)
4. that (our passions) may be subdued
5. that (our sins) may be blotted out
6. that we may enjoy (everlasting rest)
7. that Thou wouldst vouchsafe (to strengthen us)
8. that we may be found worthy (to enter into life everlasting)

Vocabulary

cohibeo, -ere, -ui, -itum (2) - to restrain, control
infundo, -ere, -fusum (3) - to pour in, infuse
benignus - loving, kindly
benignitas, -atis - kindness
potius...quam - rather...than

sanctificatio, -ionis - grace, holiness
provenio, -ire, -veni, -ventum (4) - to come forth
contraho, -ere, -traxi, -tractum (3) - to contract
delictum, -i - fault, crime
temporaliter - in time, in this life

Reading Practice

Postcommunion of 17th Sunday after Pentecost



through the supernatural gift of grace we are given the means of overcoming our sinful nature and attaining salvation

Sanctificationibus tuis, omnipotens Deus, et vitia nostra curentur, et remedia nobis aeterna proveniant.

By the grace of Thy sacraments, O Almighty God, may our passions be subdued, and our eternal salvation assured.

Collect for Friday in Passion Week

To avoid the effects of Divine Justice, let us die to sin, and by our self-mortification we will produce much fruit unto eternal life

Cordibus nostris, quaesumus, Domine, gratiam tuam benignus infunde : ut peccata nostra castigatione voluntaria cohibentes, temporaliter potius maceremur, quam suppliciis deputemur aeternis.

Mercifully infuse Thy grace into our hearts, we beseech Thee, O Lord : that refraining from sin by voluntary chastisement, we may be rather afflicted in time than condemned to punishment for eternity.

Collect of 23rd Sunday after Pentecost

we are justly afflicted for our sins, but we appeal to God's mercy that we may be delivered from the bonds of sin

Absolve, quaesumus, Domine, tuorum delicta populorum : ut a peccatorum nexibus, quae pro nostra fragilitate contraximus, tua benignitate liberemur

Absolve, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the sins of Thy people : that we may be delivered, by Thy goodness, from the bonds of sin which, by our frailty, we have contracted

Vocabulary

populus, -i - people

attero, -ere, -trivi, -tritum (3) - wear down, ruin

reficio, -ere, -feci, -fectum (3) - restore, revive

abstinentia, -ae - abstinence

intentus, -a, -um - intent, eager

extremum, -i - end

dispositio, -ionis - arrangement, providence

clementia, -ae - mercy

praevalleo, -ere (2) - to prevail

flagellum, -i - whip, scourge

devotio, -ionis - devotion

convenienter - duly

Secret from the Mass to beg the grace of a Happy Death (*bona mors*)



Christ has atoned for our sins by the sufferings of His Passion. May we accept the troubles of this life so as to be found worthy of the reward of eternal life

Suscipe, quaesumus, Domine, hostiam quam tibi offerimus pro extremo vitae nostrae, et concede : ut per eam universa nostra purgentur delicta : ut, qui tuae dispositionis flagellis in hac vita atterimur, in futura requiem consequamur aeternam

Receive, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the sacred Victim which we offer up in preparation for our last hour, and grant that for its sake all our sins may be blotted out : so that we who by Thy providence have been scourged in this life, may enjoy rest everlasting in that which is to come.

Collect of Thursday of the 1st week in Lent



Let us seek in the Eucharist the strength required to observe Lent, for it is our fasting, in conjunction with the sacrifice of Jesus, that will obtain for us salvation

Devotionem populi tui, quaesumus, Domine, benignus intende : ut, qui per abstinentiam macerantur in corpore, per fructum boni operis reficiantur

Favourably look down, O Lord, we beseech Thee, upon the devotion of Thy people : that they who are mortified in the flesh by abstinence may be refreshed in mind by the fruit of good works

Collect of Thursday of 2nd week in Lent



we ask God to grant us perseverance in prayer and fasting in order that we may be delivered from the enemies of soul and body

Praesta nobis, quaesumus, Domine, auxilium gratiae tuae : ut jejniis et orationibus convenienter intenti, liberemur ab hostibus mentis et corporis

Grant us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the help of Thy grace : that being duly intent on fasts and prayers, we may be delivered from enemies of mind and body

Vocabulary

exterius - outwardly
destituo, -ere, -stitui, -stitutum (3) - to abandon
pertranseo, -ire, -ivi, -itum (4) - to go through
certo, -are (1) - to fight, contend

interius - inwardly
conspicio, -ere, -spexi, -spectum (3) - to see, perceive
transfixio, -ionis - transfixion
gladius, -ii - sword

Collect of 2nd Sunday in Lent



realising that of ourselves we can do nothing,
let us cast ourselves on the care of Almighty
God, asking Him to preserve us from all harm
to body and soul

*Deus, qui conspicias omni nos virtute destitui :
interius exteriusque custodi : ut ab omnibus
adversitatibus muniamur in corpore, et a pravis
cogitationibus mundemur in mente*

O God, Who seest that we are wholly destitute of
strength : do Thou both inwardly and outwardly
keep us, that in body we may be preserved from all
adversities, and in soul cleansed from evil thoughts

Collect of Friday in Passion Week : The Seven Dolours of the Blessed Virgin Mary



the Mother of our Saviour becomes the Queen of
Martyrs when Simeon's prophecy is realised and a
sword of grief pierces her soul at the foot of the Cross
Thus she co-operates in the Redemption.

*Deus, in cujus passione, secundum Simeonis
prophetiam, dulcissimam animam gloriosae
Virginis et Matris Mariae doloris gladius
pertransivit : concede propitius : ut, qui
transfixionem ejus et passionem venerando
recolimus, gloriosis meritis et precibus
omnium Sanctorum cruci fideliter astantium
intercedentibus, passionis tuae effectum felicem
consequamur*

O God, in Whose passion, according to the prophecy of
Simeon, a sword of sorrow pierced the most sweet soul
of the glorious Mary, Mother and Virgin : grant in Thy
mercy that we who call to mind with veneration her
transfixion and suffering, by the glorious merits and
prayers of all the saints faithfully standing by the cross
interceding for us, may obtain the happy effect of Thy
Passion

Collect of the Feast of St Ignatius Lovola (July 31st)



with the help of Saint Ignatius may we, after
his example, combat evil on earth so as to
be crowned with him in heaven

*Deus, qui ad majorem tui nominis gloriam
propagandam, novo per beatum Ignatium subsidio
militantem Ecclesiam roborasti : concede ut, ejus
auxilio et imitatione certantes in terris, coronari*

O God, Who for the spreading of the greater glory
of Thy name didst , by means of blessed Ignatius,
strengthen Thy Church Militant with a new army :
vouchsafe unto us, that after battling upon this earth

cum ipso mereamur in caelis

even as he battled, helped by his prayers, it may one
day be ours to be crowned with him in heaven