

UNIT 4

THE ART OF DESCRIPTION - ADJECTIVES

4.1 What is an Adjective?

An Adjective is a word whose function is to *qualify* (i.e. indicate some quality of) a Noun eg. to describe someone as holy (*sanctus*) or faithful (*fidelis*) or something as small (*parvus*), excellent (*praeclarus*) etc.

4.2 Word Order

Adjectives in Latin are most commonly found *after* the Noun eg. *Pastor Bonus* (the Good Shepherd), but there are occasions when they precede the Noun eg. *omnipotens Deus* (Almighty God).

4.3 Agreement of Adjectives

Just as with Nouns, Adjectives in Latin are subject to the process of inflection. They have to be 'matched' in Number, Case and Gender with the Noun they accompany. This is what is referred to as **Agreement of Adjectives**. Although there are five Declensions of Nouns, there are only three Declensions of Adjectives to be shared amongst them. Let us see how they work in practice:

4.4 1st Declension Adjectives are those which follow the pattern of Feminine Nouns :

beata (f) - blessed

Case	Singular	Plural.
Nom	<i>beata</i>	<i>beatae</i>
Voc.	<i>beata</i>	<i>beatae</i>
Acc.	<i>beatam</i>	<i>beatas</i>
Gen.	<i>beatae</i>	<i>beatarum</i>
Dat.	<i>beatae</i>	<i>beatis</i>
Abl.	<i>beata</i>	<i>beatis</i>

They are used to qualify Feminine Nouns eg. *beatae Mariae* - of or to Blessed Mary

Reading Practice

Sancta Maria

Holy Mary

Inviolata, integra et casta es, Maria

O Mary, thou art spotless, pure, inviolate

Hostiam puram, Hostiam sanctam, Hostiam immaculatam

a pure Host, a holy Host, an immaculate Host

unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam

one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church

4.5/1 2nd Declension Adjectives follow the pattern of either

- the Masculine Noun *apostolus* eg. **beatus** - blessed

Case	Singular	Plural
Nom	<i>beatus</i>	<i>beati</i>
Voc.	<i>beate</i>	<i>beati</i>
Acc.	<i>beatum</i>	<i>beatos</i>
Gen.	<i>beati</i>	<i>beatorum</i>
Dat.	<i>beato</i>	<i>beatis</i>
Abl.	<i>beato</i>	<i>beatis</i>

eg. *beatus vir...* - blessed is the man...

beato Michaeli Archangelo - to blessed Michael the Archangel

beatorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli - of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul

beato Joanni Baptistae - to blessed John the Baptist

- 4.5/2 or the Neuter Noun *peccatum* eg. **beatum**

Case	Singular	Plural
Nom	<i>beatum</i>	<i>beata</i>
Voc.	<i>beatum</i>	<i>beata</i>
Acc.	<i>beatum</i>	<i>beata</i>
Gen.	<i>beati</i>	<i>beatorum</i>
Dat.	<i>beato</i>	<i>beatis</i>
Abl.	<i>beato</i>	<i>beatis</i>

eg. *Beata viscera* (Neut. Pl.) *Mariae Virginis* - Blessed (is) the womb of the Virgin Mary

- 4.5/3 or the Masc. Noun *liber* eg. **noster** / **vester** - our / your (pl.)

Case	masc. sing	fem. sing.	neut. sing.	masc. pl.	fem. pl.	neut. pl.
Nom	<i>noster</i>	<i>nostra</i>	<i>nostrum</i>	<i>nostrī</i>	<i>nostrae</i>	<i>nostra</i>
Voc.	<i>noster</i>	<i>nostra</i>	<i>nostrum</i>	<i>nostrī</i>	<i>nostrae</i>	<i>nostra</i>
Acc.	<i>nostrum</i>	<i>nostram</i>	<i>nostrum</i>	<i>nostrōs</i>	<i>nostras</i>	<i>nostra</i>
Gen.	<i>nostrī</i>	<i>nostrae</i>	<i>nostrī</i>	<i>nostrorum</i>	<i>nostrarum</i>	<i>nostrorum</i>
Dat.	<i>nostrō</i>	<i>nostrae</i>	<i>nostrō</i>	<i>nostrīs</i>	<i>nostrīs</i>	<i>nostrīs</i>
Abl.	<i>nostrō</i>	<i>nostra</i>	<i>nostrō</i>	<i>nostrīs</i>	<i>nostrīs</i>	<i>nostrīs</i>

eg. *Pater noster* - Our Father

in hora mortis nostrae - at the hour of our death

adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini - our help is in the name of the Lord

dimissis peccatis vestris - with all your sins forgiven

Note For convenience of reference, Adjectives are referred to by their Masculine, Feminine and Neuter attributes given in shorthand form as, for instance, *beatus*, -a, -um.

Vocabulary

<i>verus</i> , -a, -um - true	<i>plenus</i> , -a, -um - full
<i>vivus</i> , -a, -um - living	<i>aeternus</i> , -a, -um - everlasting
<i>novus</i> , -a, um - new	<i>bonus</i> , -a, -um - good
<i>dignus</i> , -a, um - worthy	<i>meus</i> , -a, um - my
<i>tuus</i> , -a, -um - thy, your	<i>suus</i> , -a, -um - his, her, their own

Exercise 1 Fill in the blanks with the correct word :

<i>suis</i>	<i>nostra</i>	<i>bonae</i>	<i>tuo</i>	<i>vero</i>	<i>dignus</i>
<i>vivo</i>	<i>plena</i>	<i>novi</i>	<i>meo</i>	<i>aeterni</i>	<i>tuis</i>

1. <i>dimitte nobis debita</i> _____	forgive us <u>our</u> trespasses
2. <i>gratia</i> _____	<u>full</u> of grace
3. <i>Deo</i> _____ <i>et</i> _____	to <u>my</u> God, <u>living</u> and <u>true</u>
4. <i>dimissis peccatis</i> _____	with <u>thy</u> sins forgiven
5. <i>Pax hominibus</i> _____ <i>voluntatis</i>	Peace to men <u>of</u> <u>good will</u>
6. <i>Domine non sum</i> _____	Lord, I am not <u>worthy</u>
7. <i>et cum spiritu</i> _____	and <u>with thy</u> spirit
8. _____ <i>et</i> _____ <i>testamenti</i>	<u>of the new</u> and <u>everlasting</u> covenant
9. <i>dixit Jesus discipulis</i> _____	Jesus said <u>to His</u> disciples

4.6 Adjectives used as Nouns

In English we sometimes use an Adjective as a Noun, for instance when referring to people, as in the expression The Holy Innocents or to things eg. 'deliver us from evil'.

Latin adopts this policy but uses it on a much broader and more extensive scale. Adjectives in Latin are used as a convenient tool with which to convey information with the conciseness and economy of words for which the Latin language is renowned. Hence :

impii (Nom. Pl. of *impius*) used on its own means 'wicked men' or 'the wicked'.

multi (Nom.Pl. of *multus*) means 'many people'

lavabo manus meas inter innocentes - I will wash my hands among the innocents

novissimi primi, et primi novissimi - the last (shall be) first and the first last

multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi - for many are called, but few are chosen

Note particularly how the Neuter Plural form is used to indicate various kinds of things :

multa - many things

vana - worthless things

nova et vetera - new things and old

terrena - earthly things

Memorise this aphorism of the Church Fathers :

<i>in necessariis, unitas</i>	in essentials, unity
<i>in dubiis, libertas</i>	in uncertain things, liberty
<i>in omnibus, caritas</i>	in all things, charity

4.7 3rd Declension Adjectives *omnis* - all, every

These follow the pattern of 3rd Declension Nouns, but with some variation :

Case	Singular		Plural	
	masc. & fem	neuter	masc. & fem.	neuter
Nom	<i>omnis</i>	<i>omne</i>	<i>omnes</i>	<i>omnia</i>
Voc.	<i>omnis</i>	<i>omne</i>	<i>omnes</i>	<i>omnia</i>
Acc.	<i>omnem</i>	<i>omne</i>	<i>omnes</i>	<i>omnia</i>
Gen.	<i>omnis</i>	<i>omnis</i>	<i>omnium</i>	<i>omnium</i>
Dat.	<i>omni</i>	<i>omni</i>	<i>omnibus</i>	<i>omnibus</i>
Abl.	<i>omni</i>	<i>omni</i>	<i>omnibus</i>	<i>omnibus</i>

Exercise 2

Vocabulary

<i>coelestis, -is, -e</i> - heavenly	<i>institutio, -onis</i> - teaching
<i>praeclarus, -a, -um</i> - excellent	<i>omnipotens, -entis</i> - almighty
<i>sacrosanctus, -a, -um</i> - sacred	<i>iniquitas, -atis</i> - sin
<i>mitis</i> - meek	<i>pius, -a, um</i> - charitable, loving, holy

Match the expressions in the left hand column with their equivalent in English :

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>rex coelestis</i> | a. Thy most sacred Body and Blood |
| 2. <i>sancte Pater</i> | b. almighty and everlasting God |
| 3. <i>divina institutione</i> | c. unto eternal life |
| 4. <i>omnipotens et aeternae Deus</i> | d. from all my sins |
| 5. <i>sacrosanctum Corpus et Sanguinem tuum</i> | e. heavenly King |
| 6. <i>in vitam aeternam</i> | f. by divine teaching |
| 7. <i>et omnium Sanctorum</i> | g. and of all the saints |
| 8. <i>ab omnibus iniquitatibus meis</i> | h. an everlasting remedy |
| 9. <i>beati mites</i> | i. O holy Father |
| 10. <i>remedium sempiternum</i> | j. blessed are the meek |

Vocabulary

<i>ipse</i> - he	<i>verus, -a, -um</i> - true
<i>dulcis, -is, -e</i> - sweet	<i>pulcher, -chra, -chrum</i> - beautiful, fair
<i>totus, -a, -um</i> - all	<i>clemens, -entis</i> - merciful
<i>originalis, -is, -e</i> - original	<i>macula, -ae</i> - spot, stain

Reading Practice

*Ips*e enim verus est Agnus

For He is the true Lamb

O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary

Cantate Domino canticum novum

Sing to the Lord a new song

Pia Mater Ecclesia

Holy Mother Church

Tota pulchra es, Maria, et *macula* originalis non est in te

Thou art all fair, O Mary, and there is no stain of original sin in thee

4.8 COMPARISON OF ADJECTIVES

Just as in English there are ways of using Adjectives in Latin to show *to what extent* we wish to attribute some quality to a person or thing, whether we wish to indicate more of that quality or express it in the highest degree. This is called **Degrees of Comparison** and can be easily recognised in the English comparative forms ‘-er’ or ‘more...’ (eg. higher, more beautiful etc.) and the superlative ‘-est’ or ‘most...’ (eg. holiest, most merciful etc.).

4.9 THE COMPARATIVE of a Latin Adjective (equivalent to the English ‘-er’ or ‘more...’) ends in

-ior

<i>altus</i> - high, tall	<i>altior</i> - higher, taller
<i>fortis</i> - strong	<i>fortior</i> - stronger
<i>nequam</i> - wicked	<i>nequior</i> - more wicked

Note the expression *Altiora* (‘the higher things’) which St Paul exhorts us to seek.

4. 10 Irregular Comparatives

Some of the commonest Adjectives have very different looking Comparatives, eg.:

<i>bonus</i> - good	<i>melior</i> - better
<i>parvus</i> - small	<i>minor</i> - smaller
<i>magnus</i> - great	<i>major</i> - greater
<i>senex</i> - old	<i>senior</i> - older, elder
<i>juvenis</i> - young	<i>junior</i> - younger

Notes

1. You will occasionally meet inflected forms, but they are relatively few and far between.
2. Sometimes the Comparative Adjective, besides meaning 'more...' can also be translated by 'too...', as when St Paul accused the men of Athens as being *superstitiosiores* (too superstitious)
3. *Seniores* means 'the ancients', as does *majores natu* (lit. greater by birth)

Vocabulary

<i>atrium. i</i> - hall, court	<i>mil; milia</i> - thousand; thousands
<i>septem</i> - seven	<i>alios</i> - other

Reading Practice

Note how the Comparative Adjective (underlined) is used in these sentences

<i>septem alios spiritus... <u>nequiores</u> se</i>	seven other spirits... <u>more wicked</u> than himself
<i>qui autem est <u>minor</u> in regno coelorum <u>maior</u> est illo</i>	but whoever is the least (strictly speaking the lesser) in the kingdom of heaven is <u>greater</u> than he
<i>veniet autem <u>fortior</u> me</i>	but there will come One <u>greater</u> than I
<i>quia <u>melior</u> est dies una in atriis tuis super milia</i>	for <u>better</u> is one day in Thy courts above thousands elsewhere
<i>non est servus <u>major</u> domino suo</i>	the servant is not <u>greater</u> than his master
<i>Juvenes et virgines, senes cum <u>junioribus</u> laudent nomen Domini</i>	Young men and maidens, let the old with <u>the younger</u> praise the name of the Lord

4. 11 THE SUPERLATIVE of a Latin Adjective (equivalent to the English '-est' or 'most...') ends in

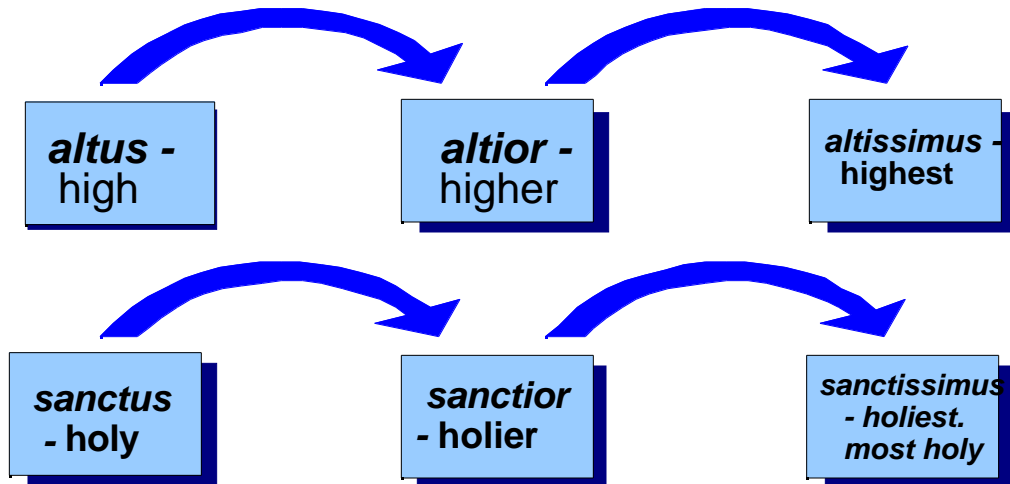
-issimus

Note the three stages through which the Adjective on the left passes to reach that point :

1. ADJECTIVE

2. COMPARATIVE

3. SUPERLATIVE



Notes

1. *Altissimus* (Most High) is one of the names found in Scripture to designate Almighty God
2. The Superlative may express not only the highest but also a very high degree, eg. *vir doctissimus* - a very learned man
3. The Superlative ending *-issimus* is inflected like *beatus* (See 4.5/1)

Vocabulary

<i>canto, -are</i> (1) - to sing	<i>igitur</i> - therefore
<i>habito, -are</i> (1) - to live	<i>primus, -a, -um</i> - the first
<i>novissimus, -a, -um</i> - the last, latest	

Reading Practice

<i>Cantabo...psallam nomini Domini <u>altissimi</u></i>	I will sing a psalm to the name <u>of the</u> Lord <u>Most High</u>
<i>O lux <u>beatissima</u></i>	O <u>most blessed</u> light
<i>Te igitur <u>clementissime</u> Pater</i>	Therefore, <u>most gracious</u> Father
<i>Qui habitat in adiutorio <u>Altissimi</u></i>	He that dwelleth in the help <u>of the Most High</u>
<i>Sic erunt <u>novissimi primi</u>, et <u>primi novissimi</u></i>	Thus shall the <u>last</u> be <u>first</u> , and the <u>first</u> <u>last</u>

4.12 Irregular Superlatives

The following irregularities must be learned by heart :

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
<i>bonus</i> - good	<i>melior</i> - better	<i>optimus</i> - best
<i>malus</i> - bad	<i>pejor</i> - worse	<i>pessimus</i> - worst
<i>magnus</i> - big	<i>major</i> - bigger	<i>maximus</i> - biggest
<i>parvus</i> - small	<i>minor</i> - smaller	<i>minimus</i> - smallest
<i>multus</i> - many	<i>plus</i> - more	<i>plurimus</i> - most
<i>superus</i> - upper	<i>superior</i> - higher	<i>supremus / summus</i> - highest

Adjectives ending in **-er** double the **r** in the Superlative :

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
<i>pulcher</i> - beautiful	<i>pulchrior</i> - more beautiful	<i>pulcherrimus</i> - most beautiful
<i>celeber</i> - honoured	<i>celebrior</i> - more honoured	<i>celeberrimus</i> - most honoured

Vocabulary

<i>princeps, principis</i> - prince	<i>nequaquam</i> - by no means
<i>praesto, -are</i> (1) - to grant	<i>purus, -a, -um</i> - pure
<i>castus, -a, -um</i> - chaste	<i>prudens, -entis</i> - prudent
<i>novus, -a, -um</i> - new, last, latest	<i>carus, -a, -um</i> - dear, beloved
<i>desideratus, -a, -um</i> - longed for, desired	<i>amans, -antis</i> - loving

Reading Practice

<i>Et tu Bethlehem terra Juda, nequaquam minima es in principibus Juda</i>	And thou Bethlehem, the land of Judah, art by no means <u>the least</u> among the princes of Judah
<i>O mitissime Deus</i>	O <u>most merciful</u> God
<i>O amantissime Pater</i>	O <u>most loving</u> Father
<i>O piissima Virgo Maria</i>	O <u>most loving</u> Virgin Mary
<i>Praesta, Pater piissime</i>	Grant, <u>most merciful</u> Father
<i>Virgo purissima</i>	Virgin <u>most pure</u>
<i>Felix es, sacra Virgo Maria, et omni laude dignissima</i>	Happy art thou, holy Virgin Mary, and <u>most worthy</u> of all praise
<i>justissima, altissima et amabilissima voluntas Dei</i>	the <u>most just</u> , the <u>most high</u> and the <u>most lovable</u> will of God
<i>Itaque, fratres mei, carissimi et desideratissimi</i>	Therefore, my brethren, <u>dearly beloved</u> and <u>most desired</u>
<i>mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa</i>	through my fault, through my fault, through my <u>most grievous</u> fault
<i>Et vocabitis hunc diem celeberrimum atque sanctissimum</i>	And you shall call this day <u>most solemn</u> and <u>most holy</u>

Exercise 3

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate word :

<i>altissimi</i>	<i>sanctissimum</i>	<i>summus</i>	<i>novissimo</i>
<i>mitissime</i>	<i>pulcherrima</i>	<i>castissima</i>	<i>prudenterissima</i>

- _____ Pontifex His Holiness (lit. the Supreme Bishop)
- Jesu Fili Dei* _____ O Jesus, Son of the Most High God
- O* _____ mulierum O most beautiful of women
- in* _____ die on the last day
- _____ Sacramentum the Most Holy Sacrament
- Omnipotens et* _____ Deus Almighty and most gentle God
- Mater* _____ Mother most chaste
- Virgo* _____

Virgin most prudent