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THE LANGUAGE OF PRAYER

(ON THE MATERIAL OF INTERCESSORY PRAYERS)

FIRST VOLUME − THESIS

DISERTAČNÍ PRÁCE

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji tímto, že jsem předkládanou disertační práci na téma "The Language of Prayer" zpracovala sama pouze s využitím pramenů v práci uvedených a citovaných.

.....V Olomouci 13.července 2013

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BC − Broadway Corpus

LC − London Corpus

PT − Prayer team

RCIA – training of a non-Christian for a baptism.

R.I.P. – Requiescat in pace, Rest in peace

F&M disease – Foot and mouth disease

CJD – Creuzfeld-Jakob Disease

CF – Cystic Fibrosis.

OCD – obsessive-compulsive disorder

VP – Votive prayers

IP – Intercessory Prayer

Pray-er – a praying person

ModE – Modern English

Gk – Greek

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> Theolinguistics is one of the most urgent
> and demanding disciplines of our time.
> *(F. W. Dillistone: Theolinguistics,*
> *ed. by J.P. van Noppen, 1981, p. 2)*

1.0 Introduction

Christian religious texts and prayers have influenced the most ancient manuscripts of the past two thousand years. Their influence has been truly immense and undeniable as they have contributed not just to the spiritual but also to the cultural, literary and linguistic development of modern civilization. From a sociological point of view, language and religion have been essential to every civilization and so they share a close history.

In 1981, interdisciplinary issues of language and religion gave rise to a new branch of linguistics named theolinguistics. The term was introduced by the Belgian linguist Jean−Pierre van Noppen, who focused his attention on the study of the relationship between language and religious thought and practice. Among the many interesting topics which attracted theolinguists, the phenomenon of prayer has retained the interest of several researchers.

This work attempts to expand upon this research, and become a modest contribution to the field of theolinguistic studies. It considers prayer as a phenomenon which should not be relegated towards the edge of scientific research, but which is worth the attention paid to this topic in this thesis.

Nowadays, the 21st century people who pray to God often ask themselves how a prayer ought to be constructed, as they do not know how to formulate their needs in such a manner that they could become the basis of a prayer. This dissertation aims to analyze the various forms of spontaneously created human prayers which were written down as intercessions. Each of the individual prayers speaks for a particular person at a particular time, and subsequently reflects the education, the way of living and the person's future plans as well as several other factors. Each of these prayers were spoken in good faith that they would be heard. Each uttered prayer presupposes the pray-er's honesty and trust in God, and it would be unfair to criticize it, or even to assess the linguistic form at the expense of

the content. Only the comments of a capricious analyst could lay themselves open to this kind of blame.

Responses to the subject of prayer may sometimes be different or at times appear even contradictory to one another. Some people will recognise prayer as a very important aspect of their daily life − an almost omnipotent resource of power − while others may view it as a mere idle monologue. It is therefore difficult to generalize on this aspect of prayer, and each person will have to cope with this problem individually.

1.1 The goal of my dissertation

The goal of this thesis is to analyse the language of "free" prayer, i.e. performed outside the area of the official liturgy, and within this area, primarily the language of intercessory prayer[1]. This topic covers both linguistic and theological aspects, because these two fields of research understand the topic in a different way. Indeed, prayer may be understood as the basic act of religious cultic behaviour, appearing in various forms, and at the same time it is representantive of a particular text type (*genre*) within the religious register, which shares some features with other religious texts.

The reason why I chose this topic of theolinguistics is simple: Religious communication and the question of religious style has so far been neglected in both Czech and English Studies. The synchronic view linked with sacral communication is represented in our country today by only a few articles: about prayer by Svatopluk Pastyřík, Marcela Grygerková and Michaela Lašťovičková, another about liturgical language by Olga Müllerová and Michaela Lašťovičková, thirdly concerning homiletics by Jiří Kraus and Naďa Kvítková, fourthly on religious terminology by Karel Komárek and Eva Hrdinová and lastly on lexicological aspects or further theolinguistic themes by Marcela Grygerková and Michaela Lašťovičková.

The texts of votive prayers were chosen as suitable for analysis because they allow people to express their ideas in a free way. People are not bound by any set formulae of public worship as it is in a liturgical language. The topic of votive prayers is pioneering in a way which has not received much attention by other linguists worldwide (apart from a few articles coming from Poland by Maria Wojtak and Piotr Kowalski).

This work focuses its attention on the intercessory prayer and the collect, which have many features in common despite the differences between them: the collect belongs to the liturgical language while the intercessory prayer functions mostly outside the official liturgy. According to the initial hypothesis the language

[1] At times I have also been using a synonymical term 'votive prayers', or 'petitional prayers', meaning nearly the same. These distinctions are explained later on.

of the collect is supposed to consist of more archaisms and sound more poetical while intercessions would probably show the opposite tendency.

The traditional opening prayers of the Mass (collects) are confronted with the spontaneously written intercessions of ordinary people who visit a church to leave there their worries, wishes, and petitions. The collected intercessory prayers have a semi-private character, as they reflect the conversation between the speaker and God but other people can read them as they are written down. It is for this reason that this work aims to conduct an analysis of the intercessory prayers, based upon a comparison with the official liturgical prayer.

1.2 Description of the material

This work is based upon the analysis of over 500 written votive prayers. Data for this research analysis were collected during my stay in Great Britain and are comprised of two corpora: *London Corpus* (from hereafter LC) and *Broadway Corpus* (BC). Despite their coming from different places, both corpora have many elements in common and they mainly contain petitions.

The first corpus comes from a Catholic church in the very centre of London, and thus is called "London Corpus". It contains 60 votive prayers. The data were made available to me in confidence, therefore I shall not mention the particular name of the church they come from. The church is frequently attended, it is located not far from Oxford Street, and many people stop there during the day. To the left of the entrance is a large board with prayer intentions tacked to it. Each visitor may write a short prayer request on a card and pin it there. Once a week these cards with intentions are collected and then carried with the offertory of bread and wine to the altar. Later on they are sorted out and some of them are read during the next Sunday Mass as prayers of petition. After that they are usually burnt or torn into pieces and thrown away. No one else reads them apart from the priest or a chosen prayer team who continue to pray for the particular intentions of the people.

This prayer team is a group of several people (usually 3−4) chosen to pray for the intentions of the people. The members of the group change after some time, they are selected by the local priest for only a short period of time. They respect the

privacy of the votive prayer writers and are prohibited from discussing the prayer intentions with anybody else.

Some enclosed convents may also function as prayer teams. Each nun draws the intention in a lottery and then prays for a particular person[2]. However, the web pages of the enclosed orders abroad provide this service over the internet, which is more popular nowadays. The internet prayer requests provide even more profuse material for analysis, which I will use twice to illustrate the phenomena in a more interesting way.

The second corpus comes from the Catholic Church near Broadway church, which is also located in Great Britain. As the votive prayers are confidential material I use the pseudonym 'Broadway', because there are several places of that name, and therefore I am not specifying the region they come from. It is a church with long opening hours and it has a permanently open book of intercession and a pen. The book is placed at the side altar on the left, near the Pietà, and people may write their prayer requests there. Once a week this book is collected by altar boys or other parish staff and some of the petitions are copied and recited at the Mass among other intercessions. The book is then returned to its place and stays there for another week, when the procedure is repeated. Both churches where I collected the prayers (though each in a different way and extent) gave visitors an opportunity to express their petitions in a written form. Petitioners in good faith assumed that their written prayer could get more attention if it were not only their personal prayer but if someone else were also to pray with or for them.

While the book from the Broadway church contains petitions spanning several years, with more than 500 unsorted prayers (due to lower attendance as compared to London), the London petitions only cover one week (more than 70 unsorted prayers). Not all the prayers, however, could be used for the analysis, finally 480 examples in the BC and 60 examples in the LC are used. The prayers of foreigners in Spanish, Italian or Polish and the prayers of uneducated people were

[2] This practice is popular even in our country (e.g. The Carmelite Convent at Prague Castle). The Norbertine Convent at Doksany prays for pregnant women before delivery who turn to them through their letters with a prayer request. The sisters of the Doksany convent have a special votive service lasting approximately thirty minutes each day, which usually follows a daily hour from the divine office (the prayer of the breviary).

left out or used only as a mere example of the overall variety of the corpora. The prayers are presented with the original mistakes. Several votive prayers could not be deciphered at all due to bad handwriting. Still, the corpora can give a reliable insight into votive prayers. Photocopies of the original prayers are included in the supplement volume.

Some prayers are dated, while others are not. In my opinion, this is a kind of automatism. Once an author of the petition writes down a date, the others follow, and on the contrary, when someone stops writing *the date*, many, following this prayer, omit it as well.

All members of the prayer team respect the privacy of the votive prayer writers and are not allowed to discuss the prayer intentions with anybody else. The prayers are obviously unprepared and there is an interval between the moment the author writes them down and the time when someone else reads them and prays for them. This method of communication is not synchronized chronologically with the reader. In fact, the writers cannot be sure if a petition was read and prayed for by someone else and they receive no response − apart from a chance to hear it in Sunday Mass intercessions.

1.3 Methodological structure of the work

The dissertation consists of two volumes. The first volume studies intercessory prayers in five chapters. After a short introduction (Chapter One), *the first theoretical part* of the thesis presents the outline of the new discipline of theolinguistics (Chapter Two), in which I thoroughly characterise and list the most significant works from the branch. As there has not been any systematic attention devoted to the newly introduced field of theolinguistics so far, whether in the Czech Republic or Great Britain, the work includes a survey of the development and names of the most noted theolinguists in the world who first introduced the new branch of this research. This is followed by an attempt to develop the line of prayer from a theological perspective in Chapter Three. The theoretical background of the prayer classification is carried out by describing a collect and a votive prayer from various perspectives. *The second part* of my work is focused on practical analysis.

The opening of the fourth chapter offers a linguistic view on intercessory prayers, based upon the analysis of the two corpora. The practical research of the religious discourse starts with the consideration of the peculiarities of various samples drawn from the corpora. It thus permeates the whole of the second part. The collect, as a structural prototype of opening prayer of the Mass is compared with the spontaneous votives because both types of prayers share some similarities in their structure. The analytical approach to votive prayer is based upon comparison of this traditional liturgical prayer contained within the Sacramentary (the Roman Missal 1985). The fifth chapter is the closing chapter, which presents the conclusion and Czech resumé. Finally included is the list of the relevant literature. The second volume consists of supplements from the collected prayers. All the analyzed material is placed therein.

For the analysis of votive prayers two types of methodology are used. The prayers are first approached from a sociolinguistic perspective. I have observed closely how the text is affected by such features as age, education, and the believer's relation to God (in as much as these data could be retraced from the corpora). The prayers are analysed from the aspect of religious style and they are viewed as part of a genre which has its own unique thematical, functional and linguistic pecularities (including grammatical ones). The analysis of the collected material is assisted by the collect which is a prototype of prayer because the intercessory prayers are structurally influenced by prayers known from the Sunday liturgy. Therefore the comparison of the similarities and differences of the collect and votive prayer, which are established in terms of the genre, follow in the next step. A theoretical background is provided by theolinguistic studies mainly of the Polish authors.

All the votive prayers for the research were collected in Britain by me. They were originally written by hand. I rewrote them, numbered and subjected them to an analysis. The collected intercessory prayers from the British parishes scrutinized in this work formed the actual basis of this research. They were subsequently filed into a confidential electronic database and served as an important tool for the analysis.

Nevertheless, due to the privacy of these prayers they could not be published electronically.

It was necessary to devise a numbering system for the intercessory prayers (191 BC p. 24; 7 LC p. 69) in the prayer corpora. The first number indicates the file number under which the prayer is stored electronically, whilst the second number indicates the handwriting and the particular page of the second volume containing supplements, where the example is documented. Due to the sensitivity and confidential nature of the data, the electronic corpus is not included as a supplement so it imposes a difficult task upon the reader when attempting to trace a handwritten prayer on any given page.

A problem which appeared in the course of writing was the inconsistent capitalization, indicating God which concerned mainly personal and possessive pronouns (*He* versus *he,* or *His* versus *his,* or *Thee* versus *thee*). It was not possible to unify it because neither individual prayers nor religious and linguistic studies quoted in this work by other authors, were uniform. Therefore it was left as the individual writers originally presented it, regardless of whether it was previously written in capitals or otherwise. Furthermore, the difficulty became more extreme, because of the many different forms of somewhat illegible handwriting presenting itself and being unable to correctly assess what was capitalized and what was not. Due to this difficulty in understanding the context of handwriting, it became a difficult task to resolve, particularly when the pray-ers wrote "&" and employed the use of the sign plus "+" meaning the same thing. It is therefore unfortunate that I was unable to clearly distinguish the handwriting pattern in all cases.

At the beginning of each chapter is a short extract on prayer which draws on the rich supply of classical works about prayer. These extracts illustrate the rich language of the Church, but they are not related to the individual chapters.

To facilitate understanding between the two homonyms (or homographs) prayer (the text prayed) and prayer (the person praying), I introduced the hyphenated spelling *pray-er* for the latter.

I have been interested in theolinguistics for more than ten years. I attended conferences related to this topic and I subsequently joined the Research Team from

the Czech Republic, 2005, which compiled "*Specificity of Church Communication"* (Specifika církevní komunikace[3]), the only comprehensive volume to date, published in this field.

In order to gather the necessary materials, I visited several countries solely for research purposes (Great Britain, Poland and the Slovak Republic) and exchanged e-mail correspondence with Belgium and Australia. As a result, I managed to collect literature inaccessible in the Czech Republic. Many of the insights were gained through personal contact with leading theolinguists from abroad, in particular J.-P. van Noppen , D. Hilborn, D. Crystal, M. Wojtak, or the Polish theolinguists from Krakow.

[3] See: Grygerková, M., ed. (2005): Specifika církevní komunikace.

> Let your addresses be full of understanding. Hence, as Solomon says, "The lips of the wise are the weapons of the understanding," and in another place "Let your lips be bound up with sense," that is, your discourses should be clear, and bright; their meaning should flash with intelligence and your sermon and treatment should need no bolstering from without. Rather, let your discourse be its own defence as it were, and see that you utter no empty or unnecessary word.
> *(The Divine Office I, Advent, Christmastide and weeks 1-9 of the year, The Proper of Saints, Saint Ambrose, 7th December, Collins and Glasgow, 1974, pp. 19-20)*

2.0 The subject of theolinguistics and its representatives

Although in recent times there has been a sharp decrease in the number of people registered as Christians, Christianity is still the dominant religion in both the UK and the Czech Republic, and religious discourse occupies a position which is far from being peripheral.

Language and religion share a long and close history. Since the 1960s there have been numerous English studies on the relationship between language and religion by famous linguists like James Barr (*The Semantics of Biblical Language*, 1961) or Stella Brook (*The Language of the Book of Common Prayer*, 1965).

This increased interest in religious language is usually linked to the 1960s, when religious language became a focus of interest at the Vatican II Council, whose ideas on liturgical change brought about the shift from Latin into the vernacular. At about the same time D. Crystal published a notable book: *Linguistics, Language and Religion* (1965) in which he addressed the theme of the *theophoric language*, which he viewed as a branch of stylistics. Thus the beginning of the theolinguistic development was linked with English speaking countries (British as well as American: D. Crystal, W. J. Samarin or Ch. Ferguson).

William J. Samarin, a professor of anthropology and linguistics in Toronto organized a conference on *Sociolinguistics and Religion* at Georgetown University in Washington in 1972 and later published an anthology *Language in Religious Practice* (1976). D. Crystal described W. J. Samarin as one who had the ability to

comment on religious language in such contexts as Swahili and Sango and that no one had been able to match his range since. He also published his investigations on glossolalia under the title of *Tongues of Men and Angels*[4] (1972).

The early 1970s brought about a near explosion of thought and writing about religious language in which many theologians and famous philosophers took part (Paul Van Buren, Gerhard Ebeling, Anders Jeffner, and Jean Ladrière to name but a few). However, the term of *theolinguistics* itself was coined by the Belgian linguist J.-P. van Noppen in 1981. He published a volume of essays on this subject under the same name (*Theolinguistics 1*) in which he introduced the term and explained it, which subsequently led to the launch of the very start of this discipline. The contributions to this volume were interdisciplinary (semiotics, philosophy, theology, literary criticism, psychology and linguistics) and among his associated linguists were the names of David Crystal, Jean Dierickx, Eugene Nida, Marie-Louise Rotsaert, and William J. Samarin. The sequel *Theolinguistics 2* which shortly followed was published in 1983 and was mainly focused on metaphor, which was another of van Noppen's main interests. (His main contribution was a study of how metaphor could be, and was, misunderstood). His range of interests was later extended to include discourse analysis, which prevailed in his later publications, and remained among one of the topics in the series of theolinguistic books subsequently published by Peter Lang in Germany (the edition was known under the name of "Religions and Discourse"). Out of the whole theolinguistically focused series only four of the books were actually written by linguists (van Noppen being one of them) and gradually they began to lose the prominence they had once received[5]. Yet further theolinguistic kept being published in Regensburg soon after, due to the care of the originally Polish linguist, namely Elżbieta Kucharska-Dreiß. The new stimuli for the discipline obviously arrived from Poland, where many new theolinguists began working on diverse approaches to the discipline, which happened to obtain immediate attention. Among the most famous

[4] Cf. Crystal, D. (in print): Whatever happened to theolinguistics? In: Chilton, P., Kopytowska, M., *Religious language, metaphor and the mind*, pp 3 and 7.
[5] Cf. Crystal, D. (in print): Whatever happened to theolinguistics? In: Chilton, P., Kopytowska, M., *Religious language, metaphor and the mind*, p. 2.

linguists appear for example the names of Marzena Makuchowska (*Modlitwa jako gatunek języka religijnego*, 1998) or Maria Wojtak (*Współczesne modlitewniki w oczach językoznawcy*, 2011). The unique contribution made by Maria Wojtak has been unsurpassed so far.

Theolinguistics

The ways in which language and religion interact can be approached from many angles, each of them provides a point of access to the material and highlights particular issues or aspects of the subject. However, all the books mentioned above and the extensive ranges of issues they cover have something in common – they come from the field of theolinguistics, a new branch of linguistic research which relates to religion.

After it was first mentioned by the Belgian linguist Jean−Pierre van Noppen as a term, it was taken over in the 1980s especially thanks to the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language edited by David Crystal, where it is defined as a discipline investigating biblical and theological language and the language of all who are involved in the theory and practice of religious belief (D. Crystal, p. 438). We find there the following definition: "Theolinguistics: The study of language used by biblical scholars, theologians, and others involved in the theory and practice of religious belief."

J.-P. van Noppen defines the term in the following way[6]: "Theolinguistics seeks to describe how human discourse may be employed to refer to the divine, and beyond that, how language operates in 'religious' situations in manners which may not meet the narrow standard of direct, univocal reference, but which nevertheless operates with a logic which can be demarcated in terms of known linguistic processes (metaphor, speech acts, …)"

Thus the growing number of works dealing with verbal communication in the Christian church seems to give evidence of the emergence of a new subdiscipline. Interdisciplinary areas of study are quite popular nowadays and have

[6] Noppen, J. P. van (1995): Methodist discourse and industrial work ethic. A critical theolinguistic approach. In: *Belgisch tijdschrift voor filologie en geschiedenis* 73, 1995, Afl.3, Moderne taal en letterkunde, p. 693.

spawned a number of disciplines comprising of a number of subfields.

Thus, we speak about psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, sociolinguistics and ethnolinguistics, and so *theolinguistics* would fit in perfectly[7]. This word developed as a neoclassical compound combining *theo* as a bound stem with *linguistics*. Although some of the disciplinary names also have a longer form where a naming unit consists of two elements like corpus linguistics, anthropological linguistics, biological linguistics, clinical linguistics, computational linguistics, geographical linguistics, mathematical linguistics, statistical linguistics and many others − the trend to economise on syllables pushed away any competing multiword terms.

In the past, the discipline of theolinguistics was more often referred to as *Christian language*, *religious language* or *the language of belief*. However, the term *theolinguistics* to denote the study of *religious language* shows a bias, in as much as it restricts its scope to monotheistic religions, and mainly to the Christian faith. Elżbieta Kucharska-Dreiss[8] also mentions the term *linguistics of religion* which, by contrast, is too long, has a more complicated form, and includes all worldwide religions, whereas Europe has a tradition of monotheism, especially of Christianity[9].

Theolinguistics cannot be understood as dealing with the language of theologians only, but it examines the language of religion in all its diversity arising from its social structure, including the study of spoken and written language, communication with God and talking about God, and the language of the church and of all believers.

However, it would be more precise to say that the participants in this type of communication are not only professional members of the church actively taking part (e.g. laity, church-goers, priests and consecrated clergy, nuns, monks, bishops and the supreme Pontiff) but also passive consumers, friends, supporters, admirers of real values and those taking religion as an occasional matter of interest. As this area

[7] Cf. Kucharska−Dreiss, E. (2004): Teolingwistyka – próba popularyzacji terminu [Theolinguistics – An Attempt to Popularise the Term]. *Język religigijny dawniej i dziś.* Wydawnictwo Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, Poznań, pp 23-30.
[8] Cf. Kucharska-Dreiss, E. (2004): Teolingwistyka – próba popularyzacji terminu [Theolinguistics – An Attempt to Popularise the Term]. *Język religigijny dawniej i dziś.* Wydawnictwo Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, Poznań, pp 23−30.
[9] Cf. Ibid.

of religion gathers people with a common interest and understanding of life, we are not dealing with a closed group of internally different people but with a community consisting of representatives of diverse groups, whether professionally, territorially or socially (education, dialects). Therefore it is a langauge area completely different from that of closed and relatively homogenous communities.

What can theolinguistics analyse? All written and spoken language, such as theological treatises, the Bible and its translations, theological language as a sociolect of the clergy − the language of biblical scholars and other experts in the field of religion, the language of all the faithful, the language of religious media, the language of sermons, testimonies, liturgical language, language of prayer, religious vocabulary and style and many other issues. It has as many aspects as are represented in the disciplines of theology itself: philosophical, moral, pastoral, liturgical, biblical, spiritual, legal, catechetical and dogmatic (including systematic theology).

All linguistic disciplines may function as a vital tool in understanding religious behaviour such as praying, meditating or praising, or simply in the area of practising one's faith. J.-P. van Noppen explains it thus[10]: "Faith is undeniably more a matter of how people live than how they talk: but while it would be an overstatement to say that religion is simply and exclusively a matter of language, it must be granted that religious practice as we know it in our regions is, in many respects, a linguistic enterprise; therefore, the study of religious language is an indispensable instrument for understanding the ways in which faith is experienced, expressed, and communicated."

In his PhD thesis[11], van Noppen distinguishes two terms: *theolinguistics* and even the older *theography*. The *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* explains the term *theography* in a short and ambiguous way which does not differ much from theolinguistics itself: "The study of the language people use to talk about God" (D.

[10] Noppen, J. P. van − Mar, J. (2009): Prayers and the Presidency. In: *From Will to Well.* Studies in Linguistics offered to Anne – Marie Vandenbergen (S. Slembrouck et al., eds). Gent, Academia Press, pp 451–459.

[11] Noppen, J. P. van (1980): *Spatial Theography.* A Study in Linguistic Expression and Communication in Contemporary British Popular Theology. PhD. Diss., Bruxelles, Université Libre de Bruxelles.

Crystal, 2010, p. 459). Elżbieta Kucharska-Dreiss[12] points out that van Noppen borrowed the term *theography* from the Anglican bishop J. A. T. Robinson, famous for his book *Honest to God*[13] (J. A. T. Robinson, 1963), which van Noppen studied in his thesis.

The most comprehensive explanation of the terms comes, then, from van Noppen himself[14]: "*Theography* is related to theology in very much the same manner as, say, geography to geology: whereas it is the concern of the *–logy* approach to 'make the soundings', i.e. to investigate the nature of its object, the task of the *–graphy* is to 'draw the maps', i.e. to transpose, for practical purposes, the relevant knowledge and experience gathered into a communicable form."

Theography is a branch of theolinguistics which concerns itself with the semantics of expressions used for the description of God, or other abstract images employed in the area of faith and belief. It examines the diversity of these images which can often be described as metaphorical and explains them in terms of a dualistic theory of metaphor.

Since God is a completely different Being and we are concerned with the intangible and non-finite world which is situated in the realm of thought, human language cannot encompass Him. Metaphor is one of the ways in which language may seek to bridge this gap in the divine-human relationship. The use of metaphor in reference to the transcendent and supernatural elements is typical. Words taken from ordinary vocabulary acquire unusual meanings in the religious setting which are often metaphorical, and in this form they are transferred to our daily life and then find their way back into everyday language or start to be used as literary forms.

Theography draws this figurative and metaphorical text not only from the field of professional theology, but also from the ordinary religious language. It mostly concentrates its attention upon the descriptive statement. However, the expressions need not only be descriptive, as even ascriptive language may be metaphorical and presuppose a metaphorical representation. Several examples

[12] Cf. Greule, A. – Kucharska-Dreiss, E. (2011): Theolinguistik: Gegenstand-Terminologie-Methoden. In: *Theolinguistics*, pp. 11−18. See: Theolinguistik.
[13] Robinson, J. A. T., the Bishop of Woolwich (1963): *Honest to God*. Bloomsbury Street London, SCM Press LTD.
[14] Noppen, J. P. van (1980): *Spatial Theography*, p. 24.

follow.

1. God as *personal* (conceived of as a being to whom one can relate, but of whom the image may be misunderstood as "God as a person", endowed with human-like characteristics, attributes and feelings). For instance, if God is approached "as if" He were human, we need personal pronouns to refer to Him, and most languages use gender-marked pronouns. God is referred to as "He", but that does not make Him male or masculine. Also, God is made the grammatical subject of human verbs (God acts, creates, judges, punishes, rewards ...) but is not subject to the human limitations suggested by the corresponding human activities.

2. God as *dwelling in heaven* (an orientational image of transcendence which combines height (up = good) and distance (= difference), which may be misinterpreted not only as an actual location, but also as a representation of distance (= unconcern).

Expressing our experience of God in a theological statement is something like attempting to draw a map. It is impossible to do it without a certain degree of falsification. The projection of God into language also involves distortion, in that we are referring to other realities which we do not accurately know enough about. This analogy sheds some light upon the logical status of human talk about God. Expressing God in language involves both distortion and projection at the same time[15].

J.-P. van Noppen published his dissertation on the topic of *Spatial Theography* (van Noppen, 1980). In his later theolinguistic papers J.-P. van Noppen also employed the term *critical theolinguistics*[16], which sought to determine whether and how religious language was or is used as a vehicle for non-religious ideologies. It subsequently explains them, criticizes those processes of a discourse that are used for passing on an ideological content by means of a belief system and if such is the case, to further criticise the alienation of a discourse from its original purpose.

However, even though in some cases we may today face a completely new phenomenon in sectarian religious texts where propagation, agitation and persuasion are present, we have hardly any critical theolinguists who deal with the

[15] Cf. Noppen, J. P. van (1980): *Spatial Theography*, p. 24.
[16] It is mentioned independently by several linguists: e.g. J. P. van Noppen (1995): Methodist Discourse and Industrial Work Ethic, a Critical Theolinguistic Approach; E. Kucharska-Dreiss and D. Crystal mention it as well.

topic (with the exceptions of Elżbieta Kucharska-Dreiss[17] and Noel Heather). The reason is that Kucharska- Dreiss's texts deal mainly with churches which are less common (such as the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, or Reverend Moon's sect; Jehovah's Witnesses) or religious groups which, in some of their ideas, resemble Christians or call themselves Christians, but act in a typically persuasive sectarian manner (including personality worship and shady financial dealings) which is well-documented in disseminated journals, newspapers and booklets).

The Polish theolinguistics hold a world famous position nowadays. On behalf of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Prezydium Polskiej Akademii Nauk), they have been assigned a section dedicated to the study of religious language (Zespoł Języka Religijnego[18]) within the Council of the Polish Language (Rada Języka Polskiego). Among the identities of the "Zespoł" members are the well known names of many famous linguists from all over the country who represent individual Polish regions: Elżbieta Kucharska-Dreiss, Marzena Makuchowska, Stanisław Mikołajczak, Zbigniew Pasek, Renata Przybylska, Małgorzata Rybka, Jolanta Sławek, Joanna Sobczykowa Agnieszka Sieradzka-Mruk, Maria Wojtak, Dorota Zdunkiewicz-Jedynak, and many others. Among the names appear even those of famous priests lecturing at Theological faculties in Poland like Wiesław Przyczyna, Paweł Holc, Jerzy Tofiluk, Henryk Sławiński or Paweł Mazanka to name but a few. Each of these names brings something new to the bibliography of the aforementioned field which enriches the Polish theolinguistics by contribution towards a number of articles or indeed monographs, published on various topics. The number of books published under the association of religious language (Zespoł Języka Religijnego) increases quite quickly. Conferences dealing with individual theolinguistic topics are held on regular basis. The close cooperation with the theological experts who oversee the accuracy of each publication is typical and they are regularly present at all national conferences in Poland.

[17] She published a collective volume in Germany in Regensburg which was devoted to the language of the Jehovah's Witnesses.
[18] http://www.rjp.pan.pl/

Theolinguistic themes have also appeared in Slovakia (Jozef Pavlovič and his recently published textbook of Stylistics in Bratislava; Jozef Mistrík − who was the very first to describe religious style; several volumes dealing with issues relating to prayer by Slavomíra Očenášová-Štrbová from Banska Bystrica; several books published by the Philosophical Faculty of the Catholic University at Ružomberok, e.g. by Terézia Rončáková, Jozef Mlacek, etc.; biblical semantics by Ján Sabol; and also several linguists from the Universities in Nitra and Trnava).

In the Czech Republic "theolinguistics"s has not been introduced as a term so far. As far as the discipline is concerned, the only comprehensive book representing the whole area is the volume by M. Grygerková et al. (2005) *On the Specificity of the Church Communication*[19]. Otherwise the attention has been devoted mainly to the religious style which has been mentioned already in the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Czech Language*[20] (2002). After the publication of Mistrík's textbook of *Stylistics* it was Naděžda Kvítková who characterised religious style in her articles and besides it appeared in the latest edition of the *Contemporary Stylistics*[21] by Marie Krčmová, Marie Čechová and Eva Minářová (2008).

[19] Grygerková, M., ed. (2005): *Specifika církevní komunikace*. Ostrava, FFOU.
[20] Encyklopedický slovník češtiny (2002).
[21] Čechová, M. – Krčmová, M. – Minářová, E. (2008): *Současná stylistika*. Praha, nakl. Lidové noviny.

> Prayer is by its very nature a dialogue and a union with God. Its effect is to hold the world together and to achieve reconciliation with God. Prayer is the mother and daughter of tears. It is expiation of sin, a bridge over temptation, a barrier against affliction. It wipes out conflict, is the work of Angels and the nourishment of all bodiless beings. Prayer is the future gladness, an endless work, a wellspring of virtues, a source of grace, hidden progress, food for the soul, an illumination of the mind, an axe against despair, a proof of hope, sorrow done away with, the wealth of monks, the treasure of hesychasts, the reduction of anger, the mirror of progress, a demonstration of success, evidence of one's condition, the future revealed, and a sign of glory. For him who truly prays, prayer is the court, the judgment hall and the tribunal of the Lord before the judgment to come.
>
> *(St. John Climacus: Prayer)*

3.0 The types of votive prayers and their general features

The Oxford dictionary defines a prayer as: "a solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God[22]" The word "pray" comes originally from the Latin word *precari*, which simply means to entreat or ask. It could originally be translated simply as 'please'. This implies that prayer has been primarily linked with asking God for something. However, by later definitions, prayer has been more often interpreted as a communication with God (St. Augustine) or as an encounter with the transcendent God (St. Thomas Aquinas). This interpretation presupposes the divine presence in man's world and Christian belief that God has manifested Himself in the history.

Traditionally prayer could be interpreted as an act of awareness and attention towards God, an affective response expressing personal attitudes to the divine, which is dialogic in character. The encounter with God may be implicit if we remain on the human level of visible signs which we miss; or explicit, if the attitudes to God are clearly expressed.

[22] (http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/prayer)

Prayer has innumerable forms and manifestations. The various forms compete with one another, but none of the forms should be disadvantaged, as theologically considered, every sincere prayer may lead one to God. The language of prayer is specific in style and as such must be learnt. All of the diverse forms may help one along the way. There are two basic groups of prayers: free prayers and standard prayers.

3.1 Assumptions for a prayer (a theological perspective)

Answering the question of "what is prayer" is not easy, because there exist many answers. The term is rather broad and covers spoken words, chants, and glossolalia examining phenomenona such as states of trance. Without doubt it always concerns an act of religious worship revealing a specific dimension of human − divine communication.

In history prayer has been often described by many church fathers[23] and saints: Gregory of Nyssa calls it "a conversation with God," St Thomas of Aquinas describes it as "an ascent of the mind to God" and John Damascene depicts it as "the raising of one's mind and heart to God." The problem of these definitions is that they are usually metaphors[24] which try to describe the phenomenon but do not provide a complete explanation. Their implied sense captures only some aspects of the total potential meaning.

True, we can find a few definitions which bring us nearer to the phenomenon; however, not even the best definition can differentiate between an ordinary text focused on God and prayer itself. Therefore it is very often difficult to say how a prayer can be distinguished from an ordinary text addressed to God. It is as problematic as distinguishing a clear dialogue from meaningless chatter.

[23] The period of church fathers is marked by the death of Saint Isidore of Seville († 636) in the West and the death of Saint John Damascene in the East († 749)

[24] Cf. Wierzbicka, A. (1994): What is prayer? In search of a definition. In: L. B. Brown, ed., *The Human Side of Prayer: The Psychology of Praying*. Birmingham, Ala, Religious Education Press, pp 25−46.

These many definitions of prayer often lead us to the conclusion that prayer could be understood as a state based upon a close relationship with God. The borders of prayer usually lie beyond human recognition. Take the prayer: "*God, thank you for my little brother, but I wanted to have a doggie.*" Who can decide whether a children's prayer seemingly addressed to God is a real prayer, or a deliberate instrument to manipulate parents to give a child more presents at Christmas?

A. Wierzbicka (1994, p. 31) also mentions that prayer is not inherently only linked with speech but that it is in fact a way of life. She explains it by saying that we rather "live in" a prayer than just "say a prayer". This is without doubt a fact stated in several books dealing with prayer as it goes back to St. Basil (cf. T. Špidlík, 1999, p. 106). A. Wierzbicka further remarks that "different people have different ideas about prayer, and these different ideas cannot offer us a firm, stable point of reference" (1994, p. 43).

During the investigation of collected prayers it was necessary to answer the simple question: "What makes a prayer a prayer?" Prayer is a phenomenon described in many different ways − it is an abstract term which is difficult to classify by parameters. It would be equally useless to try to classify God. A prayer cannot be distinguished by content either, as it is the speech of the heart or the soul, and thus we are dealing with a relationship which does not derive from some aspect of formal language, but from an inner intention[25]. No man can see into another's heart to say what is and what is not a prayer. We can just suppose that we may recognize feelings like sincerity, humility, truthfulness and openness of heart.

When a prayer is characterised as a state of mind, not as an idea or thought or a particular set of words, it is practically impossible to discern a prayer from ordinary text, because persons enter it with the intention to express requests, thanks, praise and open their minds in some kind of listening or expectation.

Some of the collected prayers sounded strange, even quaint, but as they were based on inner feelings and motivations, this was made allowance for, providing they were honest and coherent with their own meaning, reflecting a given situation.

[25] The intentionality is a typical register feature (style) of such a text.

Some authors have described prayer as an expression of a state of mind, when humans open a dialogue with God, and when we enter it by an intention or willingness to listen. The most important thing is to recognize God‘s freedom not to answer one‘s prayer, to respond or not to respond. If the prayer is really a prayer, the person voicing the prayer must respect this freedom.

If a small child asks God: “God, I would like to have the yellow house, please, help me to get it,” there must be liberty and the possibility of accepting a different answer − for example; a blue house, or a green one, or no house at all. Without this freedom, this kind of communication cannot be classified in the category of prayers but rather as magic (urging God, the gods or deities to do what man wishes). At this stage mutual communication ceases, and we would be dealing with man dictating to deity. In this case the pray-ers are concerned only with the object of their prayer, and make no effort towards unification with God, to which every true prayer should finally lead.

One of the definitions already mentioned is that prayer is a “conversation” with God. But humans cannot hear God as they hear another person. It is even possible that this conversation does not rely on pronounced words: people may also pray with their heart, in attitudes, gestures or other wordless acts.

The phenomenon of prayer is closely linked with man’s faith and the two terms are mutually interdependent. One does not exist without the other – in fact without faith, there can be no prayer and vice versa.

Humans do not need many tools for prayer. What is needed in particular? Most of all: honesty, respect for God, who is above us and above all that surrounds us, and the intention to pray. God is invited to enter into the reality which we open before him, and acts in them as God. He understands the broader context.

People often pray in the way that they recite verses, or read prayers from a book. Yet, praying is not tantamount to reading a poem or something that someone else has created. One can easily slip by becoming a non-participating reader, or by reciting something from memory, without finding it in the spirit. It may be a great cultural experience, but it is not prayer.

Praying should not lead anyone to applying the concept of stylizing oneself towards common communication patterns but to finding one´s own. God seldom speaks vocally – He communicates, but from a different side than one would expect to.

In prayer a man does not confess to God anything He would not know about. Although it is common practice that someone utters the prayer in such a way he supports it by emotional outpouring, a little bit of weeping that leads him towards experiencing the feeling of a well done prayer which he is really happy about. Primarily, prayer is valuable for one very important aspect – it gives the person a chance of sharing something with God and presenting it to Him. When one entrusts something to God, He necessarily acts in that as the Creator who creates something completely new. In this way prayer and the Creator's power are closely linked to one another (cf. M. Vácha − K. Satoria 2013, p. 90, p. 120).

Written prayers may indeed inspire one, but they must not become permanently the only thing presented to God. Prayer is actually a relationship, a kind of sharing; it is neither a poem, nor a non-participating recitation. But even those who have abandoned children's prayers or devotional prayer books can often slip into reciting formulas. Even those who try to talk to God and run out of words, become worried that they do not pray anymore. The prayer which most of the spiritual giants write about is contemplative prayer[26]. This level of contemplative prayer is not achieved merely by reciting prayers to one's Guardian Angel, or to Our Father. These prayers are unlikely to bring one to a true level of contemplation[27].

Another form of ill-conceived prayer is one which always expects to find solace, or an internal lift. It is important to realize that a "good" prayer does not depend on anything of this kind. God can sometimes grant us a feeling which touches our heart, but this does not mean that such a prayer would be more meritorious than a prayer during which one would not feel anything like that. Each

[26] See chapter 3.2 The main prayer classification and its structural components, p. 31.
[27] This fact is mentioned by many authors, for example: T. Špidlík (1999): Modlitba, p. 111 or Marek Vácha − Karel Satoria (2013): Život je *sacra* zajímavej, p. 92.

prayer in which one seeks to meet the Lord is praiseworthy regardless of one‘s uplifted feelings.

Sometimes it is difficult to rid oneself of some previous experiences, such as when one has just been upset. In such cases one has a tendency to be monothematical[28]. Each activity, even prayer, needs to be calmed down. If one cannot concentrate with all one’s thoughts, then one may not be ready for prayer either. On the other hand, one will never be completely ready, so engaging in prayer should not be postponed indefinitely, until one finds such ideal conditions.

Sometimes prayer is difficult, but one should persevere with it for a certain time. What is important is loyalty. The English have a very nice term for those who pray: “prayer warriors.” Sometimes it really can be such a struggle.

Yet one can find a way of prayer which does not need special preparation. These prayers are called “ejaculative prayers”. They function like darts which hit the target. In many aspects they look like short votive messages but they are always addressed to God[29].

There was a man in the second world war who would run out from the trenches without cover into the battle field to tend the wounded, and when met by German fire would say to God: “I surrender everything to you, even the fact that they will probably shoot me!” Ejaculative prayer could be characterized as something short and immediate what is expressed with confidence. What follows afterward becomes a prayer.

Prayer has the same pattern as any relationship: either it grows or it declines. It often begins with many words, but as the relationship grows, there may appear silent moments of striving for unification. There is a lesser tendency to explain what is going on in the mind, as one has progressed in the relationship and come to know more of the other.

The old monks claimed that man is formed by his actions, by how he acts. They considered no act as trivial. Everything was worthy of union with God. If a

[28] T. Špidlík (1999): Modlitba, p. 348.

[29] Some Americans have a tendency to say “Oh my God“ just about anything in order to stress it but the intention to address God is obviously missing there. This does not have anything in common with the intentional invocation of the divine in ejaculatory prayers.

person wanted to be with God, it did not matter much whether he was present at the Mass, washing the dishes, or sweeping the floor. Every act was an opportunity for this meeting (cf. M. Vácha − K. Satoria, p. 61 and p. 82), every activity could be shared with God and was only a matter of natural attention to a particular activity. Such attitudes led the monks eventually to the liturgization of life, to an effort of constant prayer. St. Benedict himself does not recommend to consider any work to be trivial. Nothing is profane, and our task is to reveal that what we may call profane is in fact "the sacred space"[30]. Theoretical foundations gained in prayer are actually something very useful for our practical work. A good prayer can be very short. At one point we may enter into an act, which we are just performing by uttering a short ejaculatory prayer, and this places our activity in a new context "we and God". As the monks described it humans are brought into union with God just by the invocation linked with their intention.

Prayer penetrates everything and everybody present to their depths. Through prayer we come to be present in the lives of other people. Prayer in fact lies in surrendering everything to God, and appeals to the skill of sharing. Each action becomes an act of love at the same time as a liturgical action. This could be practised even in situations which lead one to inner commentary. One does not take time to share it with others, but entrusts it directly to God. This is the simple knowledge of old monks. It would be worthwhile to end with the words of Joseph Ratzinger in one of his sermons: "If you ever pray do not ask God for less than He can give". Something similar was also expressed by Teresa of Avila: "May you not have in your heart small wishes to God[31]". The whole sentence is later explained. The reason is that God gives always, gives to anybody, and gives generously. It depends only on whether one is disposed to accept it. God is not interested in sin – but in whether one wants to accept His grace and mercy.

[30] i. e., the sacral space − sacrum.
[31] Both quotations probably paraphrase the original words of Origines who formulated it as first in Orationes. Cf. Špidlík, T. (1999): *Modlitba*, p. 87.

3.2 The main prayer classification and its structural components

Free prayers formulated *ad hoc* (individual prayers) are distinctly individual prayers, which do not require a written form. They are spontaneous and closely linked to a particular situation in life. They may express human worries about an examination, an unpleasant negotiation, a dangerous journey, etc. and they traditionally contain other related components: *petitions, thanks* and *praise*, which can be attached to each other.

Standard prayers (also called set/traditional/or formulaic prayers, such as *Our Father*) have a fixed written form[32] and are usually contained in prayer books or published collections of prayers. They are mostly edited by a particular church authority and designed or intended for wider public use by the faithful. Traditional prayers are usually considered as an act of preparation[33] on the way to the higher level of prayer.

Included among written prayers is the Divine Office. We can often find it under the term *"common prayer",* which in fact includes the liturgical prayer, i.e. breviary. The differences between these two groups (the free and the set prayers) are clear-cut. Officially acknowledged texts follow traditional structural patterns, and may have archaic connotations. They become subject to change only slowly.

Individual prayers are not bound by convention, and are more intimate. Their language comes closer to common speech. However, both types have usually the same basic structural characteristics[34], containing an address, showing gratitude, making a petition as their main part, and finishing with thanks. Whether it is a poetic prayer with grammatical forms of Tudor English, or not, it does not affect the overall function and goal, which is to keep company with God.

Between a set prayer and a free prayer, however, there exists a kind of combination of mental and oral prayers, which is called the contemplative prayer. It starts with a formulaic prayer to the Holy Spirit. A short passage from the Bible is

[32] Some standard prayers come originally from the Bible, for example Our Father (known as the Sacerdotal Prayer, John 17) or Hail Mary which is extrapolated from Luke (1, 30).
[33] Cf. Špidlík, T. (1999): *Modlitba*, p. 107.
[34] This is corpus-based evidence which is documented by collected examples.

read afterwards and this is followed by an attempt to reflect the reading in a mental prayer that can be either voiced or completely voiceless. (Even among those who have already reached the higher stage of prayer lips do not have to stay always closed. This sort of prayer quite often combines mental voiceless talk with the voiced one which is pronounced aloud.) Spiritual teachers of the prayer describe the contemplative prayer as the most fruitful way to God, or the surest way to spiritual success. Contemplation remains the summit of the prayer life. No wonder that its inner dynamism is often compared to a ladder[35] which stands on the ground, as its buttress has physical presence oriented to God in heaven.

The first rung of this ladder is ***lectio (reading).*** It should stimulate one's own free prayer and support one's desire to turn to God, to address Him and leave the text. St. Teresa deals with the place of lectio (reading) in prayer. Her rule is not to contemplate unless she has something to contemplate. Each spiritual reading should enrich her with a new impulse to prayer. In the history of the Church there have been different attitudes about what texts to use as a base for this prayer. St. Jerome never used a book when praying, but instead made notes and then went back to them and reviewed them. The copied text was the very first step for him. St. Teresa on the other hand never went to pray without a book (Bible). The method here was first to become unified with the text, and thence the reader would be ready to leave the text and go on spontaneously.

The second rung of the ladder is ***meditatio (meditation)***. This is the personalization of the prayer, a stage in which a discussion with God starts, and He is addressed directly. Now the theme becomes a basis for the relationship between God and oneself. The third rung is ***contemplatio (contemplation)*** – the prayer of unity, the highest level of prayer. In fact the act of prayer becomes the personalized prayer.

The contemplative prayer has a tendency to be increasingly interlaced with silence. While meditation may still have a vocal talkative part, there follows a stage of silence which develops and becomes increasingly common. The silence must not be uneasy or embarrassing, though, but the result of a spontaneous perception is that

[35] It is reminiscent of Jacob's dream, Genesis (28,12).

one does not need to say anything, since God is already completely unified with oneself. However this type of prayer lies outside the sphere of any thesis.

Traditionally, prayer was divided into *praise, thanksgiving* and *petitions*. Less frequently included are *confession* and *adoration*. A prayer may begin with praise, and during its course may change to a petition. Its various components may then alternate freely, even several times within one prayer.

Petition: When it is on behalf of others, this type of prayer is also known as supplication or intercession. Man confides his human misery to God, and expresses some desires. He may confirm existential dependence upon God and His power to change things. Petition is also an integral part of liturgical worship or devotional prayers, such as litanies. Petitions are the most frequent type of prayer. However, teachers of devotional life tend to regard petitionary prayers as the lowest form of prayer, something which should not occupy too large a place in the life of prayer. This is largely caused by the fact that this kind of prayer offers the greatest opportunity for selfishness and is too heavily focused on one's own interest (unless, of course, one includes intercession in this category as well). Petitionary prayer therefore reflects the most secular pattern of thinking.

A. Wierzbicka (1994, p. 45) says: "The fact that many authors writing about prayer appear to identify prayer with 'petitions to God' could be regarded as evidence that prayer is semantically linked with 'asking for things' (as the older meaning of the verb *to pray* would suggest)."

Praise: The focus of praise may be not only God but also His mighty deeds in the history of mankind. Hymns and acts of praise are a common feature of all liturgical worship. The reading of the gospel in the Roman Catholic liturgy is, for example, answered with the response: "Praise be to God". Quite well known also is the ancient hymn "Te Deum Laudamus", coming from the fifth century A.D. Praise is usually more abstract and often mentions God's attributes and deeds. Praise is thought by many theologians to be the highest element of prayer because it is selfless. This is well captured by the famous bestseller on prayer of praise, which enjoys great popularity all over both U.S.A. and UK (M. L. Carothers, 1972).

Thanksgiving: Thanks given to God are the basic attribute of Christian prayer. Mostly the person praying gives thanks for the hope of eternal life, for the personal experience of God's goodness, for the concrete manifestations of God's love in his/her life (for faith, occupation, or one's family). It is an attempt to find reasons for gratitude even if one feels arid and abandoned. The ability to give thanks is a great benefit, which takes man away from himself. (Giving thanks is usually linked with something particular e.g., something awesome or enjoyable.

Confession: The forms of confession vary greatly, but generally include an expression of sorrow for past transgressions, and a petition for God's forgiveness. A personal confession has always been a feature of Christian private prayer. (The awareness of human sinfulness and the need of divine mercy are for example reflected in Kyrie Eleison.)

Adoration: The word adoration connotes "resting" in God's presence. Of all the forms of prayer described here, this one is the least tied to verbal forms of expression. It usually includes a combination of praise and thanksgiving.

3.3 The votive prayer

Linguistically, though the terms for a prayer (meaning especially intercession, petition, plea and votive prayer) may come to us as being almost synonymous, liturgically considered, there is a difference between an *intercession for others* and a plea or *petition for oneself*. Moreover there is another term, *votive prayer*[36] from hereafter VP, used often by linguists for the analysis of the analogous intercessory texts in Poland. Concerning the content of the prayer one cannot precisely define where the borderline between an intercession and a votive prayer lies. The area of votive prayer is definitely wider and includes also thanks and blessings.

The examples collected in my thesis include mostly intercessions and it would be more correct to call them "intercessory prayers". However, there are also

[36] It is also known under the term "modlitwa wotywna" in Poland.

prayers which belong to thanks and blessings and they would rather fit into "paraliturgical[37]" votives. After careful consideration of the complex problem in terminology the term of a votive prayer finally prevailed. It does not automatically imply that the term of VP is liturgically always the best suited, therefore the more precise term of intercessory prayers was used in the official title of the work as an explanatory term. The result is that both terms continue to alternate in the work.

It is interesting that the book from Broadway was originally called *The book of intercessions* while the place with the cards on display in London was headed as *prayer intentions*. As a result of that, my dissertation should rather be precisely called *The specific language of intercessory prayers* as it mostly deals with this type of prayer.

However, the book of prayers I analysed was originally situated under the pietà where it was left lying on the altar. The statue of the Virgin Mary embracing Jesus' dead body (the pietà) was a part of Marian chapel. It frequently happens that books with votive prayers are placed near Marian statues or altars. This fact also supports the idea that it is right to call them votive after all as votive masses may be addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary for instance (besides other typical votive devotions to Holy Trinity, Holy Cross, Holy Name, Holy Spirit, etc.)[38]

The practice of writing votive prayers in a local book of petitions is not found everywhere around Britain. It is a part of religious behaviour, performed in places of pilgrimage or in popular places where something miraculous has happened like a healing or an apparition. It is therefore mostly reserved to famous and often visited churches. People visit such places to pray and leave there their votive prayers in the hope that the place gives privileged access to God, or that at least

[37] They are usually used outside the official liturgy.

[38] A votive mass is celebrated to strengthen piety and is usually focused on some mystery from God's life on earth or that of a saint. Providing there is no particular memorial or feast of the liturgical year, a votive mass can be celebrated for this particular occasion from the texts for votive masses. (On the feast of the Holy Trinity the text from the actual feast is used for the celebration but in ordinary times of the year, it may also be celebrated as a votive from a different text). Votive masses function liturgically as a kind of supplement text in case the liturgical calendar for the day does not prescribe any obligation. Votive masses cannot be celebrated on Sundays, or during Lent and Easter time.

there is a prayer team interceding for the visitors and supporting them, even after their departure.

According to the personal experience of the prayer team members, the votive prayers may be linked with certain distrust in their own parish as they mean some extra work for a person who coordinates it.

Votive prayers have a form of everyday conversation with their immediacy and informality. The language used is not much different from a talk with a good friend or a colleague at work, though it has the written form. Prayers tend to be transparent and participants openly share their worries with which they want to address God.

> The angels too pray, all of them. The whole creation prays. Cattle and wild beasts pray, and bend their knees, and in coming forth from their stalls and lairs look up to heaven, their mouth not idle, making the spirit move in their own fashion. Moreover the birds taking flight lift themselves up to heaven and instead of hands spread out the cross of their wings, while saying something which may be supposed to be a prayer. What more then of the obligation of prayer?
> *(A reading from the treatise of Tertullian On Prayer. The Divine Office, The Liturgy of the Hours according to the Roman Rite, vol. 2. Lent and Eastertide, Collins, London, 1974, p. 162ff)*

4.0 The intercessory prayers as part of a Holy Mass

The votive prayer may assume the form of a short public liturgy but more often it means a personal prayer expressed by simple entries in the book of intercessions placed at the side altar or near a miraculous image or statue. Votive intentions may also take the form of cards thrown in boxes or mass intentions communicated in the parish office.

The votive prayer is a "variant prayer[39]". It is a kind of short statement that replaces an individual prayer and turns into a short petition usually read during the Sunday Mass. If this prayer is to be read during the Mass, the style of expression cannot be left completely free. The petition should be expressed in a clear and concise way so that people attending the Mass may understand it. Furthermore the votive prayer can be edited for a possible public recitation during the Sunday worship. This established frame of worship provides some space in which the votive prayer may be inserted. At the same time this set framework reduces the emotional impact that a votive prayer may exert. General prayers are liturgically preferred and the final choice can be influenced by the personal preferences of the priest, deacon or the prayer team leader who usually coordinates it.

The petitional prayers at the Mass are usually introduced and followed by the common parts of the liturgical prayer for a particular day. Their form may be like the one below:

[39]Cf. Wojtak, M. (2000): Stylistyka modlitwy wotywnej – rekonesans, p. 1.

ORDINARY TIME II

My brothers and sisters, we are gathered to celebrate the mystery of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Let us ask God our Father to open for all the world this fountain of life and blessing.

A. For all who have dedicated themselves to God, that He will help them to be faithful to their promise, we pray to the Lord:
R. **Lord, hear our prayer**

B. For peace among nations, that God may rid the world of violence and let us serve Him in freedom, we pray to the Lord:
R. **Lord, hear our prayer**

C. For the aged who suffer from loneliness and infirmity, that we will sustain them by our love, we pray to the Lord:
R. **Lord, hear our prayer**

D. For all of us gathered here, that God will teach us to use wisely the good things he has given us, that they will lead us closer to him and to the eternal blessings He promises, we pray to the Lord:
R. **Lord, hear our prayer**

Father, hear the prayers of your people. Give us what you have inspired us to ask you for in faith. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(People's Daily Missal II, pp 1878-1879)

4.1 The thematic line of votive prayers

When we follow the thematic line we realize that the range of issues and needs with which people turn to God is relatively fixed, and different topics seldom appear. Prayers reflect the news from the parish, the health, the success of an operation, safe delivery, exams, etc. The most frequent petitions are for the ill and deceased. It is not unusual that the pray-er gives the names of an entire extended family, and that someone is entrusted to pray for them. The lists may include relatives, or even house pets, and may be almost endless. We can easily get the impression that all residents of the village are dying of cancer, and gradually gather in the local cemetery, while those who survive suffer from other serious illnesses and fill the local hospital. Thanksgiving and praise are sporadic here (not counting those thanks addressed to the local parson for the well-kept cemetery near the church).

Some prayers also reflect tragic world events such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunami, the death of Pope John Paul II, the fall of the World Trade

Center in New York, and the bombs in London. With a little exaggeration we can say that such a book functions as a local newsletter informing people of upcoming funerals, marriages, operations, etc.

> Pray for Martin and Rachel, shortly to be married in this church. God please grant them good health and joys unbounded. BC 92 (p. 12).

> I pray for all who were in the tsunami and that my gran will get better amen
>
> BC 370 (p. 47)

> Please pray for the soul of my friend Margaret, buried at the same time as the Pope.
>
> BC 380 (p. 48)

> Please pray for all those worried by the recent bombs in London. Pray for peace in your world Lord. BC 402 (p. 52)

> Please pray for all the people who died in the States this week and the English. God bless all of them. Amen. BC 112 (p. 15)

> Pray for all the families of the people who died in New York, Washington and Pittsburg[40]. Pray that governments act wisely with God's help.
>
> BC 113 (p. 15)

> Please pray for Sheila & Barrie Rosewarm, and all the poor souls who died in the tragic events in U.S.A. BC 114 (p. 15)

> Please pray for all the people who died in the States last week[41] also their families. God bless all of them. BC 116 (p. 15)

> 10.10.05
> Pray that God will help the families who are devastated by the earthquake in India & Pakistan, comfort the bereaved and aid those who are trying to help & find survivors.
>
> BC 419 (p. 54)

Some texts contain references to earlier prayers, according to date. For example there is a prayer for a parishioner as for "*one who died on August 11th*",

[40] The author left out '*h*', Pittsburgh.
[41] A comma should be placed here but is missing.

and indeed, we can find it there. The book also gives topical information (e.g. who has just died and when he/she will be buried). In addition, the content of the following petition may be influenced by someone who thinks of it first. It is hard to say whether it is copied automatically or because the writer finds the idea really important as well:

> 30th June
> Please pray for my grandchildren, that they will keep their faith[42]
> BC 190 (p. 24)

> 4.8.02
> Please pray for my children, also that they keep their faith.
> BC 191 (p. 24)

> 3.4.02
> Please pray for Geoff Barrett whose funeral takes place today[43] may he rest in peace
> Pray for his daughter Rachel who is now without parents.
> BC 161 (p. 21)

> Please pray for the repose of Charlie Fulles, his funeral is on Wednesday next.
> BC 313 (p. 38)

In some cases the messages have a contextual framework, like in the case of Lorna referring to the preceding message:

> 2.4.05
> Please pray for Lorna who is having chemotherapy. Amen.
> BC 383 (p. 48)

> Please pray for Lorna Filshill who is very unwell.
> BC 395 (p. 50)

> Please pray for the soul of Lorna R.I.P.
> BC 400 (p. 52)

The frequency of individual prayers and their length is variable. Some authors write a prayer, leave and return to continue them at a later point. There are

[42] The word is underlined by the author himself.
[43] A comma should be here but is missing.

other visitors who enter the church out of curiosity in order to have a look and then, fascinated by the possibility to write down a prayer, imitate what others do.

> For healing of my family relationship – brother & sister
> Please pray for Peter Gibson who is due for serious operation. Dear Lord please bring him through it safely.
>
> BC 97 (p. 13)

> Please pray for Mary's brother who was killed in a car accident. Lord, may he rest with you now[44]. & please give strength & comfort to Mary & her family. Amen.
>
> BC 127 (p. 17)

> Please pray for the repose of Reggy Wickery. Thank you Lord for her peaceful and pain free end.
>
> BC 271 (p. 33)

> MARCH
> Please pray for Bernie in the name of Jesus Christ Our Saviour.
>
> BC 428 (p. 56)

> 12.04.05
> A truly peaceful place to pray for troubled souls. Amen.
>
> BC 381 (p. 48)

> 16.8.
> I used to come to S. Mary's Church in 1959. I remember this church after so many years (I live in Florence now). God bless us all.
>
> BC 410 (p. 53)

4.2 The authors of votive prayers

Many petitions give us various details about the writers. We know their sex, age, origin, and level of education. They tell us a lot about their religious education in the past, their evaluative system, and their relationship with their neigbours. Some of the authors are foreign, some of them used to live in Broadway expanse and return here to visit the churchyard.

The form of a particular votive prayer is linked with the spontaneity, colloquialism and individuality of the author (though it is often difficult to determine what is the individual author's style as the texts are rather short).

[44] The following fullstop is probably a mistake as the author continues by '&'.

Some prayers sound more egocentric, others sound more theocentric. Although both types usually employ schemes from ordinary oral prayers and they use apostrophe[45] and parallelism as elements of their construction, the person saying these prayers may either present an enhanced feeling of self-belief (reflecting on the work or the relationship to the addressee) or has a bigger focus on God himself.

The book of intercession contains prayers from random visitors and regular members of the congregation; educated and uneducated people, English people and foreigners. The prayers may inform us about territorial origin of the visitor as in the example below. Probably it was an American, because of the "*mom*", it would be *"mum"* in the South of England or *"mam"* in the North of England.

> 6.10.04
> God our Heavenly Father please send me a baby. Please look after my mom[46]. Graciously hear & answer my prayer.
>
> BC 349 (p. 43)

The linguistic and educational levels significantly differ among the writers; some texts imply uneducated, maybe dyslexic (dysgraphic) authors, whereas the others seem to have been written by well-educated people. Another interesting group of writers are foreign believers or random visitors sharing impressions from their trips.

In the prayers cited below, one can note a number of errors, pointing to a low level of communication skill displayed by those submitters. Furthermore it reveals the helplessness in the way the statement is formulated with grammatical errors and orthographic errors as well.

> 17.12.
> Remembering all my colleague Passionists who have professed before this altar – and for all our advent intentions, particularly for our daughter and son–in –law's house move – and for our 3 lovely grandchildren – Conrad + Anna + Maria
>
> BC 216 (p. 27)

[45] Meaning: addressing a person or an invocation.
[46] This kind of intercession raises the question of prayer as an 'easy substitute' for action. The author might look after her mum herself, but seems to be leaving the job to God.

4.3.
Conrad here again & John Forsyth – prayers for his parents and mine in the peaceful churchyard – a happy sanctuary.

BC 225 (p. 28)

A foreigner from Italy:

Madonna Santa aiutami, fa che non abbia un brutto male o la cirrosi. Aiuta e proteggi Daniela. Proteggi i miei figli e nipoti che faccia un buon viaggio di ritorno in Italia. Gracia. (Signature)

(Translation: Holy Mother, help me to avoid having cirrhosis or any other serious illness. Protect Daniela and my sons and nephews and let them have a safe trip back home to Italy. Thanks. Signature.)

BC (p. 38, not numbered)

Thank You Dear Virgin Mary for interceding for me and my husband and obtain so many favours from Our Lord Jesus Christ. Carmen

BC 110 (p. 15)

(The sentence has double interpretation probably caused by the fact that the author, Carmen, is a foreigner. It is unclear as to whether she is asking for more favours or praising Virgin Mary as the one "who obtains so many favours". In any case if she suggests *for interceding* there should also be *obtaining*.)

Non-native speakers and uneducated people often make mistakes:

Please pray for all people who live alone. I wish to Thank the Virgin Mary for interseding for me during my oariation and my stay in Hospital. Carmen Heeks

BC 96 (p. 13)

(By interseding she means interceding, by oariation means operation, and Hospital should not have capital letters.)

Pray for Jill who's husband has Alzheimer. Pray for me to regain my lost faith.

BC 94 (p. 13)

(Whose is changed into who's; a frequent misspelling even among natives.)

Please pray for all the people who died in the states and their faimlys and for all those people who are still being effected by terorism over there may God be with them. Also pray for my grandad who's birthday was on October 19th who died before I was born but I love him so very much

BC 125 (p.16)

(This VP is probably written by someone with the orthographic disability of some kind; faimlys means *families*, effected stands for *affected*, terorism is *terrorism* and *whose* is replaced by who's. There are missing commas after "over there" and "October 19th" and a fullstop is missing at the end.)

Another specific feature of these communications is the layering of various petitions unrelated to each other and adaptation of well-known phrases from the liturgical language and occasional prayers (intertextualization and ritualization) or even from foreign languages, mainly Latin in my corpus. Some of the prayers are generation−specific. The older generation tends to use the standard language, thus the words are unmarked and rather neutral, whereas the younger generation tends to use the language without restrictions, as is typical for their age group. The same is true for the petitions of young people affixed to the internet.

The second way is the trend to encrypt the statement and say instead that God has the necessary knowledge of human needs. The petitioner attempts to hide some elements and expresses faith in the power of the recipient from the sacred sphere. The encryption may be conveyed through specific formulas: *You know, you understand, you are familiar with my prayers, etc.* They use pronouns such as *all, everything,* and avoid being very specific. Sometimes writers use various nicknames or initials, or they do not write anything, to avoid being identified with the content. Unfortunately this tendency was not well documented in my English votive prayers, so for illustration I will use Czech examples from another corpus of votive prayers[47]. I collected them from the internet five years ago in order to write an article about the topic and translated them into English.

> I ask for a prayer for my little angel called Veronica, who needs a drop of luck during her coming state exam in English. Thank you from Little Ant, Ferda[48], asking for God's mercy.

[47] This corpus comes from the Czech internet web page focused on prayer in emergency. It was displayed on 16. 5. 2005 yet the web page was cancelled later on. It does not appear to be in existence any more.

[48] It is the reference to the fairy tale "Ferda, the Ant". The prayer comes from the same corpus: Prosím o přímluvnou modlitbu za svého Andílka Verunku, která by potřebovala trošku štěstíčka při nadcházející státní zkoušce z AJ. Děkuji, mraveneček Ferda.

The coffee after the service was weak, I don't know why the Czech brethren are not able to prepare a good cup of coffee. But it will not turn me from my trust in you. Next time it will not spoil my mood in the same way as today. You know I have faith in you. And for this faith I thank you, it really is a big gift. I only do not know how to show it to others. And therefore I pray to you for my children, my wife and my neighbours, even for the pagans around. And for those voting for the communists again and again[49].

As the indirect addressing of the prayer team prevails in both examples here, the authors appear to feel a little bit uneasy about writing what the team should pray for, or whether to reveal their identity. The semi-encrypted language[50] is rather common *(Help me and fulfill my heart's desire…)* and instead of names, initials are used *(Love and protect RN, Please pray that SG).*

5 Sep 2005
Dear Jesus[51] take all our needs unto yourself we ask in great need of your Divine Mercy. Amen.
Mary Theresa Short

BC 441 (p. 58)

Please pray for my son, daughter and husband. R. N.

BC 262 (p. 32)

The word "husband" is underlined by the author herself.

Please pray for little H.J. xx our darling. BC 253 (p. 31)

Please pray for the intentions of AP, and the grandmother of the girl from Stratford-upon-Avon.

BC 45 (p. 8)

An interesting matter is the position of 'xx' − it would be expected at the end after 'our darling'.

[49] The Czech prayers from non-Catholic circles were collected by N. Kvítková for the book of M. Grygerková (2005): *Specifika církevní komunikace*, p. 102: Káva po bohoslužbách byla dost slabá, já nevím – že ti evangelíci nejsou schopni uvařit pořádný kafe. – Ale i tak to už mi náladu nezkazí. Vlastně to není žádná nálada, vždyť je to víra. – Za ní ti děkuji, je to opravdu krásný dar. Jen pořád nevím, jak ho ukázat dalším. – A proto tě prosím za své děti a manželku a souseda – a pohany. A za ty, kteří pořád volí komunisty.
[50] Compare Wojtak, M. (2000): Stylistyka modlitwy wotywnej – rekonesans, p. 14.
[51] The comma which is placed after invocation is often left out.

4.3 The collect as a prototype of prayer

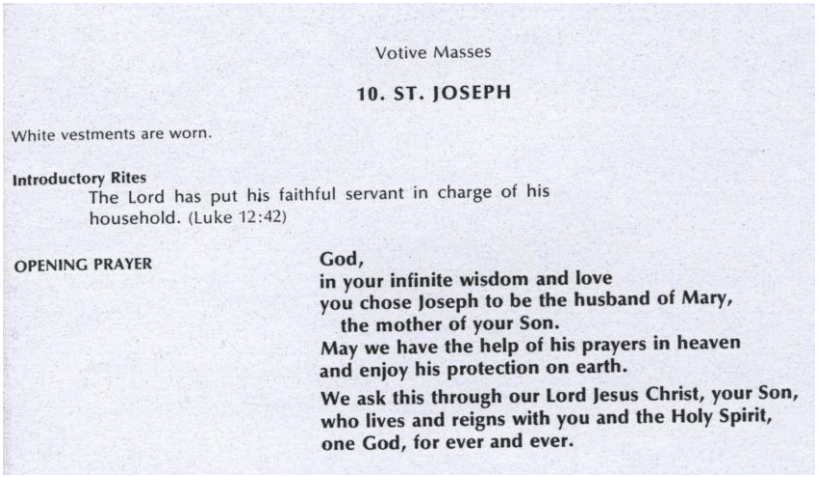
The collect is the introductory prayer of the Holy Mass, therefore it is also called the opening prayer. In the Roman rite it may be called *oratio* − "the prayer" but also *collectio, collecta*, or *ad collectam*. It is a prayer of the whole assembly[52] which is gathered to reflect the occasion of the Mass celebration. This communal prayer liturgically varies according to the period and it may refer to the person or saint commemorated on a particular day. This prayer is linked with typical postures and gestures of the priest who stands up, extends his hands and invites all the people to pray together with him. This is followed by a brief silence so that people in church may realize they are in God's presence and they may call to mind their own petitions for the Mass and add them to the official prayer of the priest. The celebrant then reads a short prayer to God collecting all intentions of the present people (the name of the collect may be historically derived from the act of collecting the individual intentions).

In most instances the prayer is concluded either with "we ask this"… or "grant us". This is followed by a doxology which formulates the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ: e.g. the prayer is addressed to the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit or the action of the Father comes through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Slight variations are represented by "in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord" or "through Jesus Christ our Lord". People give their assent by the acclamation "Amen" and by that formulaic answer they accept the prayer for their own.

The collect is a general prayer with a stereotyped structure. Its distinctive pattern is influenced by conventional rules of Latin formulations (mainly drawn from the late classical artistic prose). Due to its set structure and its distinctive stereotyped form, this liturgical prayer serves as a prototype of every prayer. It keeps a distinctive pattern and the conventional rules of the Latin formulations (mainly the late classical artistic prose).

[52] In Latin it probably means "assembly".

Thematically, *the collect* usually relates to the faith and a dogmatic part of it. It commemorates the great God's deeds and it mentions the imperfection of believers and their constant efforts to get closer to God. The theme of the collect is linked with other events of the liturgical year (e.g. solemnities of saints) which are reflected. The collect is paid such great attention to because its stable structure becomes a prototype of the genre[53]. Maria Wojtak stresses[54] that the collect is the subject of stereotyping and becomes a model of other established prayers which further develop. The collect is so short that it may consist of only one sentence, often divided into clauses by semicolons or commas. The text of the collect copies the Latin pattern almost literally[55]. The collect is a prayer contained in the Roman Missal[56] which has been translated and in style retains the succinct character of the original Latin[57].



Votive Masses

10. ST. JOSEPH

White vestments are worn.

Introductory Rites

The Lord has put his faithful servant in charge of his household. (Luke 12:42)

OPENING PRAYER

God,
in your infinite wisdom and love
you chose Joseph to be the husband of Mary,
the mother of your Son.
May we have the help of his prayers in heaven
and enjoy his protection on earth.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Picture 1 (The Sacramentary, The Roman Missal, 1985, p. 853).

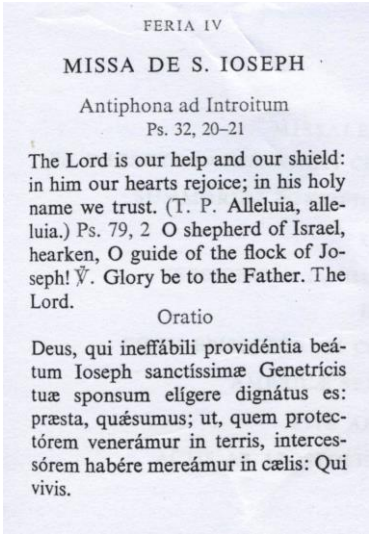
[53] Compare: Grygerková, M. – Lašťovičková, M. (2013): K jazyku modliteb v katolickém Českém misálu. In: Perspektiven der Bohemistik und Slovakistik, Specimmina philologiae slavicae. Adam, H., Hammel, R., Turočeková, M., eds, München, in print.

[54] M. Wojtak (1999): Modlitwa ustalona – podstawowe wyznaczniki gatunku. In: *W zwierciadle języka i kultury*, J. Adamowski, S. Niebrzegowska, eds, Lublin, pp 129 − 130.

[55] Cf. M. Grygerková – M. Lašťovičková: K žánru modlitby (na příkladech z katolického Českého misálu), p. 158–159.

[56] Meaning *The Sacramentary*, 1985.

[57] See the example from the previous version of the Roman Missal, from the year 1964, from a votive mass to St. Joseph (picture 2).



FERIA IV

MISSA DE S. IOSEPH

Antiphona ad Introitum
Ps. 32, 20–21

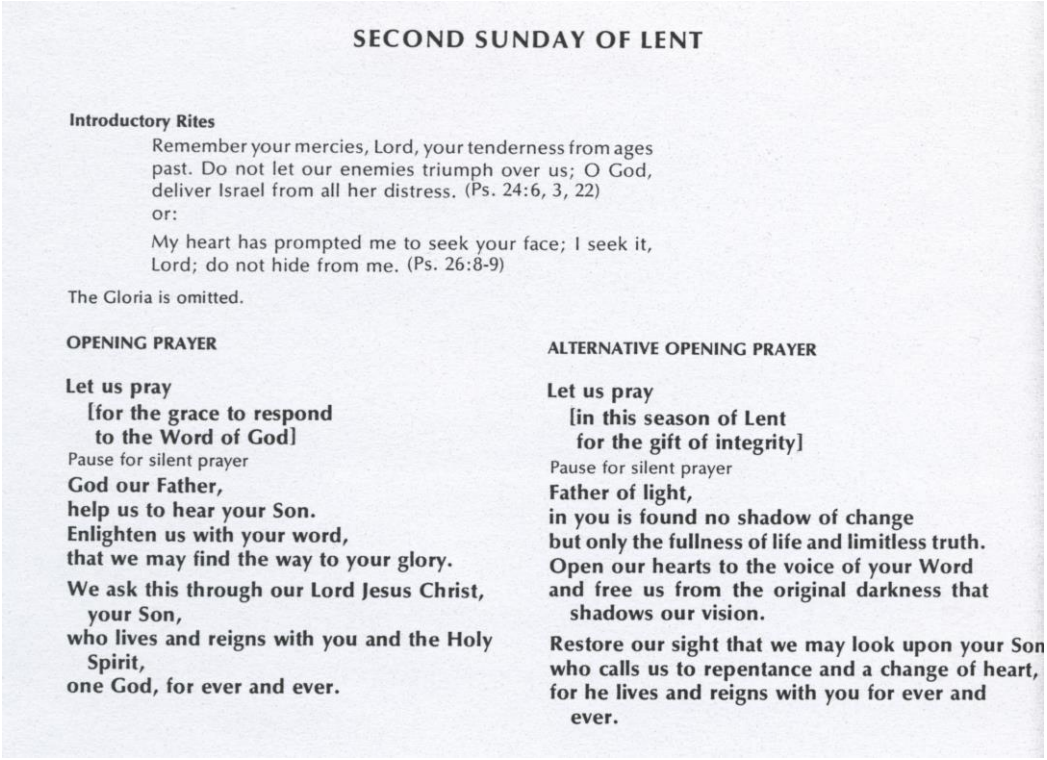
The Lord is our help and our shield: in him our hearts rejoice; in his holy name we trust. (T. P. Alleluia, alleluia.) Ps. 79, 2 O shepherd of Israel, hearken, O guide of the flock of Joseph! ℣. Glory be to the Father. The Lord.

Oratio

Deus, qui ineffábili providéntia beátum Ioseph sanctíssimæ Genetrícis tuæ sponsum elígere dignátus es: præsta, quæsumus; ut, quem protectórem venerámur in terris, intercessórem habére mereámur in cælis: Qui vivis.

Picture 2 (The Roman Missal, Missa votiva de S. Ioseph, 1964, p. 59). The Collect is marked as "Oratio" here. The text is already archaic as it is clearly seen from the text of the antiphone above, e.g. *hearken − listen to me* is no longer used in ModE. Neither is the collect said in Latin now.

At the Mass only one opening prayer is used, though an optional invitatory prayer may be offered on Sundays and certain feasts. Somewhere, an alternative opening prayer may be placed within square brackets to indicate that its use is at the discretion of the priest. This alternative text of the collect follows only the central theme, but it does not have to be completely faithful to the corresponding Latin pattern, as it grows organically from already existing national liturgical practice, which might be slightly different according to each country. So when two opening prayers appear side by side in the Sacramentary, the one on the left is faithful but not necessarily a literal translation of the correspondent Latin text, whilst the one on the right is an alternative collect, which only shares a global theme with the Latin pattern. However, the alternative collect is usually more concrete and expansive. Either text of the collect may be used at the Mass according to the celebrant's preferences.



SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Introductory Rites

Remember your mercies, Lord, your tenderness from ages past. Do not let our enemies triumph over us; O God, deliver Israel from all her distress. (Ps. 24:6, 3, 22)
or:
My heart has prompted me to seek your face; I seek it, Lord; do not hide from me. (Ps. 26:8-9)

The Gloria is omitted.

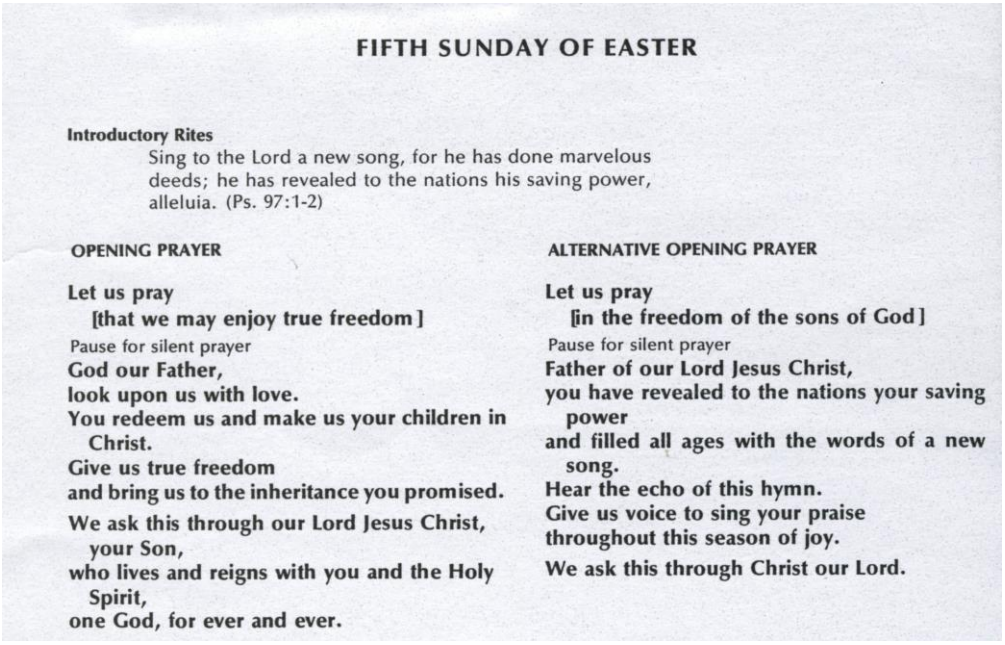
OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray
[for the grace to respond to the Word of God]
Pause for silent prayer
God our Father,
help us to hear your Son.
Enlighten us with your word,
that we may find the way to your glory.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

ALTERNATIVE OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray
[in this season of Lent for the gift of integrity]
Pause for silent prayer
Father of light,
in you is found no shadow of change
but only the fullness of life and limitless truth.
Open our hearts to the voice of your Word
and free us from the original darkness that shadows our vision.
Restore our sight that we may look upon your Son
who calls us to repentance and a change of heart,
for he lives and reigns with you for ever and ever.

Picture 3 (The Sacramentary, The Roman Missal, 1985, p. 162).



FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Introductory Rites

Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous deeds; he has revealed to the nations his saving power, alleluia. (Ps. 97:1-2)

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray
[that we may enjoy true freedom]
Pause for silent prayer
God our Father,
look upon us with love.
You redeem us and make us your children in Christ.
Give us true freedom
and bring us to the inheritance you promised.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

ALTERNATIVE OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray
[in the freedom of the sons of God]
Pause for silent prayer
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
you have revealed to the nations your saving power
and filled all ages with the words of a new song.
Hear the echo of this hymn.
Give us voice to sing your praise
throughout this season of joy.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Picture 4 (The Sacramentary, The Roman Missal, 1985, p. 294). On some occasions The Sacramentary offers even the text of several collects and it is dependent upon the priest to decide which text should be preferred.

As the collect should address all the faithful present at the Mass, it is generally formulated and usually focused on God's merits, the wishes of the believers and their spiritual goals. Abstract words are used (love, sin, freedom) and fixed word combinations, fixed phrasemes, clichés or multiverbizations often appear: *May all your people who have gone before us in faith share his victory* (The Sacramentary, 1985, All souls p. 666), *grant a blessed ending to the journey on which they have set out* (The Sacramentary, 1985, Religious profession, p. 777), *come to the joyful vision of your glory* (The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 621), *help us to answer his call to forgiveness and life* (The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 112), *to proclaim your salvation with joyful praise* (The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 181), *to cast off the old ways of life* (The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 180), *bring us the blessing of your forgiveness* (The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 148), *free us from the slavery of sin* (The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 102), *he is the salvation of mankind* (The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 127), (*he*) *became man and was born of a virgin mother* (The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 132), *come to the glory of his kingdom* (The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 143), etc.

Moreover, the collect is typologically related to other prayers of the Mass belonging to the same category of "orations" and its text is thematically harmonized with them (like prayer over the gifts and prayer after communion) as well as with the choice of the songs or a theme of a homily as well[58].

4.3.1 The structure of the collect

The votive prayer has a similar structure to a *collect*, the introductory prayer of the Mass[59]. This is the reason why attention should be focused on liturgical prayer first as votive prayers are a type of text concomitant with an understanding of the collect. The Polish linguists[60] observe not only the existence of a genetic relationship but also a structural one which takes the form of a variation in the structural pattern of the collect.

[58] Grygerková, M. − Lašťovičková, M. (in print): K jazyku modliteb v katolickém Českém misálu.
[59] I use the structure given in the article of Charles A. Ferguson (1976): The Collect as a Form of Discourse. In: William J. Samarin, ed., *Language in Religious Practice*. Newbury House Publishers, Massachusetts, p. 102.
[60] It was mentioned by M. Wojtak (2011, p. 47ff).

As the structure of votive prayers is partly taken from liturgy, it contains multi-stylistic texts combining various forms of ritual language, and of common, sometimes even colloquial, speech. Some of these elements of the religious style are present in other styles. Therefore, we speak of multi-stylistic texts, by means of which believers turn to God. This stylistic variety corresponds to the already existing texts characteristic of God's revelation.

The texts of votive prayers show clear relations to other genres of communications[61], for example the official request, contract, complaint and observation of their rules. Many prayers keep certain conventions typical of letter writing to a distant correspondent.

The collect formula defines the structure of a prayer, and it remains the most stable base. It is formed by an invocation which outlines a communicative situation. It has a central theme with a petition or thanksgiving followed by an enumeration of the good results it is supposed to bring. The final formula is a doxology[62] or a mere acclamation, "Amen".

It has five parts:

1) an invocation: i.e. an address to God
2) the "basis" for petition: i.e. some quality of God or some action attributed to him;
3) the petition or the plea itself
4) the purpose of the request or the reason for making it: i.e. the desired result due to the granting of the petition; and
5) a formulaic ending.

Of these five parts, the second or the fourth are sometimes absent, and occasionally both are missing. This structure is represented by **Formula One**.

1. Collect→Invocation (+ Basis) + Petition (+ Purpose) + Ending

[61] Ibid.

[62] An expression of praise to God, like: *Through Christ our Lord* or *Who lives and reigns with you forever and ever…*

See for example the text of the collect from the Sacramentary, Saturday of the first week of Advent, p. 85, where the second element is absent):

1. *God of power and mercy,*
2. *it is absent*
3. *open our hearts in welcome. Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy,*
4. *so that we may share his wisdom and become one with him when he comes in glory,*
5. *for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.*

If we accept ***the Collect model*** by Charles A. Ferguson (1976, p. 101) as a valid criterion for the structure of all votive prayers, we may eliminate the texts that do not meet these requirements. I would classify them as ***Variations on Formula One*** or ***Adaptations,*** where the structure is absent or was borrowed from somewhere else. The remaining group will be called ***Individual Forms.*** These include the remainder.

Variations → reduces the standard structure or varies it, while basically it is still preserved.

Adaptation → the structure no longer exists; it was replaced by a different text form such as *Letter*, *Application*, *Confession*, *Order* or *Complaint*.

Individual Forms → are highly individual statements.

The terms, adaptations and variations have been already mentioned by M. Wojtak[63] though her categories bear different names: alternations, adaptations, canonical pattern. I realized that the word "canonical" is not really suitable as a name for the category because it is used either about law (the canon law) or books of the Bible (Biblical canon) in theology. However, the structural typology of votive prayers attracted my attention, so I developed M. Wojtak's theory, by use of

[63] Wojtak, M. (in print): Funkcje modlitwy wotywnej – spojrzenie językoznawcy, p. 9.

Charles A. Ferguson's collect pattern and illustrated that by diagram at the core of which the base of the collect model lies.

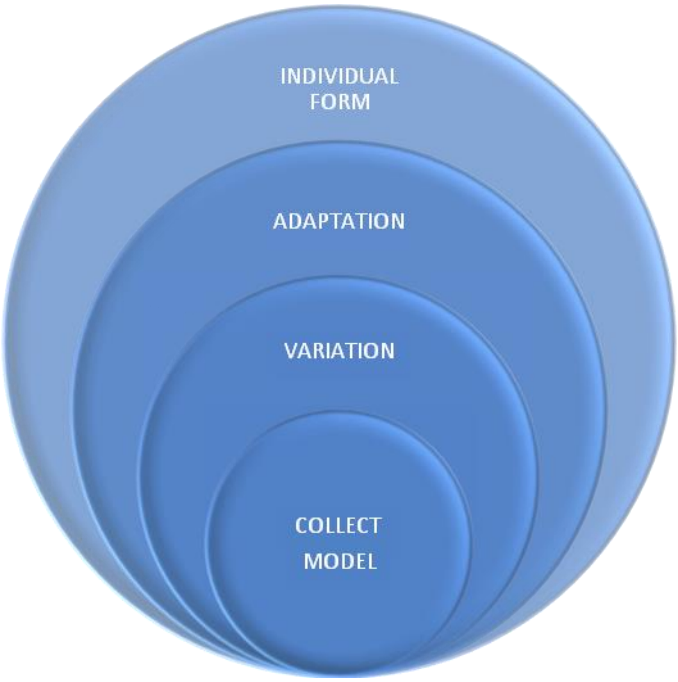


Illustration 1 (the structural typology of VPs).

Let me exemplify this with a few examples: I begin with corpus documents that comply with at least the basic structure delimited by Charles A. Ferguson. Then, I subsequently follow the corpus examples of variations, adaptations and individual forms.

In my examples the votive prayer is very often structurally reduced to just three parts (the second and fourth element may be absent as mentioned above) and from an analysis arising from nearly 500 occurrences I did not find any sample that included all five parts.

> Lord, protect the lonely and vulnerable. Amen.
>
> BC 254 (p. 31)

> 13/3/05
> Lord, watch over my children as they grow in faith and love. Help me to be their best guide always, but especially in their times of need. Amen.
>
> BC 377 (p. 48)

May
Lord, I offer up the concerns of a troubled friend.
Grant them peace. Amen. BC 305 (p. 37)

Variations

The variations on *Formula One* develop on the basis of differentiation or reformulation of this pattern. In the first example of the variation below, the same number of elements is maintained, but there is a reversal of the order and it does not begin by addressing God. The second and third examples lack a formulaic ending which is the most common feature of the corpus. The fourth example repeats the reversal of the order. Addressing God, comes as the last element and instead of *amen* is *thank you*. Both ways are interchangeable. However, *thank you* is usually preferred for addressing the prayer team.

21/11/04
Thank you, Lord, for the gift of love in my life and in the lives of my children.
Amen.
BC 363 (p. 45)

O Mary, Mother of God, please heal my brother John & bless his wife Sheila.
BC 340 (p. 42)

Dear Lady,
Please lift the soul of my dear friend Peggy Smith to your kingdom of might and to shine in the glory of your eternal[64] presence.
BC 16 (p. 4)

15.2.04
Help Frank to forgive the church when he was a child! Thank you Lord.
BC 290 (p. 35)

The author has omitted details of what happened. He obviously presupposes that God knows what he should forgive. Please, see the chapter 4.2: "The authors of votive prayers", dealing with encrypted language and the tendency to conceal various data.

[64] Some of the words were underlined by the author.

Adaptations

Adaptations are linked with other structure forms. In the following examples the structure does not resemble prayer any more.

> For my Dearest Aunt Kathleen who doesn't have long to go.
> With love & prayers.
> Love from favourite nephew John x
>
> LC 24 (p. 71)

Adaptations influenced by different forms (*an order, a letter, a confession*, etc.) other than a prayer are rather wide-ranging. Here are listed many examples with such influences:

The example of an adaptation under the influence of an order:

> Dear God & St Jude
> Please give me a boyfriend in time for Valentine's Day. Thank you?
>
> LC 55 (p. 76)

The example of an adaptation under the influence of a confession

(the confession is placed first, the petition follows):

> I don't know what to do. I'm in love with someone who's not treating me well enough. I know I need to walk away and I just need the strength to do so. God, please guide me and tell me what to do.
>
> LC 21 (p. 71)

The example of an adaptation under the influence of a request

The trend to brevity is clearly demonstrated by abbreviations, e.g. NE − northeast, UK − United Kingdom and by usage of numbers. *And* is shortened to + or *&* as the author likes it. The writer of the following petition marks the prayer as a request and underlines it.

10/Jan/2008

URGENT PRAYER
xxxxxxxx REQUEST
Please pray for John Annet sole survivor of minibus crash in NE Africa. 8 others were killed and John is in a coma having been flown back to the UK. Please also remember his wife Patricia, a good & faithful servant, + his 2 sons.

LC 58 (p. 77)

The example of an adaptation under the influence of letter-writing:

In the following examples the texts resemble letters which have an addressee and a writer. The second example starts as thanks then follows a request and the formulaic ending of a letter.

24/1/08
Dear God,
thank you so much for all our countless blessings – please help Anthony to get his new job, help Maria get better & also little Miranda be well too.
All my love & appreciation
Leona

LC 6 (p. 68)

Thank you my dear Lord for answered prayers for my lovely son James.
Continue to heal & bless him, & give him faith.
Martin & Keith too
xx

LC 13 (p. 70)

Another votive prayer is a description of the handicapped Suzannah where grammatical rules are bent due to the poetical tone. The prayer ends as an informal letter. The writer is obviously somebody other than Suzannah − probably a friend or a relative.

Suzannah 22 years
once perfect, full of fun,
kindness wisdom and
amazing beauty + intelligence.
Cut down to a wheelchair life
- no arms or leg movement
- no speech
but so much to say
so much to live for
Why Lord? Why her?
She loves life help her
+ help us xx She is love

LC 25 (p. 71)

The following votive prayer uses the informal sign of crosses, common in letters. Both parts of this prayer, written by the same author, well represent the epistolary form.

> Please pray for love!
> Thank you!
> Xxx
> Dear God
> My heart is breaking for the man I love. I love him with all my heart !for 32 years! Please God show him the light and return Peter back to me! I truly love him! I am so broken to pieces without him.
> Jacqueline
>
> LC 27 (p. 72)

The petitioner of LC (60) inserts in the end "P.S." underlined by the author himself but without full stops between individual letters. This abbreviation is originally drawn from the epistolary genre.

> Lord, Holy Spirit,
> please give the gift of faith to my husband Keith.
> Grant James & Martin the strength to overcome OCD[65].
> Give them faith & healing: the same for Adrienne & Craig.
> Please give the gift of children to Joanne, Gaby & other lady who is Irish & known to you.
> Lastly I ask for all the blessings & gifts that you wish to bestow on me so that I may serve you better & do your will.
>
> PS Strength to overcome for Craig.
>
> LC 60 (p. 77)

> 9/3/03
> Please Lord our Father take care of my grandchildren Elizabeth Lucas and William + Leonard, also tell them how I love and miss them
> +gran
>
> BC 227 (p. 28)

The structure may imitate the model of a collect but may also remind us of a letter or an official request. The next trend I seek to address is the attempt to present a prayer as an *official application.* In my corpus it is presented as a matter of immediate divine assistance, a matter of which the author has expectations[66].

[65] Obsessive-compulsive disorder.
[66] Cf. See the chapter 4.8: Evidence of politeness and impoliteness.

Official application:

Father Son and Holy Spirit
please help me and fulfill my heart's desire and give me a nice job and a nice house please
Heal me as soon as possible Dolores (signature) LC 1 (p. 68)

Pray for Albert & Emilia Okumauba & family
For a blissful marriage – Albert & Emilia
Healing – Mike, Ricky & Fidelis
Peace – Family
Prosperity – Family
Progress – Family
Success – Family
Love – Family
& Endurance – Family
for my family – Albert & Emilia Okumauba & kids, Michael, Ricky & Fidelis

For safe travels the whole year round. Amen LC 59 (p. 77)

Many prayers of this type attempt to integrate inside a statement, expressing confidence in God or the hope for a possible miracle. One way of obtaining favour is the use of conventional formulas, expressing gratitude. The core of the prayer may evoke a list (a particular enumeration) which refers to the values the writer possesses as the most important for his life and what should be fulfilled first of all. Use of statements belonging to different forms other than a prayer, highlights the persuasive function where the role of the writer is less connected with the sacred sphere, this being more typical of private or official communication. In extreme cases, the writer may only give the appearance of the votive practice through context and by providing a certain sacred dimension to the text, which is otherwise firmly fixed in the profane area through its linguistic form. This is probably the reason why Kowalský understands[67] these texts in such a way that he compares them to a contract. Petitioners writing in a book of prayers enter into a contract by means of their signature. They appeal, describe their suffering, and offer up a gift. By affixing a signature they enter into a contract. They may now expect a miracle to happen.

[67] Compare: P. Kowalsky*: Prośba do Pana Boga*. Wrocław, 1994, p. 221

***The example of an adaptation under the influence of complaints*:**

In a group of statements undergoing the process of adaptation, there can also be found texts in the form of complaints. They describe something inappropriate or wrong, or some violation of religious rules. In votive communication they cannot be taken exclusively as an indictment. Very often they express concern for bad neighbours who have gone astray, but they do not always immediately express a plea for their salvation.

The two corpora provided only one example of a complaint, which has already been quoted elsewhere, so I used the examples of Maria Wojtak[68], where the petitioners present their difficult situation and clearly demand justice as well as punishment of a particular person that has caused a nuisance to the pray-er and has led him or her to experience a feeling of hurt. A votive text in the form of a complaint contains a description of events (often presented in detail) and a spontaneous (or only suggested) directive with the consequences that the person who is the object of complaint should bear for their actions.

> To my dearest Mum from Leżaj, as a thank you for successful harvest. With the whole family we cordially thank you for all the graces obtained from God and now I ask you to punish the enemies that have been doing spiteful actions to us for years and don't want to mend their ways. What's more, they throw chains in the fields to damage the mowing machines. If a cutter bar breaks we can't mow the field and have to go home far. So the dearest Mum, please, punish the enemies with your loving heart the way you want, because neither a prayer nor tears shall melt their hearts, they do what they want, because nowadays everyone does what they want. In a fervent prayer, a poor God's servant and her children praying the rosary (L)[69].

> [Do Najukochańszej Matuchny Leżajskiej podziękowanie za szczęśliwe zbiory żniwne nie zrośnięte składamy z moim domem najserdeczniejsze podziękowanie i za wszystkie łaski co mamy od Boga a teraz proszę o ukaranie wrogów co nam nazłość robiu lata i nie ma poprawy i coraz jest gorzej teraz tak robiu że żucaju łańcuchy w koniczynę żeby się zepsuła kosiarka i nam się urwał bagnet i nie wykosiliśmy kończyny a tu trzeba było daleko jechać do domu więc najukochańsza Matuchno proszę Cię ukochanym sercem ukaż wrogów jak chcesz od siebie bo żadna prośba do nich nie dociera albo płacz robiu co chcu bo tu jest teraz sama wola co kto chce to robi Błagam o gorącą prośbę biedna sługa Boża z dziećmi moimi w modlitwach i na różańcu (L)]

[68] Wojtak, M. (in print): Funkcje modlitwy wotywnej – spojrzenie językoznawcy, p. 10 ff.
[69] Wojtak, M.: Funkcje modlitwy wotywnej – spojrzenie językoznawcy, p. 10.

A prayer to the Comforter of the Afflicted:
I ask for health and for a God's and human help. I ask for Vincek to stop taking revenge on his rival. Mother, protect us, my son and myself against proud and poisonous slanderers and bribers. Save us, Mother merciful and compassionate, protect us. Your admirer in despair. (L)[70]

[Prośba do Matki Bożej Pocieszenia:
Proszę o zdrowie i o pomoc Boską i ludzką. Aby Wiącek przestał się mścić ze swym mścicielem. Obroń nas o Matko syna mego i mnie przed oszczercami pełnymi dumy i zdzierstwa i łapownictwa ratuj nas Matko pełna litości i wspułczucia obroń nas. Twoja czcicielka w rozpaczy. (L)]

A certain member of the Carmelite order is considering the possibility of leaving his order. They've asked us for a prayer. (V)[71]

[Pewien karmelita nosi się z zamiarem wystąpienia z Zakonu. Proszono nas o modlitwę. (W)]

They have been pleading us for a prayer in relation to a young couple with five children from Łęczna, where they joined the community of a Pentecostal church. As a result, they want their son to stop attending the Bishop's grammar school; they don't want to send their children anymore to religious education classes, even though one of their children is preparing for the first communion. (V)[72]

[Gorąco proszono nas o modlitwę w intencji młodego małżeństwa z pięciorgiem dzieci z Łęcznej, gdzie zaangażowali się we wspólnotę Zielonoświątkowców. W konsekwencji chcą wypisać syna z Biskupiaka, nie posyłać dzieci na katechizację, mimo że jedno z nich powinno przygotować się do I Komunii św. Bóg zapłać! (W)]

Individual forms

Direction. Grace. Salvation.

LC 47 (p. 75)

Take care of Mia.

BC 121 (p. 16)

The example BC 121 may be taken as an absolute shortening of the VP, where all the other positions are void. That is the reason why it has been added to the section of individual forms.

[70] Ibid., p. 10
[71] Ibid., p. 11.
[72] Ibid., p. 11.

As documented by the examples of collected votive prayers there exist many structures, of which only a small part (in BC 65 cases and in LC 30 cases) could be called 'prayers' on the basis of their structure.

In the previous chapter it became obvious that although we analyze votive prayers, the corpora do not contain many prayers which can be recognized as such by their structure alone. The reason is simple: writers are not sure whom to address with their prayer. Most people do not address God directly, but instead address the prayer team, or in some cases write a kind of hybrid message for both God and the readers of the prayer team.

> Please pray for all my intentions and thank you for all the strength provided. Thank you. Mary Bernadette.
>
> BC 257 (p. 31)

> 15. 2. 04
> Please pray for my Vicky and John her father
> help the healing of their relationship.
> Thank you Lord.
>
> BC 289 (p. 35)

This research suggests that writers are at a loss when they see an open book lying on the altar with petitions in it, and consequently they tend to read the earlier petitions and then write something similar. Such hybrid sentences produced by writers may, for example, start with addressing the prayer team and finish with the conclusion *Amen* or a doxology[73], like a real prayer. Or they start as a prayer, instructing the prayer team what they should remember, and they finish with *thank you*.

> Please pray for my colleagues at work my manager Julia Cable − stop the negative nature. My children John and Catty. For faith-love-amen.
>
> BC 101 (p. 14)

[73] It is always added to the end of canticles, psalms, and hymns. It can be any official end which mentions the Holy Trinity, for example a doxology from the Liturgy of the Hours: *Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

After “at work” one would expect a conjunction *and* but what follows is the layering of another petition without clear explanation or saying at least “also my children”.

> Please pray for my daughter Becky who is having twins by Caesarian section on January 24/1, that she and the babies will be well.
>
> Prayer answered. Thank you Lord & those who prayed.
>
> BC 140 (p. 18)

4.4 Invocations of VPs

The invocation appears at the beginning of the prayer and it addresses the divine. It is expressed by a vocative and it functions as an explicit textual signal of addressing God. The range of invocations is narrow. They are positioned at the beginning mostly, inside a clause, or at the end of the prayer and they tend to be used freely. They may even be repeated in two separate places in a single VP. By repetition of the invocation the emotionality is increased. Pre-modification of names is quite common but it is characteristic of the whole religious register in general, not only of invocations:

- *heavenly, eternal, almighty…*

Invocations clarify the addressee of a particular votive prayer and indicate a social relation between the prayer and the addressee. They frequently appear in appositions, they may even form multiple appositive nominal groups:

- *Hail Mary−daughter of the Father, mother of the Son, spouse of God the Holy Spirit*
- *Lord God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

However, invocations of VPs cannot equal in number the occurrences in the liturgical language or in traditional prayer books where their number is much higher. Quite often an invocation may contain a relative clause (or an invocation with a dependent structure) like here:

- *God, who art in heaven.*

Sometimes the addressing of God can be made explicit. M. Wojtak emphasizes[74] that the text and structure of the collect tend to be stereotyped. "This tendency affects also various invocations containing for example the lexeme *God*, which only changes in pre-modification *(My God, Dear God, Eternal God, Faithful God, etc.)*".

However, unlike what can be observed in Poland, addressing God directly is not really frequent in my collection of votive prayers from England (LC 25 cases and BC 33 cases). Although *the repertoire of invocation* is quite limited, the addressing the Mother of God is more imaginative.

> *LC: God, Dear God, Dear God and St. Jude, Dear Lord Jesus, Dear Jesus, Lord – Holy Spirit, Father Son and Holy Spirit, Father, Virgin Mary, Dear St. Jude, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Most Holy Mother, My dear Lord*
> *BC: Lord, Dear Lord, Lord Our Father, God, Dear God, Dear Jesus, God our Heavenly Father, B. V. M., Ave Maria Gratia Plena, Sancta Maria Mater Dei, Happy Birthday Mary, Dear Lady, Cor Maria Dulcissimum – Most Sweet Heart of Mary.*

From the titles encountered, one that is quite interesting is *B. V. M.* (the abbreviation stands for both the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Institute of Consecrated Life of the same name, i.e. sisters of a convent). We therefore, do not know whether the pray-er referred to the nuns of that convent, who belong to the prayer team, or whether they are meant for the Virgin Mary.

> B.V.M. pray for Lizzie – please
> Please pray for me. J. BC 111 (p. 15)

Several invocations (although formulated by an English speaking person) were in Latin or other foreign languages. This code-switch for instance, half Latin, half English was peculiar and could also be associated with intertextuality. In some

[74] Wojtak, M. (1999): Modłitwa ustalona – podstawowe wyznaczniki gatunku. In: J. Adamowski, St. Niebrzegowska, ed.: *W zwierciadle języka i kultury.* Lublin, Wydawnictwo UMCS, p. 131.

texts, Italian and Spanish appeared. For example, BC 361 remained an enigma for a long time until I realized it must have been written on the feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple. However, at the same time, this day on 21.11.2004 was also Sunday and therefore the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King − a day well-known as the official end of the liturgical year and the beginning of advent. Therefore it is no wonder the prayer mentions the coming of the New Church Year, in the invocation.

21/11
Happy Birthday Mary
Please pray for a very happy year[75]
for Mary-one filled with joy, peace and love.
BC 361 (p. 44)

An interesting aspect is a certain degree of intimacy and confidentiality present in English – Latin intercessions.

Cor Maria dulcissimum, iter para tutum, Most Sweet Heart of Mary[76] make the way safe
May 30/07 BC 437 (p. 57)

Hail Mary−daughter of the Father, mother of the Son, spouse of God the Holy Spirit[77]
Ora pro nobis BC 326 (p. 40)

Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis BC 240 (p. 30)

Ave Maria gratia plena John Oct. 03
BC 279 (p. 34)

30/3/05
Our Lady − our dear Pope, my family and all those I love[78]
Ave Maria Gratia Plena John
BC 379 (p. 48)

[75] It lacks commas between individual parts.
[76] It misses a comma after invocation.
[77] Please, see previous footnote.
[78] It misses a comma here.

Sometimes God or the prayer team are addressed indirectly: the addressee is not explicitly mentioned and cannot be clearly determined from the context. Among cases where God or the prayer team are the addressees, these can only be implicitly presupposed as belonging to the following examples.

> Please look after my mummy: Nora Mc Connon and my brother Desmond
> Love you always (signature)
>
> BC 230 (p. 28)

The next text presents us with a question: Is Jeremy a believer and who should pray for him?

> Please pray for Jeremy and hope for a miracle. He is the lovely man who has helped so many people and now needs our & your help.
> God Bless & keep him safe. xxxxx
>
> LC 28 (p. 72)

The intended addressee is made clear, thanks to the passage from the prayer "Our Father" and intertextuality which is marked by blue colour.

> 9.3.03
> Please help one when temptation is in the pathway. Lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil. And may we live in our little bubble of peace and love & happiness forever.
> BC 228 (p. 28)

A comparison of the two corpora reveals that the LC has a higher frequency of direct address to God, and the structures are more like 'real prayers' (30). In the Broadway corpus (BC) I counted 364 cases of *Please pray for*, 37 cases of *For* (somebody or something), and 19 cases of *Pray that…* All the variants are indirectly addressing the prayer team. Occasionally there were expressions such as: *please remember somebody*, *I am asking for prayers*, *prayers are asked* or *say a prayer for somebody*. Altogether there were 420 cases of visitors addressing the prayer team. Additionally, in the London corpus, there were 35 cases of turning indirectly to the prayer team.

Maria Wojtak mentions that the primary function of invocation is that of establishing contact with God, and the secondary function is to give praise to God, thank Him for the graces received, trust Him and ask Him for another blessing[79]. This in fact means that the invocation starts with what B. Malinowski called phatic communication, in which he meant creating a sense of mutual trust and starting a social dialogue by formulae of greeting and comments on the obvious (for example the weather), gossip or anecdote, etc.

G. B. Caird illustrates this communication of the past as follows[80]: "Orientals have never been sparing with their greetings. When Jesus sent his disciples out in twos to proclaim the arrival of the kingdom of God, one of the many indications of the urgent haste of their mission is that they were instructed to 'exchange no greetings on the road' (Luke 10, 4); for the interminable interchange of eastern etiquette might delay them for as much as half a day."

There is a strong element of phatic communication in all forms of worship. The phatic function of worship-talk creates and maintains the feeling of community by engaging in speech acts (notable is for example hymn-singing).

4.5 Features of spoken and written language in VPs

Though there are many differences between spoken and written language, in votive prayers we are dealing with an intermediate type of communication, a form between speech and written text where the orality is combined with writtenness. Most votive prayers look like short messages or notes which are written to be read by someone else.

The borderline is difficult to set because a fixed prayer may serve as a model, then is transformed into an extemporaneous one in whichever form it is written down. The written form may seem to us to be secondary. Therefore the features of the spoken and written language will be examined separately. First we will look at spoken language and then written one.

[79] Wojtak, M. (in print): Funkcje modlitwy wotywnej – spojrzenie językoznawcy, p. 14.
[80] Caird, G. B. (1980): *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, p. 33.

The votive prayer (VP) is a free petitionary prayer, conforming to individual wishes. Unlike the spoken prayer, VP is primarily realized in a written form, it refers to a private matter which is highly confidential, emotional, spontaneous and even connected with human actions. In fact the collected votive prayers belong to a communicative area that fluctuates between written and spoken language. Although the communication is realized in a written form, on the level of formulation in the prayers we often deal with the spoken language. A significant phenomenon is this clash of both modes of communication.

4.5.1 Features of spoken language

On one side we are dealing with differences in written and spoken communication, and on the other we can trace individual feautures at the level of style. Writers are very spontaneous, and in places this is shown in their prayer structure which resembles oral communication and is full of emotional charge. Children can draw a picture and the adults send a kiss to the reader. Votive texts describe personal problems or human misery; they may include a part of confession and then suddenly change into the praise of God. They may include arguments like those found in a dialogue between human persons and provide an explanation as to why God is expected to hear this particular prayer, giving Him reasons for doing so and trying to persuade Him into doing something specific for the invocator or the intended recipient of the prayer invocation.

VPs can tell a lot about the writer through the confidential content of the prayer. The author shares with the reader something from this intimate conversation with God about human worries. The following example comes from Poland, from the Marian pilgrimage site. It was collected by Maria Wojtak[81]. The writer is a teenager who makes many mistakes.

[81] M. Wojtak (in print): Funkcje modlitwy wotywnej – spojrzenie językoznawcy, p. 13.

> Mary of Koden, please hear my prayers and stop my feet growing any biger, and please arange for me to loose some weight, to be succesful with boys and to keep having good marks at school. Please arange for me to never argue with my mom and to have some piece and quiet. Please, please HEAR ME. One of your Christian women.[82]
>
> [Maryjo Kodeńska proszę wysłóchaji moje prośby żeby mi więcej noga nie rosła, żebym jeszcze schudła, miała duże powodzenie u chłopców i cały czas bardzo dobże się uczyła. Proszę, żebym nigdy nie kłóciła się z moją Mamą i żebym miała pogodę ducha. Błaga, proszę WYSŁUCHAJ MNIE jedna z twoich chrześcijanek (K)]

The examples from the Broadway corpus also reflect the sense of *humour* and the *immediacy* of VPs. Though some of the petitions mention serious matters (illnesses and death) they contain both planned and unplanned humourous aspects. The second example below (BC 119) is at the same time the only case of a complaint in the collected material. Please note the apparent *spontaneity* which is used.

> 26.6.
> Please pray for Grandpa Michael Chatwin + nanny Margaret Chatwin also grandad John Mc Cloud and nanny Winifred Mc Cloud who now have a grandson Ruan. Unfortunately I haven't met as all have passed away.
>
> BC 320 (p. 39)

As obvious, the prayer becomes incoherent and it would be much better to say instead: "unfortunately, I didn't meet them as…"

> Please pray for my brother, Bob Ryan, who is 62 and has been "on vocation" from the sacraments and the Church for 20 years. He is a hard case, so pray hard. Thank you.
>
> BC 119 (p. 16)

The text may be quite fragmentary with a tendency to shortening. The brevity may be related to the confidentiality of certain information and its anonymity. An elliptical effect may hit the syntactic level or appear at the lexical level of the word. Votive prayers have a typical average length − about ten intercessory prayers on a page − which is rarely exceeded.

Examples of typical shortening:

> I need to go to Lourdes. LC 18 (p. 70)

[82] M. Wojtak (in print): Funkcje modlitwy wotywnej – spojrzenie językoznawcy, p. 13.

Direction. Grace. Salvation. LC 48 (p. 75)

The next VP presents us with colloquially shortened expressions like “ya” meaning “you”. Small letters in *Advanced Prostate Cancer* would be more apropriate as well as the left article preceding *tumour*. Typical are shortening tendencies in *incl.* or *ya*.

> Please pray for: Daniel Hegartie who suffers from Advanced Prostate Cancer incl. tumour of the sacrum + generalised osteoarthritis = Thank ya
>
> LC 54 (p. 76)

The following features do not demarcate only the area of spoken language but it probably prevails here:

Fronting is a tool for emphasis and highlighting, it refers to the syntactic shifting of an element. It changes its post-verbal position and appears suddenly at the beginning of the sentence. It may also be the result of immediacy in speech and of the lack of building the sentence pattern. Thanks to fronting an element receives some extra importance, though it is not clearly stated whose grandmother is concerned:

> Grandmother who is dying please pray for.
>
> BC 43 (p. 7)

Parcellation is a tool of dividing a sentence into smaller units which logically belong together. Instead they often end with a fullstop or start with a capital letter and independently they look rather incomplete.

“Peta, George and also Ruth” would sound more common. A different word order starting with “that” is a clear proof of spontaneity.

> Please pray for Peta and George also Ruth
> That they may be restored to good health
>
> BC 207 (p. 26)

Right dislocation (one element of the sentence is expressed twice, in one case it is a pronoun):

My parents who are buried in this churchyard – may they Rest in Peace[83].
BC 170 (p. 22)

My father – in – law who is buried in this churchyard May he rest in peace.
BC 171 (p. 22)

Ellipsis

This is another grammatical feature of the spoken language. The elements of the sentence which are predictable from the context can be omitted. It is a kind of reduction. Examples are very frequent. Instead of *Please pray for* there are reductions to *For,* and even that is sometimes reduced just to a noun like *Repose…*

(In terms of non-standard punctuation, note a missing comma after *Ian* in LC 16 and missing fullstops at the end in LC 19 and LC 20. This is the accompanying feature of many VPs.)

For Ian that he may find health and wholeness in life + the true love of Christ.
Amen
LC 16 (p. 70)

For safe travels the whole year round. Amen. LC 59 (p. 77)

For the babies in danger of abortion. Lord, protect them. T.
LC 19 (p. 70)

For Speedy recovery of Evangeline Pabalan
LC 20 (p. 71)

Repose of soul of Brian Hooney
LC 23 (p. 71)

Please help my Dad to get as well as can be
Thank you[84]. LC 31

Prayers are strongly influenced by spoken speech. The only features which are perhaps absent are hesitating noises and fillers such as *well*. The petitions are not prepared and consequently the style of writing is not really homogeneous.

No less interesting is the way of *layering the individual intercessions*. One follows after another, seldom divided by commas or full stops, even though a completely different topic begins.

[83] It is difficult to conclude whether the author really intended to use the capital letters in *Rest in Peace,* or it might be just the individual style of handwriting.
[84] The word was underlined by the author himself.

Thus, the first petition coincides with the second or third one and each of them is a completely different and independent unit. It can look like an endless list of items with literally everyone and everything. This kind of *enumeration* is rather typical for the prayer style of VPs and litanies.

4.5.2 Features of written language

Votive prayers may be edited by someone responsible for the spiritual care of the particular place, and therefore may be occasionally censored. This censorship concerns too many details in the presentation of the prayer, or a long introduction to the plea, which may be recognized as overly private, or even intimate. However, such a strict censorship was not evident in my corpora, though theoretically this may happen when the intercessions are chosen as a part of the Mass. Children crossed out some words or someone made an error and then corrected it. (Please, see the second volume for example pp 5, 7, 15, 16, 17, 27)

At some places the text contained notes added later (my examples are in blue) giving other people the evidence that the petition was heard. This is illustrated with the example of the twins who were safely born to a mother who had several previous miscarriages:

> Please pray for the safe delivery of my daughter's twins.
> There are complications. Due 24 January 02
>
> Prayer answered 21/1 Thank you Lord
>
> BC 135 (p. 18)

> 24/10/02
> Grandchild's hearing tested by hospital audiology department: no deafness.
> Thank you, Lord, and Mary Mother of God for her intercession Re 1/4/02
> BC 214 (p. 27)

Another quite important feature is *a trend to brevity*. The writers tend to abbreviate some expressions in their prayers. There is a tendency *to be economical, short* and *brief* and *anonymous*. Abbreviations in the text are quite common. Here are some examples in blue:

Please pray for the RCIA[85] course beginning in our parish today[86] 17th Jan Feast of St Anthony of Egypt. Pray for more staff. BC 11 (p. 3)

Please pray for the happy repose of the soul of Josephine Mc Namee. R.I.P.[87]

BC 28 (p. 6)

2/5/02
Please pray for all the children starting their GCSE's.

BC 167 (p. 21)

In some places there is a tendency to brevity, while elsewhere the author writes under the influence of emotion and communicates all the diseases that arise in his mind. As votive prayers are thematically focused on terminal illnesses, e.g. cancer (spinal cancer, oesophageal cancer, liver cancer, lymphatic cancer, advanced prostate cancer, etc.), funerals and the souls of the dead − the authors frequently use just a short medical term. Some of the illnesses are abbreviated and then may function as a euphemism.

Sometimes *abbreviations for illnesses* are mentioned, which reflect the life in a parish and in the world:

Please pray for Mr. Dellow who is ill.
Please pray for all the farmers & their families who are affected by this F&M disease[88].
Please pray for the repose of the soul of Terry Monorey and private intentions.

BC 46 (p. 8)

Please pray for Kate Crane who has CJD[89]. Keep her family in your prayers.

BC 130 (p. 17)

4.10.05
Please pray for Dominic who has CF[90]

BC 418 (p. 54)

The example below, demonstrates not just abbreviations which have been mentioned but which at the same time shows a tendency for enumeration which is quite frequently used. The petitions are layered in individual lines and linked together into one prayer:

[85] RCIA – training of a non-Christian for baptism (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults).
[86] The sentence is incomplete, a comma after *today* and after *17th Jan* would be expected.
[87] *Requiescat in pace* which means *Rest in peace*.
[88] Foot and mouth disease.
[89] Creuzfeld-Jakob Disease
[90] Cystic Fibrosis.

Lord, Holy Spirit,
please give the gift of faith to my husband Keith.
Grant James & Martin the strength to overcome OCD[91].
Give them faith & healing: the same for Adrienne & Craig.
Please give the gift of children to Joanne, Gaby & other lady who is Irish & known to you.
Lastly I ask for all the blessings & gifts that you wish to bestow on me so that I may serve you better & do your will.
PS Strength to overcome for Craig.

LC 60 (p. 77)

Occasionaly there are other abbreviated forms where one would not even expect them. Sometimes this communication resembles that of an electronic one. The abbreviated form *pls* would be a good example which portrays itself as offering rather a text message type of spelling. Also the abbreviation RIP is fairly frequent, with full stops or without[92].

Father I ask that you pls make my Academy[93] successful one in Jesus[94] name
Father pls give me wisdom and understanding towards people especially my sister's in-law.
Father pls bless my marriage LC 52 (p. 76)

Please pray for the repose of Diana Ormesby who died on Friday R.I.P. Amen.
BC 469 (p. 63)

Punctuation

It is evident that forms of punctuation may often reflect the social status of the author. This incongruence is rather typical and it is most probably the result of the emotionality and education. One pray-er will concentrate on the form of the prayer and present the right punctuation, whereas the other will concentrate more so on the result of the words and their effect, and tend to ignore the punctuation altogether. Both tendencies are well represented with the consequence that the punctuation is often missing or faulty, with numerous misspellings. Some parts of the texts are highlighted (important words are often underlined) which clearly implies the non-underlined text is unimportant and considered as secondary.

[91] Obsessive-compulsive disorder
[92] See the chapter: 4.1 The thematic line of votive prayers.
[93] *Academy* should be written with small letters as *bless*.
[94] In Jesus' name − it misses the apostrophy.

The same is true about other forms of *punctuation.* Commas are left out and capital letters mostly ignored (with the exception of titles such as God, the names of Virgin Mary or saints). After a full stop, a sentence may begin with a lower-case letter. *And* is abbreviated to + or &, crosses in letters are used as kisses (some texts conclude with three or more crosses and thus the prayer acquires an epistolary style, as in an informal letter). However, capital letters may also appear unexpectedly, as in the case of *Dowry* where it would not be expected at all.

Pray the Sacred Heart of Jesus reign over the Dowry of Mary.

BC 87 (p. 12)

4.5.3 Poetical and rhetorical elements

In votive prayers we can find many techniques and skills that would originally belong to the "art of speech" and rhetoric, particularly so-called *figures of speech* which divide into *schemes* and *tropes*. Schemes comprise those figures which arrange words into schematized patterns of foregrounded regularity of form, syntactic or phonetic. Common are those which depend on parallelism or repetition between the clauses, for example *anaphora, epistrophe*, or some sort of contrast or inversion (*antithesis*). Schemes of sound include mainly *alliteration* in examples of VPs (cf. K. Wales, pp 405 – 406 and p. 413).

The significant means for heightenening the emotions:

Anaphora is a popular figure of speech involving repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences or verses (K. Wales, p. 23).

Pray for R.C.IA. members Denis & Helen P…
Pray for the children preparing for their first Holy Communion & their parents and teachers.

18 BC (p. 4)

Epistrophe − a rhetorical device of repetition by which the last words in successive lines, clauses or sentences are repeated (a repetition at the end):

A fine woman!
A fair woman!
A sweet woman! (K. Wales, p. 152)

Symploce − a repetition of one set of words at the beginning and another set at the end.

E.g. Tell zeal it wants devotion;
Tell love it is but lust;
Tell time it is but motion;
Tell flesh
but dust (K. Wales, p. 447).

Epizeuxis − is a figure of repetition. It is used effectively in Shakespeare's plays to suggest great intensity of feeling or emotion.

E.g. Thou'll come no more,
Never, never, never, never! (K. Wales, p. 153)

Antithesis effectively contrasts ideas by contrasting lexical items in a formal structure of parallelism.

E.g. Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasure. (K. Wales, p. 29)

Alliteration (it is paraphrased as 'initial rhyme'). It is the repetition of initial consonants in two or more words.

E.g. Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper (a famous tongue twister).
While melting music steals upon the sky... (K. Wales, p. 18).

Hendiadys (from Gk meaning "one thing by two") is a relatively uncommon rhetorical figure. Two nouns are connected by *and* and used instead of more usual *adjective + noun construction*, to give added emphasis, e.g.:

"The heaviness and the guilt (i.e. heavy guilt) within my bosom
Takes off my manhood (Shakespeare: Cymbeline, V.ii)"
(Cf. K. Wales, p. 216)

In prayers there appears mainly rhythmic, lexical and grammatical repetition. Among stylistic markers are *enumeration*, *parallelism*, and *lexical repetition*, which may take the form of a chain of synonyms. *Hendiadys* and *parallelism* are quite well represented in both corpora.

28.5.02
Please pray for the old & infirm and that I may stay healthy.

BC 196 (p. 25)

Similar devices which depend upon the principle of equivalence, or the repetition of the same structural pattern, is *parallelism.* This often involves coordination that provides a pleasing balance between the parallel units which are quite similar in type. The frequent occurrence of *parallelism* gives evidence of the tendency to play with the language in an extensive manner. Parallelism in the past was often influenced by Latin models and therefore we find it abundantly present in liturgy and psalms. The example of syntactic parallelism is marked in blue:

Lord, please open and enter the heart of one who finds it so difficult to know.
Grant him understanding and bring him to have a love of you.

BC 22 (p. 5)

Employed by this phenomenon, I listed all repetitional structures which usually concerned synonyms (near synonyms or full ones, or in some cases they included two aspects of the same notion, where the specification was gradual). Occasionally, examples included even triplications or vice-multiplications.

> Please pray for my mother, Barbara, that she will live the rest of her days in peace & contentment. BC 55 (p. 9)

> Please pray for Mary Brockbank[95] who is old and frail.
> BC 59 (p. 9)

> 4.9.02
> Please pray for my husband that he will find peace and happiness through Jesus.
> BC 201 (p. 25)

> For courage and hope for Ron & Peggy − Broadway – Ron with a brain tumour, Peggy with Parkinson's disease. BC 60 (p. 9)

Note the poetic ornamental epithet *joys unbounded* brought to the prayer probably with intertextual influence from liturgical texts:

> Pray for Martin and Rachel, shortly to be married in this church. God please grant them good health and joys unbounded.
> BC 92 (p. 12)

> Please pray that the leaders of the world act wisely and justly. May those in sorrow find comfort through kindness and compassion of others.
> BC 115 (p. 15)

> 10th June
> Please pray for all the children who are about to receive First Holy Communion. They are a gift and a blessing.
> BC 178 (p. 23)

> 30.5.02
> For health and happiness for my daughter, who is rather depressed. For my son's safety when he donates bone marrow.
> BC 198 (p. 25)

> Lord, protect the lonely and vulnerable. Amen.
> BC 254 (p. 31)

[95] A comma is missing here.

22/11
Please pray for the dead and bereaved in the M25 crash, for the Spring family and for those still in hospital.

BC 215 (p. 27)

11th May
Please may Tony, James & Robbie know that they are in our thoughts and prayers and find a comfort in this knowledge.

BC 310 (p. 37)

8.6.04
Please pray for peace & harmony amongst the members of my family.

BC 319 (p. 38)

16/7/04
Please pray for the soul of John, a real friend over the years. A humble and self-effacing man, who did not dare to believe in the existence of God. May he now receive the proof he sought.

BC 329 (p. 40)

21/11
Happy Birthday Mary
Please pray for a very happy year for Mary-one filled with joy, peace and love.

BC 361 (p. 44)

02.02.05
For safe and successful move to Norway, we ask your help, O Lord.

BC 373 (p. 47)

Lord, I know you care for us all. Thank you for the love of my mother Margaret may she rest in perfect peace and love.

BC 374 (p. 47)

13/3/05
Lord, watch over my children as they grow in faith and love. Help me to be their best guide always, but especially in their times of need. Amen.

BC 377 (p. 48)

Hinds−Girling−Anne
Rest in peace Anne knowing we love and cherish James and Robert and keep them in our thoughts, hearts and prayers. Susan & family BC 386 (p. 49)

Hinds−Girling−Anne
My cousin – everyday in my thoughts and prayers. Always remembered − Ian.

BC 387 (p. 49)

20/8/05
Dear God please pray for my mum and dad to be happy and to get back together[96]
BC 412 (p. 53)

16.9.05
Pray for all those troubled in mind and spirit. May they find true peace and contentment. Amen.
BC 416 (p. 54)

Please pray that I will be blessed with a happy and healthy pregnancy this time after our recent losses. Helen (signature)
BC 477 (p. 65)

I pray for Mansen, that her all consuming desire to Love and Serve You Lord will be fulfilled in accordance with Your Holy Will[97]
12/1/2000
BC 4 (p. 2)

Please pray for Michael that he may be helped and strenghthened.
BC 6 (p. 2)

Heavenly Loving Father for the sake of your beloved Son's sorrowful passion and death on the cross, please have mercy on Joseph Ryan.
BC 7 (p. 2)

Father Son and Holy Spirit
please help me and fulfill my heart's desire and give me a nice job and a nice house, please[98]
Heal me as soon as possible Dolores (signature)
LC 1 (p. 68)

Dear God,
I pray for the poor and the lost in life. I pray for my soul… let me be testimony of you[99].
LC 3 (p. 68)

Dear Lord Jesus,
Please let me find a good job and employer
Thank you for everything you gave me[100]
LC 5 (p. 68)

[96] The full stop is missing as well as a comma after *God.*
[97] Again the full stop is not included at the end and a comma after *You*.
[98] The full stops are missing.
[99] The sentence sounds a bit incoherent at the end.
[100] Periods are missing at the end of sentences.

24.1.08
Dear Lord, thank you so much for all our countless blessings – please help Anthony to get his new job, help Maria get better + also little miranda be well too. All my love and appreciation Leona LC 6 (p. 68)

May God grant speedy healing to Mary[101] Helen and Gail and Magda. Amen.
May He have mercy on the lonely and misguided – especially Claire+ Jay. Amen.
LC 15 (p. 70)

For Ian[102] that he may find health and wholeness in life & the true love of Christ. Amen
LC 16 (p. 70)

I don't know what to do. I'm in love with someone who's not treating me well enough. I know I need to walk away and I just need the strength to do so. God, please guide me and tell me what to do.
LC 21 (p. 71)

The last example looks like a list:

Dear Lord,
Help me to do my best and take away my resentments, my lust, pride, dishonesty and selfishness Thank you. (M.)
LC 4 (p. 68)

The next example uses *multiple parallelism* (once perfect, full of fun, kindness, wisdom; syntactic parallelism: no arms or leg movement, no speech but so much to say; Why Lord? Why her? She loves life help her) then comes duplication of expressions (amazing beauty +intelligence; no arms – no speech) the text finishes with the function of gradation (Why Lord? Why her? Help her, help us).

Suzannah 22 years
once perfect, full of fun,
kindness wisdom and
amazing beauty + intelligence.
Cut down to a wheelchair life
- no arms or leg movement
- no speech
but so much to say
so much to live for
Why Lord? Why her?
She loves life help her
+ help us xx She is love
LC 25 (p. 71)

[101] It is probably *Mary, Helen, Gail and Magda* and the first *and* is simply redundant. The author underlines *Amen.*
[102] The period is missing.

Please pray for me. As I find my way in life with God.
Love & Blessings[103].

LC 32 (p. 73)

Please pray for healing and peace for my dear friends, all seriously ill! − Beryl, Brian, Ben, John and Robin and José. Also for Lavinice who has many problems. Thank you.

LC 44 (p. 75)

The VPs may even contain common messages and notes from the profane area addressed to any reader which are not limited to the area of prayer, for example the instruction to light a candle and the requirement to pay money for it. The writer at the same time addresses the dead person (*apostrophe: Steve, you were*…). This emotive figure originated in the speaker's turning aside from his immediate audience to address some other people. It addresses an absent or dead person. This trend will be dealt with in chapter 4.8 under the heading "Evidence of politeness and impoliteness."

1/5/02 Thank you Denise you don't know how much this means to me and I love you very much. Thank you xxx. BC 166 (p. 21)

5.8.04
Please pray for my god-parents Sue & Colin who lost their son Steve nearly a month ago. It was very sudden and unexpected. May they find comfort soon to understand why he was taken so deathly[104] ill, as the doctors may never know. He was a good friend of mine 20 years. God bless his younger brothers Darren & David, they lost their best friend. Steve you were a kind, caring, loving, funny & you will always be in my thoughts and forever in my heart. I miss you. Happy birthday to my nan who is resting in peace with my grandad outside our lovely church. I love you both. God bless. Becky from Chetenham. I put 10p for a light please can someone light it for Steve. Thank you.

BC 338 (p. 41)

Parallelism leads to accumulating various associations, the most frequent building stones being adjectives and nouns. This inherent duality is a distinctive feature of the religious vocabulary and it seems rather typical.

However parallelism is also a device base on the repetition of the same structural pattern, common between phrases or clauses. It usually requires two

[103] It is underlined by the author.
[104] It is not quite clear whether the author meant this adjective as the first letters are missing.

similar syntactic structures (for example SVO or SVC). It has not only an informative function but also a poetical one. It is more frequently found in collects as a part of the liturgical language. It sounds more poetical, even containing other figures of speech. In the example below *antonyms* are employed also. Parallelism with contrast or *antonymy* is known as *anthithesis*.

> 12/9
> Please pray for Ken: he is in so much pain at times, yet is so cheerful – help him to maintain his nature. Also for Jane & her family that they can find peace and tranquility.
> BC 343 (p. 42)

In places the prayers pass into *poetically coloured structures* using verse, repetition, an alliteration or even humour. In the following intercession, there is a section where we can identify unintended rhyme, meter and ritualization[105] which then again changes into an ordinary votive prayer:

> Please dear Jesus through the intercession of your Blessed Mother please hold our beautiful Steve in your arms, and please Blessed Mother take our beautiful son in your arms. All of us who love him are missing him so much. Also please[106] that Bell will be well. Also for Maz & Neal & Chies. Please always be with us. Anna + Bell
> BC 261 (p. 32)

Alliteration, paraphrased as "initial rhyme" is also associated with poetic language of VPs. It flourished in England before the Norman Conquest. G. M. Hopkins used it as a significant device in his poetry. Furthermore, it aids memorability and has onomatopoeic effects. The alliterated syllables are often stressed and they may be related in a rhythmic pattern. In the following example, it was probably unintentional effect. However whether the writer wanted to use it as a slang expression[107] or alliteration, remains a mystery:

> Pat Mash – pray for knackered knee please[108].
> BC 359 (p. 44)

Lexical repetition in conjunction with grammatical repetition (so called *paralellism*) is a good instrument of poetism in the corpora of VPs. Repetition of

[105] See the chapter: 4.6 Intertextuality as a typical phenomenon.
[106] It looks as if one word was missing.
[107] *Knackered* − A slang word for *worn out.*
[108] This word should probably precede a comma.

words at the beginning of successive clauses (*anaphora*) follows in the example of BC 464. In the second part of the first sentence we can sense the intertextual influence:

> Please pray for Steve as he seeks recovery from addiction & emotional turmoil.
> Please pray for Math. He is struggling & needs to find God's loving strength.
> Please pray for Siobhan & her family that all will be well.
>
> BC 464 (p. 62)

> Please pray for a very[109] very special intention.
>
> BC 78 (p. 11)

> 17.4.05
> Grany is ill very ill we pray for her and granpa and mummy. Amem Minnie and Crispin
>
> BC 381 (p. 48)

(It was written by children: a period is missing after *is ill* and there should be *grandpa* and *amen*. The prayer also contains a drawing of face.)

Besides layering we can see other figures based on repetition (underlined).

> Father I ask that you pls make my Academy successful one in Jesus name
> Father pls give me wisdom and understanding towards people especially my sister's in-law.
> Father pls bless my marriage
>
> LC 52 (p. 76)

Occasional poetic features appear although they are not as frequent as in liturgical language (metaphor and euphemism). In the next example, it concerns the addressing of the dead person (*apostrophe*) with a metaphor about his way of life:

> Rest in peace, Walter Green. Your light was a beacon to many…
>
> BC 388 (p. 49)

Euphemism − it means in fact, the substitution of an unpleasant word by an inoffensive expression which stands for a taboo word which evokes other people's feelings. In votive prayers it was used mainly about death:

> Please, pray for the soul of Ken Evans who finally lost his battle with ill health and is now at Peace with his Lord. BC 454 (p. 60)

[109] A comma is missing and a concealment tendency is obvious.

MAY 2007
Please pray for my Dear Mother that as her life is coming to an end[110] that the Dear Lord comes quickly to take her home with him[111]. Thank you. BC 434 (p. 57)

Pray for the souls of Patrick (PJ) & Sarah Mc Phillips Belfast, NR, Ire, who are laid to rest in Milltown Cemetery, Falls Rd, Belfast…
BC 398 (p. 51)

The passive voice together with the poetic tone surprise us in a free prayer like this one where direct communication is expected. It would sound more appropriate for liturgical texts or written prayer books. The use may be motivated by the older age of the author or certain conservatism learnt from written prayer texts.

26.2.05
Please pray that Dominic's faith may be strengthened & his health improved.
BC 375 (p. 47)

4.8.02
Prayers please for Kevin & Kikke Kavanagh[112] all in N.Y.
& pray that I, my children & grandchildren may all have our faith strengthened.
BC 193 (p. 24)

26.06.04
Please pray for Pam Pope who has recently undergone chemotherapy and is awaiting results of a cat scan on Monday the 28th June. Your prayers are much appreciated and May You All be blessed.
BC 321 (p. 39)

27th July
Please pray that my daughter may be given a clean bill of health and my son gives bone marrow safely. BC 189 (p. 24)

Please pray that the rift between my mother and myself will be healed.
BC 54 (p. 8)

[110] This figure of speech is called a *circumlocution* (rather than defining precisely, it describes and talks around). As if precision is impossible, circumlocution requires extra words to circle around. It would be enough to say "she is dying".
[111] It is the same figure of speech as above.
[112] Probably a semicolon is missing here.

4.6 Intertextuality as a typical phenomenon

At this point it becomes appropriate to ask how the prayer text has developed and which original prayer text gave rise to its present form. Where did such a form arise from? Was it memorised and repeated thoughtlessly and automatically? Was it the prayer text which was de-sacralized or was it the text that was sacralized – that is a question of viewpoint. When something became a part of the cult, it must have been sacralized. This way of thinking brings us to two different terms: *ritualization*[113] and *intertextualization*. While the former term concentrates upon the function of these elements, the latter rather diagnoses where these elements originally come from.

The religious texts we study seem to be full of religious turns taken from somewhere else which all of a sudden appear in a spontaneous prayer (e.g. *he was crucified, died and was buried* – taken from the Apostles'creed; *through the intercession of St. Joseph* – from the intercessions at the Mass or from litanies). The whole language process could be compared to the conquest of new territory: the new text is "contaminated" by imported words or whole phrases which were transferred from another source. People remember these phrases from some standard prayers and use them unexpectedly in the middle of colloquial speech or a free prayer. Stylistically considered "ritualized inserts", they need not be in complete harmony with the surrounding text since they come from an extraneous environment. Yet they belong to this style of the text and are linked with the language of believers. Each prayer usually offers a form or a segment which belongs among repeated formulae (e.g. including Latin or archaic expressions). Common are especially liturgical, biblical and dogmatic phrases. To soften the archaic or foreign character, a paraphrase may be employed as well.

These expressions, drawn from liturgical language used on various occasions or from well-known chaplets, litanies and other devotions, provide these prayers with some aspect of the sacred absent in everyday speech. The examples in blue come from the funeral rites and devotions on All Soul's Day in a cemetery. They

[113] Ritualization in religious texts was described in the article of Wojtak, M. (2000): Stylistyka modlitwy wotywnej – rekonesans. In: M. Białoskórska, ed.: *Synchroniczne i diachroniczne aspekty badań polszczyzny.* Szczecin, pp 277 − 289.

belong to the same genre (the prayer for the dead) but instead of a priest these words are voiced by a believer. These stylistic borrowings intensify the credibility of the church language.

> Lord, I know you care for us all. Thank you for the love of my mother Margaret may she rest in perfect peace and love.
>
> BC 374 (p. 47)

> 8.5.2002
> Please pray for the repose of the soul of Winifred Vickers who died today. May she rest in peace.
>
> BC 167 (p. 22)

> Pray for the souls of Patrick (PJ) & Sarah Mc Phillips Belfast, NR, Ire, who are laid to rest in Milltown Cemetery, Falls Rd, Belfast. May their souls & the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen. Paddy Mc Phillips 21st June 2005
>
> BC 398 (p. 51)

The blue parts are drawn from litanies and chaplets. The following example is interesting as it combines the influence of the chaplet with archaic *unto*:

> 5 Sep 2005
> Dear Jesus[114] take all our needs unto yourself we ask[115] in great need of your Divine Mercy. Amen.
> Mary Theresa Short BC 441 (p. 58)

> 5.12.05
> Please pray for Damien who has lost his way, and that his father can stay around long enough to help. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus I place all my hope & trust in Thee.
>
> BC 424 (p. 55)

> Heavenly loving Father for the sake of your beloved Son's sorrowful passion[116] and death on the cross, please have mercy on Joseph Ryan.
>
> BC 7 (p. 2)

The blue part of the prayer below comes from the liturgical texts of the Mass:

[114] A comma is missing.
[115] It is not clear if the author did not write *are*. The handwriting is not very clear.
[116] Originally it is: For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world. Compare the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

Please remember in your prayers Ken who suffers from cancer and has recently had a slight stroke.

BC 181 (p. 23)

The echo of the prayer Our Father (the Lord's Prayer):

9.3.03
Please help one when temptation is in the pathway. Lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil. And may we live in our little bubble of peace and love & happiness forever.

BC 228 (p. 28)

The opening and closing formulae (or a part of *doxology*) with slight modifications appear quite often in votive prayers. They may be a part of deep – seated ritualizations which are imported from the Mass or standard prayers either at the beginning or at the end.

6.7.04
Please pray for my mother and pray for my father who cares for her. In the name of Jesus Christ.

BC 323 (p. 39)

MARCH
Please pray for Bernie in the name of Jesus Christ Our Saviour.

BC 428 (p. 56)

19.3.
Please pray for Kate who is very unwell − in the name of Jesus our Lord.

BC 296 (p. 36)

"Ritualized statements" are rooted in tradition, and may be repeated many times, for example in liturgy or devotions. This method of address includes many variations (e.g. *Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Mother of Good Council, Mother of the Redeemer, Queen of Prophets, Queen of Apostles* etc.), metaphors (*the fruit of redemption*), or repetitive formulas (*pray for us, have mercy on us, graciously hear us*). In most cases it is an echo of liturgical texts from the Mass, from funeral rites (e.g. BC 398: *May the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen*), from standard prayers (Our Father – BC 228), or from a chaplet and litanies (BC 424 and BC 7). Some words, like the biblical echoes in prayers, hymns or chants (for example: "*This is the Lamb of God, who takes away*

the sins of the world[117]") are so well remembered that their place is absolutely secured. They belong to religious corpus and do not appear anywhere else in this form.

4.7 Some typical sentence type structures

Votive prayers, however, use some structures which may be found elsewhere. Although there might be an alternative, their occurrence is rare. These structures may have a number of functions in the text. For example they signal what kind of text will follow. After the verb *to pray* we naturally expect a text focused on prayer (a transitive verb; an intransitive 'pray' appears only at the end of prayers "in His name we pray"). Followed by the preposition *for* or pronoun *that*, *pray* introduces a new topic of discourse.

Openings to the request may have other variants as well (*Pray*, *I pray*, *Please pray*, *help us*, *ask*, *beg*). Some of the most typical structures were listed:

I pray for +sb/sth

> I pray for my mother who is very unwell. Thank you Lord for allowing her to feel peaceful. May she know your love. Amen
>
> BC 371 (p. 47)

> 19-9-02
> Please pray for Jess & Ken: passed away[118]. They lived in Broadway in the last war. It was that[119] wonderful place together.
>
> BC 206 (p. 26)

pray that+sth/sb

> Please pray that the rift between my mother & myself will be healed.
>
> BC 54 (p. 8)

> Please pray that Our Lord will watch over Ken whilst he is working away – keep his health strong to sustain the work. John (signature)
>
> BC 399 (p. 51)

> Please pray that I will be blessed with a happy and healthy pregnancy this time after our recent losses. Helen (signature) BC 477 (p. 65)

[117] The Sacramentary (1985): p. 524
[118] More common would be *deceased*. Also the other part of the sentence is incoherent, it is not quite clear what the author means.
[119] This word is somewhat ambiguous. The intended meaning would imply *their* as well, which does not give much sense either.

Another very frequent lexical form is an expression of gratitude by means of thanks. It has several variants:

thank sb (for sth)

thank you *Lord* / *God* / *Virgin Mary* ***for sb*** **/** ***sth*** **/** ***doing sth***

(for my granddaughter, for answering the prayer, for the safe arrival, for the gift of love, the strength provided, the intercession…)

> 5/09/03
> Here again to visit mum & dad & brother in-law in beautifully maintained churchyard (thank you!) also to pray for close friends Peter W+Jim F. Both facing very difficult situations in health/business. Conrad and Anna Maria and Brenden.
> BC 273 (p. 33)

> Thank You Dear Virgin Mary for interceding for me and my husband... Carmen
> BC 110 (p. 15)

> Thank you God [120]today you made me realise after suffering so much for 4 years that at last the church and school will live again. Thank you.
> BC 19 (p. 5)

> Thank you Lord for the launch of the children's liturgy – Thank you Lord for our parish priest.
> BC 27 (p. 6)

> How I thank you Lord for Ray and for the beautiful family you have given us.
> Give us the grace to be sweet to one another during this time of readjustment and to continue to seek your face. Lord thank you for everything you give us and bring into[121] our way. Lord I beg of you that our children will come to know and love you.
> BC 21 (p. 5)

This lexical form may introduce a new topic, it may signal the beginning of a prayer or its formulaic end. God is thanked for recovery, blessings, received gifts, newly born children and heard prayers. However, even other non-standard expressions may function as formulaic end:

R. I. P., Amen, Love, Give a p. my love, In memory of my mum – thinking of you always, we will always treasure your memory, Praise, honour, + glory to the Lord God.

[120] One would expect *for* here and *that* placed after *realise*.
[121] This word is missing in the original, the author has left it out by a mistake.

One example of *thank you for* at the begining position which is followed by a typical example of a *ritualized phrase* imported from the liturgy of the Mass.

> Thank you Lord for answering prayers for my son to get a wonderful job. Praise, honour + glory to the Lord God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit!
>
> BC 367 (p. 46)

Further initial position of *thank you for* provides at the same time another different example of a *ritualized phrase* in the end:

> Thank you for the prayers offered for my Mother Margaret. She is now[122] much better. Thanks be to Our Lord.
>
> BC 139 (p. 18)

The author in fact uses a sentence from the liturgy of the Mass: *Thanks be to our Lord Jesus Christ* but employs only the first part of it. He compiles something similar to *another sacred text*, he enriches his style with something he remembers well and which is suitable for the occasion of prayer. This means that VPs can be evaluated as stylistically unhomogenous language material.

The authors obviously try to work with formulae typical for the religious style. The liturgical prayer provides them with an inspirational model for a personal prayer and a model of how to talk to God. The moment they find themselves in a holy place, they automatically combine standard linguistic behaviour with ordinary every day speech. They use the ready-made formulae they were taught in the official liturgical tradition. Many of these turnings were intended for public repetition so they arise in their minds semi-automatically. Thanks to these ritualizations, VPs are often a combination of spontaneity and liturgical ceremoniousness. The sublimity of the high prayer style imported from liturgy is thus clashed with commonness or the low style which the author may present.

Through the regular repetition of some formulae taken from the liturgy, a particular ritualized phrase acquires preferential status. Believers who regularly participate in the liturgy will remember pre-patterned religious texts, and subsequently develop a competence to reproduce its stylistic patterns. They will use

[122] The position of ‘now’ is incorrect. It should be placed at the end. It is an evidence of a foreign author.

this competence to construct similar texts, as these formulae tend to be used later on in individual prayers.

The exceptional character of interaction within the context of the religious act causes pray-ers to give their invocations the form of a liturgical prayer, and to repeat some of the standard familiar patterns they know. They may also enrich them poetically or otherwise. Individual participants of VPs praise God in a particular way and enrich the communication by their diverse expressions, experiences and convictions. So on one side there is the official language of the Church, and on the other there appears an individual form of prayer.

The stereotypical structure of VPs

The structure of VPs is quite stereotypical. The pattern is the following:

Addressing* + *Request* + *Thanks* / *Amen

The invocations (addressing) and the formulaic ending were already described in previous chapters[123]. The remaining structure element is a *request* itself. The petitions are mostly expressed by a very simple pattern:

For sb* / *For sth

For sb* + *a person of a particular name: Michael, Peggy Smith, Denis and Helen P., etc.

For* + *a relative: my father, my dad John, my mum, my sister, my mum, my sister-in-law, my aunt, my darling daughter, my grandchildren, my son's girlfriend, etc.

For* + *a general address: a dear friend, all the families who are devastated by the earthquake in India, all our family on earth and in heaven, all the people who, all the children in the parish, the leaders of the world, those who have lost their dear ones, all involved in this event, all those connected with the farming industry, all the farmers who are affected by this F&M disease, the bereaved in the M25 crash, etc.

[123] E.g. Chapter 4.4: "Invocations of VPs"

For + sth: the safe arrival of my new grandson, a person's conversion, courage, faith, healing, health, spiritual and physical health, my vocation, intentions, a successful operation, the happy repose of a person, the repose of a soul, the welfare, a return to health, the unity of the church, a very happy year, a happy and settled environment for the children, interceding, listening to my prayers, etc.

The object of the requests was often modified by an apposition (a construction in which a noun or a noun phrase is explained by another explanatory equivalent; both elements have the same syntactic relation and the second expression identifies or supplements the first one).

Modifications of the objects of the request:

Apposition: Fr. Eugene K., former parish priest

a person –ing: suffering from sth, serving in Iraq, going through very sad marriage break up

a person –ed: aged, deceased, tragically killed, troubled in mind and body, severely stressed, very confused, buried in this church, those devastated by the earthquake in India

a person with sth: a brain tumour, Parkinson's disease

a person + who + present tense: who is old and frail, who has is unwell, who has is in hospital, who has is on his way to the Gulf, who is now without parents, who is at a critical stage of pregnancy, who has Alzheimer, who has a mental illness, who has serious problems, who is dying, who is finding life difficult, who is having an emergency operation

a person + who + perfect tense: who has been diagnosed with with stomach & liver cancer, who has been poorly, who has spent 20 years paralysed

a person + who + past tense: who died, who was taken from us, who was in the tsunami

a person + who + future tense: is to be married, will be 93 on April 2

a person + who(m): I miss, we have promised to pray for

a person + whose: whose funeral takes place today, whose funeral is tomorrow

Other interesting features of the VPs:

Time adjuncts: on their wedding day, on his birthday, when he donates bone marrow, this day ten years ago, tomorrow, when he was a child, on 19th Febr., when temptation is in the pathway

Explanation in a full clause: She leaves a heartbroken husband and two small children

Direct appeal: look after a person, bless a person

Appeal to people not to God: remember in your prayers, thank you Denise you don't know how much this means to me, you are never far from my mind, all my thoughts are with you now, Dear Anne, my first Christmas without you

The frequent type of clauses:

a THAT clause

a wish clause without MAY

that a person does /does not / will not do sth (that a person recovers, will make a complete recovery, will meet J. K. in heaven, does the right thing, knows God)

that sth happens (a person will be healed, a rift is healed, the Sacred Heart of Jesus reigns over sth).

a wish clause with MAY:

that a p. may do / have sth (live, cope with life, find peace, return to good health and contentment, rest in peace, know your love)

that God may do sth (enlighten her mind and heart)

that sth may happen (circumstances, health may improve, for the evil of drugs to be stamped out, he may be drawn closer to God, the war may not be necessary

The examples of condensations:

for sb / sth to do / be done: for a person to be cured, for us to make the best decision

> In a prayer I try to contemplate Love and in my work I truly test whether I do not live in a state of illusion.
>
> *(Isaac of Stella)*

4.8 Evidence of politeness or impoliteness

As the quotation of Isaac of Stella has it – the work is a practical test of the 'right prayer', as it puts into practice the theory which was contemplated earlier. At the same time prayer can test the art of communication because prayer is defined as a conversation with someone else (God) and thus examines one's communication skills.

Prayer can be characterized by another feature − the showing of emotion. It may quite often concern arguments which are merely the expression of emotions, feelings and despair. Prayer can be emotionally healing when man allows God to enter painful moments in life providing he does not lock himself in grief and emotional breakdowns.

Therefore, the assessment of politeness and rudeness in speech is an unreliable matter. In fact, man can use a rough word or phrase, and yet his relationship is genuine. Sometimes prayer reminds one of an angry child who keeps repeating something all the time. Parents are, of course, well aware that a child needs to "get his feelings off his chest" and that he will eventually revert back to normal speech, usually the following day. Prayer has in this sense a therapeutic effect.

On one hand, the prayer texts contain elements expressing politeness yet on the other hand there are elements of impoliteness, both of which require individual discussion.

The modal adjunct please and archaic pronouns

Like other mental adjuncts, they express the speaker's attitude to the interlocutor who is not always God (the addressee is the church's prayer group). It originates from the conditional clause *If it pleases you,* which provides the addressee the option of refusing. It is very frequently used, mainly in the position

before *pray for* and it implies politeness[124]. This adjunct appeared quite frequently in both of the corpora. Here are some examples of the typical occurrence:

> 28.5.02
> Please pray for my son and daughter who shortly will go to live & work in New Zealand & Australia – keep her safe please & may she never lose her faith. Comfort her Mother who will miss her. Please give her strength to cope, too.
>
> BC 197 (p. 25)

> Please pray for our mother Berry, who's very ill in hospital[125], intensive care ward. Please God give her the strength she needs. As we love her so.
>
> BC 264 (p. 32)

> 10/10/04
> Dear God,
> Please help my dad get better Amen from Kathleen xxx
> and pray for my nan because she is very ill – Amen Thank you[126]
>
> BC 352 (p. 43)

> 11/11
> Please help us Lord to make the right decision.
>
> BC 422 (p. 55)

> Please kindly pray for my cousin, he is a priest in Malta, Fr. Emanuel Bonavia. Thank you.
>
> BC 179 (p. 23)

> Please pray for my brother and his wife who have serious problems. Please will you ask for the prayers of the venerable John Henry Newman[127]
>
> BC 117 (p. 16)

Use of pronouns

Another element of politeness is represented by archaic pronouns. Many pronouns appear in prayers. Most pronouns in VPs were personal pronouns which referred either to the writer (first person) or to God (second person) or to the prayer team (second person) or to somebody else whom the author prayed for (he, she). Marginally there is a reference to other human participants, like relatives, dying people or holy communicants.The possessive pronoun *your* is used as well. Here are some examples of the abundant use of them.

---

[124] However it could imply also emotionality or urgency of the request.
[125] Now should follow *in the intensive care ward.* The next sentence sounds incoherent. It would not probably start like this, it seems parcelated.
[126] The prayer was formulated by a child as the punctuation is obviously mistaken.
[127] A dot is missing at the end of the sentence.

Thank you for my family – Please accept my father lovingly in your arms. Please give us all strength & help my sisters & mother. Bless our family & thank you for our many blessings. Amen + God bless (signature)

BC 368 (p. 46)

Apr.
Lord I ask for prayer for Hans + Betty who are both unwell.
I pray for the repose of the soul of Muriel Begman who died this week R.I.P.

BC 301 (p. 37)

Thank you, Lord for the gift of love in my life. Teach me to let Holy Spirit guide me. Amen.

BC 384 (p. 49)

Forms of personal pronouns *thou*, *thee*, *thy*, *thyself*, *thine* developed in the period of Early Modern English (15th-17th century) and were standardized by the time the King James Bible was published. The archaic pronouns have the power to emphasize politeness, ceremoniousness and grandeur. As the corpora contained them, the table of these archaic forms was included below together with some examples.

Please pray for Damien who has lost his way, and that his father can stay around long enough to help. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus I place all my hope & trust in Thee.

BC 424 (p. 55)

I pray that my fiance & myself have a wonderful life together and that the wedding goes smoothly. I love Thee Lord Amen. LC 34 (p.73)

Dear Lord and let my cry come unto thee. Praise the Lord.

17 LC (p. 78)

Person	Nominative	Objective	Possessive
1st Person singular	I	Me	My/Mine
1st Person plural	We	Us	Our/Ours
2nd Person singular	Thou	Thee	Thy/Thine
2nd Person plural	Ye	You	Your/yours
3rd Person singular	He/She/It	Him/Her/It	His/Hers/Its
3rd Person plural	They	Them	Their/Theirs

Table 1 (Archaic pronouns)

The VP texts can reveal the pray-ers' inner state of mind, but on the other hand they also show some shortcomings in their religious awareness; many people do not know how to approach prayer, whom and how they should address, and they actually do not know how they should pray. Such a prayer may easily change itself into a "pseudo-devotion[128]" in which someone presents a distorted image of God because the prayer also reflects in what kind of God he believes. The picture of Him may be sometimes quite shocking.

As impolite we may consider the endless compulsive repetition of formulas, or replacement of the vital relationship by the quantity of recited formulae. Prayer must continually overpower the temptation for idolatry, or treating God as someone whose favour one can buy. However, it is fully impossible to identify these feelings from a text of VPs, as they are concealed in a human heart and can only be known to the praying person, himself.

Still the corpora contained prayers with some obvious shortcomings. Addressing dead ancestors represents one of the interesting areas in prayer research. In this case we cannot speak about prayer in its truest sense. Such a speech or text does not fulfill the definition of prayer, where prayer is understood as the "raising of one's mind and heart to God and requesting good things from God[129]".

When the pray-ers turn in prayer to their beloved dead ones only, but not to God, they usually act purely from emotion, and such a prayer may even be considered as a pagan custom. Naturally, Roman Catholics firmly believe that our dead ancestors, or other close relatives and friends, can help us by their intercession if they are with God, and that the pray-ers can intercede for their loved ones too; on the other hand, this should not be part of any liturgical prayer, unless the person is beatified or canonized.

Nevertheless, the pray-er might have turned his mind to God (which is not evident from the text alone), therefore I have decided to leave those texts in the corpus. Examples of the prayers addressing the deceased will follow:

[128] It does not concern the clumsiness in formulations but various images of punishing and cruel God or a magician of some kind and similar cases.
[129] The Catechism of the Catholic Church §2559. This definition comes from the writings of St. John Damascene.

Dearest mummy and Ah Sai,
I love you both very much and I miss you dearly. (signature)

LC 8 (p. 69)

God bless you Dad on Ash Wednesday which would have been your 70th birthday. I love & miss you, Julie LC 22 (p. 71)

Please pray for Monty Riordan a cherished and loved member of my life,[130] sadly left us on Monday 5 Nov, may he rest in peace. "Monty I will always[131] love and miss you."

BC 129 (p. 17)

5.8.04
Please pray for my god-parents[132] Sue & Colin who lost their son Steve nearly a month ago. It was very sudden and unexpected. May they find comfort soon to understand why he was taken so deathly[133] ill, as the doctors may never know. He was a good friend of mine 20 years. God bless his younger brothers Darren & David, they lost their best friend. Steve you were a kind, caring, loving, funny & you will always be in my thoughts and forever in my heart. I miss you. Happy birthday to my nan who is resting in peace with my grandad outside our lovely church. I love you both. God bless. Becky from Chetenham. I put 10p for a light please can someone light it for Steve. Thank you.

BC 338 (p. 41)

We all got together at last to say goodbye and let you know how much we love you. I wish we could have helped you through your illness and pain more but maybe we will see more of each other now[134] we have lit a candle to remember you – all my love Marc (signature)

BC 293 (p. 35)

Page upon page of sad stories from the life of the parish church members permeate the book, such as Annie, who tragically died in a car accident along with her children. Her mother, who survived, attends the church on regular basis and writes emotive prayers into the book of petitions. These prayers are mixed, some of them address the dead Annie, some of them the prayer team, some of them even address God. They express sympathy, they are poetic, they contain ritualization, and some of them have the characteristic of news.

(2004) May
Pray for the Girling family who have lost a loving wife & mother. May Ann's[135] soul rest in peace.

BC 306 (p. 37)

[130] *Who* had better follow before *sadly*, but is omitted as well as a comma after invocation *Monty*.
[131] It is underlined by the author for the purpose of emphasis.
[132] A missing period.
[133] It is somewhat unclear whether the author intended to insert this adjective as the first letters are missing.
[134] A full stop is missing.
[135] It is not clear whether there is *Ann's* or *Annie's* in the handwriting.

11th May
Please pray for the Girling family in their time of need.

BC 307 (p. 37)

11th May
Please offer support for the Girling family

BC 308 (p. 37)

11th May
May the Girling family find peace at this time.

BC 309 (p. 37)

11th May
Please may Tony, James & Robbie know that they are in our thoughts and prayers and find a comfort in this knowledge.

BC 310 (p. 37)

6.10.04
Please pray for my daughter Annie, give her peace, also my grandsons James & Robert.
Longing to see you both (signature) (Annie's mum) also Tony

BC 350 (p. 43)

Dear Anne[136] my first Christmas without you and the boys. My love as always. Mum.

BC 365 (p. 46)

21/3/05
Please give my daughter Anne Elizabeth Hinds-Girling peace,
tragically killed at road accident.
Devoted mother to James and Robert, our very dear gransons, deeply mourned & moved.
Miss you, her mother and uncle Val, forever in our thoughts & hearts.

BC 378 (p. 48)

Hinds−Girling, Anne Elizabeth
There is a gift in the world so rare
The Love a mother and daughter share
What I would give to see you smile Ann.
Forgive me Lord if I ask why?
Kiss her dear face Lord for me.
My love <u>love</u> as always and my love
To my gransons James & Robert.
I miss you. Grandma

BC 385 (p. 49)

Hinds−Girling−Anne
Rest in peace Anne knowing we love and cherish James and Robert and keep them in our thoughts, hearts and prayers. Susan & family

BC 386 (p. 49)

Hinds−Girling−Anne
My cousin – everyday in my thoughts and prayers. Always remembered − Ian.

BC 387 (p. 49)

[136] A comma is presupposed here.

Please pray for my daughter Anne & my grandchildren James & Robert. I miss you Anne. I always will. Take care of my grandsons. I miss them,
mother, grandma – uncle Val.
We love you. Thank you Lord. Please try to give me peace of mind.
BC 400 (p. 52)

16.9.05
Pray for all those troubled in mind and spirit. May they find true peace and contentment. Amen. BC 416 (p. 54)

Please pray for my daughter Anne. For[137] your prayers and my gransons James & Robert I thank you Lord. Mother BC 420 (p. 54)

Several other prayers address God, asking him to pray for something or someone, which is doctrinal nonsense. If one accepts that God is the ruler, with absolute power, it must be humans who need to pray. This doctrinal error is illustrated by just a few examples, but it was in fact quite frequent. It is also possible that the writer was in a hurry and wanted to address the prayer team in fact − all that remains a question for us as we do not know his or her intentions. However, theologically considered, it may tell us a lot about the author and his religious background and his or her idea of God.

Dear God,
Please pray that I will find real love. Thank you Miss F.
46 LC (p.75)

Dear God,
Please Pray for Nicole Ruz she is suffering from cancer.
Thank you Lord. 48 LC (p. 75)

Results expected immediately according to a wish

Further examples reflect a very strange image of God, similar to the genie in Aladdin's lamp, who grants all requests made to him. Sometimes the pray-ers come near to idolatry, with the writers suggesting some sort of magical solution and a kind of "abrakadabra action". They ask for something with untiring persistence, and they wish to see immediate results. It may seem, as if there were no reverence of

[137] It is not clear here which word she means. The author is probably old and ill which affects her writing.

God, which is partly related to the first commandment[138]. Although man should not be worried nor be afraid before God (whose love is ready to accept even the cross), God cannot be simply understood as a magic agent, who automatically gives humans whatever they ask Him for, no matter how they live. It does not work like that.

There are several examples in the Bible. Whenever the Hebrew people wanted to manipulate God, it ended in a bad way. For example, the battle with the Philistines[139]; which ended in defeat for the Hebrews, even though they took the Ark of the Covenant[140] − the symbol of God's presence − with them to win the battle. However, they were not only defeated in the battle, but the Ark too was subsequently captured by their enemy.

In the Czech fairy tale *Anděl Páně* (the Angel of the Lord), the main character of God the Father explains to Virgin Mary why he did not help in one particular case. When he was asked about it, he answers in a very witty way: "True, I'm good but it doesn't mean I'm a fool".

This would suggest that a prayer cannot be considered to be a mechanical or magical procedure, designed to produce automatic results. Rather it implies a communication between the believer and God, which accepts the integrity and liberty of both. These votive prayers seem to be immature in this respect – they tend to invert the roles: a person expects that God is going to serve him and not vice versa. Being religious texts, the petitions are also about God and reflect the picture people have of Him in their minds. The following petitions seemed to belong to this category:

> Dear God + St Jude
> Please give me a boyfriend in time for Valentine's Day. Thank you?
>
> LC 55 (p. 76)

[138] "I am the Lord your God you shall not have strange gods before me" (Ex 20, 2−17) it may be linked with "Love the Lord your God with all your Heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt 22, 36) or also Catechism, p. 447.
[139] 1 Sam, 4−6
[140] The Ark of the Covenant – the most sacred religious symbol of the Hebrew people – and was associated with the presence of God. It was in the form of a wooden rectangular box, overlaid with gold inside and out. The Hebrew people carried this Ark from the time of Exodus into the land of Canaan.

Father Son and Holy Spirit[141]
please help me and fulfill my heart's desire and give me a nice job and a nice house please
Heal me as soon as possible Dolores (signature)

LC 1 (p. 68)

The last of my "pseudo-devotional examples" would be *imprecations.* These are the prayers (in fact they would not be called prayers any more) which curse or wish someone something evil. A real difficulty arises in how we can interpret them if we do not know the author and his problems.

Such examples were not included in my corpora. However, if we read some Polish prayers focusing on enemies, we cannot be really sure what the pray-er has in their mind, whether it is peace, or hatred and revenge. A prayer for bad things to happen to one's enemies is an abomination to God, writes Tomáš Špidlík[142]. The definition of the prayer by St. John Damascene is "the raising of one's mind and heart to God and requesting good things from God[143]". It does not mean that a person would not feel any bitterness, that there would not be any anger or dissapointment in such a person as well; it may partly remain and disappear after an extended period of time, but there should definitely be some openess and willingness to forgive; an expressed decision not to avenge nor to wish evil, should certainly be presupposed.

This prayer is probably written by someone who works in the field of agriculture and who faces a problem with their neighbour on regular basis. In such cases the will to forgive seems literally vital and essential.

To my dearest Mum from Leżaj, as a thank you for a successful harvest. With the whole family we cordially thank you for all the graces we get from God and now I ask you to punish the enemies that have been doing spiteful actions to us for years and don't want to mend their ways. What's more, what they are doing now is to throw chains in the fields so that the mowing machines got damaged and a cutter bar broke off and we didn't mow the field and we would have to go home far, so the dearest Mum, please, punish the enemies with your loving heart the way you want, because neither a prayer nor tears shall melt their hearts, they do what they want, because nowadays everyone does what they want. In a fervent prayer, a poor God's servant and her children praying the rosary (L) [144].

[141] A comma is missing here.
[142] Špidlík, T.: Modlitba, p. 92.
[143] St. John Damascene, Catechism §2559.
[144] The example of the prayer was taken from the translated article of M. Wojtak (in print): Funkcje modlitwy wotywnej – spojrzenie językoznawcy, p. 10.

> [Do Najukochańszej Matuchny Leżajskiej podziękowanie za szczęśliwe zbiory żniwne nie zrośnięte składamy z moim domem najserdeczniejsze podziękowanie i za wszystkie łaski co mamy od Boga a teraz proszę o ukaranie wrogów co nam nazłość robiu lata i nie ma poprawy i coraz jest gorzej teraz tak robiu że żucaju łańcuchy w koniczynę żeby się zepsuła kosiarka i nam się urwał bagnet i nie wykosiliśmy kończyny a tu trzeba było daleko jechać do domu więc najukochańsza Matuchno proszę Cię ukochanym sercem ukaż wrogów jak chcesz od siebie bo żadna proźba do nich nie dociera albo płacz robiu co chcu bo tu jest teraz sama wola co kto chce to robi Błagam o gorącą proźbę biedna sługa Boża z dziećmi moimi w modlitwach i na ružańcu (L)]

It is difficult to say, how many writers of these votive prayers preferred their relationship with another person (to whom they entrusted their prayer) over their personal and living relationship with God. How active or passive their personal religious life was is also unclear. As I noticed during my short presence in these places, instead of kneeling down and praying at the altar, some people went directly to write down their petition into the book, and afterwards they left the church without any other act of piety. It would appear that some of these people did not actually know how to pray. By writing their prayer into the book of petitions, or pinning their prayer card on the board, this made them feel, perhaps, that they had done what they could.

It was clearly evident in all the examples throughout the work that a prayer may contain different linguistic elements. The prayer reflects people's cultural age, corresponding to the linguistic changes in their environment. Moreover the language of VPs contains liturgical echoes and images which are revived here, thanks to ritualization and intertextuality. But even if the style is refined and high, this literary artistic aspect is secondary, and its only task is to secure a decent communication with God. The primary criterion of the prayer is its artistic nor its literary value, but its authenticity. The archaisms of Tudor English, colloquialisms, or high-brow style do not give the prayer any more weight.

Praying is authentic only if one prays by means of one's own words. This does not mean one could not use a prayerbook, but the text of the prayer has to be accepted as one's own[145]. It can never be just a stereotyped repetition of something nice or memorable from the past. A text can never substitute for a personal relationship to God. The beautiful prayers of all ages are not undervalued here.

[145] Cf. Casper B. (2000): *Událost modlitby*. Praha, Vyšehrad, p. 73.

They may certainly function as a school in which people learn to pray, but function only as a temporary pattern.

Prayer is not a hunt for performance. Nor is it a compulsive repetition of some formulae that should replace a real relationship with God. Indeed, there may be many prayers drawn from the corpora similarly resembling a list of family members and friends which was sent to a prayer team. Thus, there is a need to criticize such an attitude to prayer without a meaningful relationship. Otherwise it would be just a set of empty sentences written down into a book of petitions.

4.9 Votive prayers as different from the collects

The distinction between the collect and the VP would rather imply a differentiation between an improvised personal prayer and a liturgical one. This divergence is indeed, quite fundamental[146] as I shall explain. Please, see several examples of the collects from the Sacramentary (1985) first.

> Father, source of forgiveness and salvation for all mankind,
> hear our prayer.
> By the prayers of the ever − Virgin Mary,
> may our friends, relatives, and benefactors
> who have gone from this world
> come to share eternal happiness with all your saints.
> We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
> who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
> one God for ever and ever.
> (The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 890)

> Lord,
> you gave your apostle Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven,
> entrusting him with supreme power to bind and to loose.
> By the help of his prayers
> free us from the bonds of our sins.
> We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son
> who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
> one God for ever and ever.
> (The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 855)

> God our Father,
> our strength in adversity,
> our health in weakness,
> our comfort in sorrow,
> be merciful to your people.

[146] Please, see the article of Lašťovičková, M. (2005): Jazyk liturgie. In: *Specifika církevní komunikace* [The Specificity of Church Communication], p. 67−75.

As you have given us the punishment we deserve,
give us also new life and hope as we rest in your kindness.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever
(The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 831)

Almighty and ever-present Father,
your watchful care reaches from end to end
and orders all things in such power
that even the tensions and the tragedies of sin
cannot frustrate your loving plans.
Help us to embrace your will,
give us the strength to follow your call,
so that your truth may live in our hearts
and reflect peace to those who believe in your love.
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.
(The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 326)

The Sacramentary (1985) provides an enormous quantity of the introductory prayers (known under the name collects) which are offered each and every day of the liturgical year. However, their structure remains the same throughout, all the time, with only minor exceptions. As the collects clearly reveal, the structure does not change only the words vary, therefore examples are not included in greater numbers.

Father of all holiness,
guide our hearts to you.
Keep in the light of your truth
all those you have freed from the darkness of unbelief.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.
(The Sacramentary, 1985, p. 298)

Previously, the Roman Catholic Missal was translated from Latin into the vernacular in earlier times. Therefore the liturgical language has retained something of the antiquity (some people will say the ‘charm’) of the past, and up to this day it is still under the control of the Congregation of the Divine Worship. It is the language trying to describe or address God, for whom extraordinary language is felt to be appropriate but additionally, it is combined with an ordinary language, informing people about the historical events of bygone days. It is a language balanced between a poetical tone (associated with metaphor) and ordinary current

language. Sentences are long and clearly linked to one another and each sentence needs a context before to give precise sense to what has already been said. Words find their meaning within the context of the whole prayer or a rite, in particular the assembly of the faithful (Cf. G. Ramshaw 1986, p. 1). A liturgical prayer is full of symbolic imagery, most of which derives from the Bible. At the same time it contains some theological language, as a reasoned speech about the divine.

Gail Ramshaw (1996, p. 41) describes the liturgical language as "a language in which exists a tension of the old with the new." The old being represented by the Jewish tradition, whereas the new represents the Christian through the revelation of God in Christ. In this way liturgical language is therefore old (understand mainly metaphoric) yet it is nevertheless open to the new (cultural patterns and contemporary vocabulary). The liturgical language functions within this complex. Some liturgical texts belong to the treasures of prose and poetry, yet not all the texts are of course literary masterpieces. In some cases they can also be a jumble of all styles[147].

It can be acclaimed that liturgical language is not colloquial. This is because the conversational tone seems inappropriate when the situation is socially significant. Liturgical speech ought to be vernacular, but vernacular is not the same as colloquial speech. Christian vocabulary changes in fact constantly. Moreover it seems that the art of speaking effectively somehow anticipates a structure of the conversation which the liturgy provides. The favourite pattern often presented, is the interchange of praise and petition (it might have been historically influenced by the tradition of the Psalms; cf. Psalm 22, 23 or 63 serve as examples).

The collect represents a ready-made text, which is written down and is highly figurative and poetical. Invocations constitute a considerable part of the collect and occupy an important position at the very beginning and form an even greater part of the collect itself. This table compares the individual features of votives and collects:

[147] Some examples of the jumble sort of style includes the article about the hymns from the contemporary Czech breviary (The Divine Office): Lašťovičková, M. (2003): K volbě hymnů "Denní modlitby církve".

The Collect	The Intercessory Prayer
The figurative language; extensive use of symbols	Direct; transparent with detailed description
Too metaphoric; a lack of clarity due to too many metaphors at times.	Clearly expressed; the lack of clarity caused by deliberate concealment from the people.
It retains the same structure which is never broken; no fluctuations in the length; relatively the same length.	Fluctuations in the length of the text is common; it can be either too long or too short (detailed descriptions).
metaphors and poetical language	Metaphorical inserts from biblical and liturgical language
unemotional	highly emotional; with the empathy, solidarity and sensitiveness
homogenous style	inhomogenous style; presence of several styles is rather atypical; stylistically heterogenous
coherent text	incoherent; layering and enumeration
Invocations are long and ramified. They may occupy a bigger part of a collect.	Invocations are sometimes missing or can be stereotyped.
vernacular; written form, the ready-made language	The spoken language which is written down; the ignorant punctuation, ellipsis, mistakes.
The tendency to generalize the human needs and to speak for all the people, town or country.	The tendency to see only individual needs.

Table 2 (VPs in a comparison with the collects)

Invocations from the samples of collects

− Father, source of forgiveness and salvation for all mankind
− Lord
− God our Father,
  our strength in adversity,
  our health in weakness,
  our comfort in sorrow
− Almighty and ever-present Father
− Father of all holiness
− Father of light
  in you is found no shadow of change
  but only the fullness of life and limitless truth
− Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
− God of power and mercy

The poetical language from the collects

Our friends, relatives, and benefactors
who have gone from this world
come to share eternal happiness with all your saints.
(*periphrasis*; meaning who died)

(The) supreme power to bind and to loose
(*an antonymical doublet*)

free us from the bonds of our sins
as we rest in your kindness
(*a figurative language*)

your watchful care reaches from end to end
and orders all things in such power
that even the tensions and the tragedies of sin
cannot frustrate your loving plans
(*periphrasis*, meaning the omnipotence)

the light of your truth
the darkness of unbelief
(the popular *metaphor* of the light and darkness;
it is frequently used in liturgy)

your truth may live in our hearts
(*personification*)

On the contrary, some of the VP's language used is not much different from that of written electronic communication because of the trend towards brevity and economy. The length of the prayer often fluctuates as it may somewhere change into a detailed confession containing a detailed description of everything around while it uses just a bare sentence elsewhere. However VP uses primarily spoken language which is presented in a specific, written down format alone. Intended participants of these communications were usually anonymous and remote. A writer was oblivious of the identity as to who was in the prayer team, whilst writer and reader were in different places and therefore did not convene.

Though both prayers were in the written form, the VP's structure was less consistent than the collect's. Invocations in some VPs were not always present and furthermore they appealed to people instead of to God.

The form of prayer appears to be affected by the personality of the author, whether he is an ordinary visitor or a visiting priest from somewhere else just being on holiday or at home. Some authors tend to address both God and the prayer team. Unlike VPs, collects always address God alone and their invocations are dressed in poetical language with a number of metaphors.

The content of VPs was more confidential than the collects', even though there was a heavier charge of emotions, spontaneity, immediacy, informality and sense of humour. Thematically a VP tended to describe the human misery more frequently. The actual prayer structure was often violated and incomplete, whilst the central part represented by a petition was always present. However the beginning or

the end was frequently missing or was alternated instead by a greeting or *thank you.* The epistolary form appeared quite frequently together with non-verbal signs (X's and O's in letters − representing kisses and hugs).

Another difference was discovered at the pray-er's signatures and revealing the author's identity. Many prayers were signed and transparent. However, there was also a trend to conceal and remain anonymous, perhaps because of the belief that 'God knows all about it'.

While the collect always generally focused on the needs of all people and could be applied to anyone, the VP aimed at only the good of the individual, in relation to either the material or spiritual nature.

Unlike collects, the VP's language could include a whole confession or indeed just a mere fragmentary piece of text, with notes or drawings added later on. Frequently there appeared errors (even at the level of the sentence structure, where parcellation or ellipsis was used). There was a tendency towards brevity, with the usage of abbreviations, layering and subsequent enumeration of the individual's personal needs. Sporadically there would be a metaphor, euphemism, archaism, repetition or a verse. VPs contained number of misspellings; the total absence of punctuation and of capital letters. While on the one hand people wanted to be polite (thee, please), on the other hand there were also several signs of impoliteness (some authors expected a magical solution and dictated to God as to what he should do now and here).

VP proved to be stylistically unhomogenous and disjointed language material was evident, particularly where nearly all phenomenons appeared. The basic stylistic tendency included a combination of opposite features. Therefore a prayer could start in a form of everyday conversation and continue with an insert of ritualized phrase consisting of highly metaphoric quality. As a result the stylistic features of VPs clashed. *Grandeur* and ritualizations were contrasted to colloquialisms. Synonymical doublets continued a few lines later as plain, ordinary and everyday expressions and the fact that text was still a prayer could be identified solely from its intention.

> I very much hope that the subject has a future that lives up to the promise it displayed in the 1980s. All we need is for a few more linguist labourers to enter the theolinguistic vineyard.
> (*D. Crystal: Whatever happened to theolinguistics?* In: *Religious Language, Metaphor and the Mind*, 2013, p. 13)

5.0 The language of intercessory prayer – summary

This work aims to present research of the language used in intercessory prayers against the background of theolinguistics. Theolinguistics is a newly introduced discipline of linguistics and is presented mainly in the first part of this thesis, which briefly outlines the history and development of this linguistic branch and mentions some of the most significant theolinguists and their important works.

The origin of this field dates back to the 1960s when the liturgical language became a talking point at the Vatican II Council. This was the era of liturgical change which entailed the translation of the Latin Mass into the vernacular. During that time D. Crystal from the UK published a notable book *Linguistics, Language and Religion* (1965) where he discussed the theme of the *theophoric language* which, in his opinion, is a branch of stylistics. The beginning of the theolinguistic development was linked with English speaking countries (as its representatives were both British and American: D. Crystal, W. J. Samarin or Ch. Ferguson).

William J. Samarin, a professor of anthropology and linguistics in Toronto organized a conference on *Sociolinguistics and Religion* at Georgetown University in Washington in 1972 and published an anthology, *Language in Religious Practice* (1976). However, the term of *theolinguistics* was coined by the Belgian linguist J.P. van Noppen in 1981. He published a collective volume under the same name (*Theolinguistics* 1) where he introduced and explained this term, which gave birth to the theolinguistic discipline. The contributions in this volume were interdisciplinary (semiotics, philosophy, theology, literary criticism, psychology and linguistics) and among his associated linguists were the names of David Crystal, Jean Dierickx, Eugene Nida, Marie-Louise Rotsaert, and William J. Samarin.

The sequel, *Theolinguistics* 2, which followed soon after was published in 1983 and was mainly focused on metaphor, which was to become one of van Noppen's main academic interests. (His main contribution was a study of how metaphor could be, and was, misunderstood). His interest was later extended towards discourse analysis, which prevailed in later development, within the field of theolinguistics. Nevertheless in another series of theolinguistic books published by Peter Lang in Germany, only a few books were actually written by linguists (van Noppen being one of them) and gradually began to lose the prominence they had once received. Another different type of theolinguistic series was to be published in Regensburg soon after, under the care of the originally Polish linguist, namely Elżbieta Kucharska-Dreiß. New stimuli for the discipline also arrived later from Poland where many new theolinguists began working on diverse approaches to the discipline which obtained immediate attention. For example, among the most famous names appeared that of Maria Wojtak or Marzena Makuchowska.

This thesis works with two corpora of prayers collected in two parishes situated in Great Britain. Both corpora include ca 500 intercessory prayers which I compare with the prayers from the book of the Roman Missal (the Sacramentary 1985). The thesis consists of two volumes, the thesis itself and the supplements. The first part of the thesis incorporating the first three chapters, discusses the theoretical aspects of theolinguistics and deals with the prayer as a specific kind of linguistic discourse in general. In the first chapter the collected material and methodology is described too.

In the second part of this thesis, I focused my attention on a practical analysis of the intercessory prayers which represent the core of my work. This prayers' research was based on the corpus evidence (contained in chapters four and five). In this section I sought to describe and analyse the distinctive features of the collected votive prayers and then compare them with the traditional liturgical prayers, namely the collect – the opening prayer of the Mass. I have subsequently observed how the sociolinguistic perspective might influence the prayer (the age of the writers, their education and their relationship to God).

Unlike extemporaneous, spontaneously voiced intercessions, the collects are an official liturgical and formal type of prayer. They consist of a ready-made text with both metaphorical and poetic colouring, which recalls an aesthetically pleasing impression. The typical rhetoric figure used is *circumlocution* (which is also sometimes called *periphrasis*) i.e. a statement or phrase using more words than are strictly necessary and rather than defining something precisely, sidesteps the issue (e.g., *our friends, relatives and benefactors who have gone from this world come to share eternal happiness with all your saints* − those who died, see p. 107). As the text was reserved for sacred occasions, the familiar tone would have been inappropriate in the given context, as well as the colloquial contractions of the day. The assumption of the metaphoric diction and the existence of traditional utterances pleasing each and everyone's sense of aesthetic values as a characteristic feature of register was definitely confirmed. The lexis was really unique and could not be confused with any other area and style. However it was surprising collects did not contain any archaism drawn from the intertextual biblical or theological inserts. Perusal of current Roman Missal did not even reveal any archaic pronouns (*thee, thou*) which were considered so typical of the liturgical texts. The text of the collects used solely the expressions of present-day modern language, e.g. "your, yours" in all cases. This might have been caused by the regular revisions of the text complied by the liturgical committee.

Collects contained no archaic lexis that would be hard to understand and all the used words were quite intelligible. Further exploration of the electronic version of the online Sacramentary (the Roman Missal)[148] really identified only three occurrences of archaic pronouns *thy.* All of them were centred in the Lord's Prayer (Our Father). This fully confirmed the hypothesis that the Sacramentary (the Roman Missal) does not contain any archaic pronouns nowadays. The archaic pronouns are likely to appear in prayer books and devotional texts containing biblical fragments and in the liturgical prayer of the breviary (the divine office). The result could have been influenced by the fact that I worked with the contemporary version of the

[148] (www.elephantsinthelivingroom.com)

Sacramentary (1985) and if I had taken the earlier version, then archaisms might well have appeared.

Votive prayers were rather informal and developed as a result of extemporaneous communication, since the requests were expressed directly. The text contained ellipses, repetitions, ignored punctuation, and a variety of abbreviations and shortened forms were used thus giving rise to a form of writing closer to spoken interaction. On one hand the votives showed a certain degree of elevated language and 'grandeur', especially in the poetic choice of words or passages with intertextual inserts and strings of synonyms which appeared as doublets or triplets; on the other hand, they contained features quite contradictory to 'grandeur' such as colloquialisms, contracted forms, or inappropriate abbreviations. Such passages of refined speech, as could be observed, were imported from various prayer books and devotional texts. Thus they imported for example the archaic pronouns of *thou* and *thee,* which I had expected to see in the collects, where in fact they did not appear at all.

In the individual prayers the petitions were often layered upon one another and they were built into rather economically simple and short sentences. They often lacked even the central link and continuity of speech. Therefore the petitions within one prayer adhered to each other although without the same context, and thus made a long list. The votives contained an enormous emotional charge (e.g. nonverbal symbols of X's and O's in letters − representing kisses and hugs).

Votive prayers were among the discourses established on the borders between sacred and profane communication. One part of these statements presented a religious perspective the other part presented a secular one. Some prayers were more anchored in *sacrum,* whereas others were closer to the *profane* world. This was probably due to their heterogenous nature, which was highly influenced by the context. As a result votive prayers possessed a somewhat inhomogeneous character which in fact appeared as polymorphic.

5.1 Jazyk přímluvné modlitby − shrnutí

Cílem této práce bylo představit jazyk přímluvné modlitby, což je téma, kterým předložená práce navazuje na teolingvistické studie jindě ve světě. A protože teolingvistika je relativně málo známý pomezní obor, souběžným cílem bylo přiblížit tento obor.

Přímluvná modlitba je modlitba, kterou se věřící obrací k Bohu, aby ho poprosil o pomoc pro sebe nebo pro jiné osoby. Jazyk takových proseb srovnávám s tradiční vstupní modlitbou z liturgie mše svaté, s tzv. kolektou. Tento konfrontační pohled měl podle mé hypotézy ověřit teorii, že kolekta bude obsahovat více archaických a poetických prvků, jak je pro liturgii charakteristické, zatímco spontánní přímluvná modlitba prokáže tendenci opačného rázu. Za tímto účelem jsem předložila přes 500 přímluvných modliteb, které jsem analyzovala. Materiál tvoří dva korpusy votivních modliteb, které jsem získala ze dvou anglických farností a pochází z let 2002−2006. Text kolekt jsem čerpala ze současné verze Římského misálu z roku 1985 v anglickém znění, který se dnes běžně používá v liturgii mše svaté jako současně platný bohoslužebný text římskokatolického ritu.

Teolingvistika se začala ve světě vyvíjet jako reakce na jazykovou revizi liturgických textů po Druhém vatikánském koncilu, ale jako obor byla v 60. letech ještě docela neznámá. I když byl o náboženský jazyk velký zájem a prof. D. Crystal publikoval v roce 1965 svou knihu *Linguistics, Language and Religion*, ve které používá označení "*theophoric language*" (jazyk, který pojednává o věcech Božích), terminologicky byla tato disciplína vymezena až skoro o 20 let později belgickým anglistou J.P. van Noppenem v roce 1981. Počátky této disciplíny však byly zprvu spojeny s anglofonním světem (zmíněná kniha prof. D. Crystala z Walesu ve Velké Británii, konference v Georgetown ve Washingtonu, organizovaná antropologem prof. W. J. Samarinem z Toronta a články významného sociolingvisty, prof. Ch. Fergusona, jsou toho jednoznačným dokladem).

William J. Samarin vydal v roce 1976 antologii *Language in Religious Practice.* Na tuto iniciativu navázal Belgičan J.P. van Noppen, který vydal sborník z konference *Teolingvistika 1* (1981), kde byly zastoupeny značně různorodé interdisciplinární příspěvky z více oblastí: sémiotiky, filosofie, psychologie,

jazykovědy i literární kritiky. Záhy nato následovala *Teolingvistika 2* (r. 1983), která byla zaměřena na metaforu, které se van Noppen dlouhodobě věnoval. Téma metafory a později ještě diskursní analýzy natolik převážilo, že se po dlouhou dobu mylně považovalo prakticky za jediné téma, o které v teolingvistice jde. Nakladatelství Peter Lang začalo vydávat první teolingvistickou řadu, avšak z padesáti titulů byly pouze čtyři orientované lingvisticky a ty zastupovaly jedno ze dvou zmíněných témat (metafora či diskursní analýza). Jeden ze svazků této řady (*Transforming words*, 1999) zpracoval i sám J.P. van Noppen. Tato řada postupně vyvolala monotematický dojem a následkem toho o ni přestal být širší zájem. Další teolingvistická řada vycházela o něco později v Regensburgu a přinesla už zcela novou tematiku. U jejího zrodu stála původem polská lingvistka z Wroclawi − Elżbieta Kucharska-Dreiss. I když teolingvistika nepřestala v anglicky mluvícím světě existovat, nemohla se zdaleka chlubit takovou rozmanitostí tematiky jako teolingvistika polská, která na sebe záhy, zvláště však ve dvou posledních dekádách, strhla veškerou pozornost především díky osobnostem Marzeny Makuchowské nebo Marie Wojtak, ale i díky bohatému zapojení mnoha desítek renomovaných polských lingvistů z nejrůznějších oblastí výzkumu.

Moje disertační práce má dva díly. První díl je rozčleněn do 5 kapitol. V první části (1.−3. kapitola) jsem pojednala o teoretických základech práce a charakterizovala jsem rozdíl mezi kolektou a přímluvnou modlitbou. Ve druhé části (4.−5. kapitola) jsem se věnovala praktické analýze založené na příkladech přímluv z obou korpusů. Sebrané přímluvné modlitby jsem porovnávala s texty liturgických kolekt. Sledovala jsem, jak modlitbu ovlivňuje sociolingvistická perspektiva (věk pisatelů, jejich vzdělání a vztah k Bohu). Nahlížela jsem modlitbu jako text dialogu s Bohem, jako dialog, který má určitou ustálenou podobu a ve svém výsledku vytváří charakteristický žánr, útvar textu typický svou kompozicí, tématem i jazykem. Otázku žánru jsem však více nerozpracovala, protože nebyla stanoveným cílem mé práce.

Kolekta, která tvoří součást oficiálního jazyka, má sama o sobě výrazně formální ráz. Má svou pevnou strukturu: oslovení, oslava Boha nebo jeho činů, prosba, poděkování, „amen". Mohou se v ní objevit drobné biblické obraty nebo

jazyk teologie (nejčastěji věroučného rázu). Jde o modlitbu psanou, určenou k recitaci celebranta, která má výrazně poetizující zabarvení a celkově metaforickou dikci (je typická právě pro oslovení). Z tohoto důvodu vytváří modlitba esteticky líbivý dojem. Mezi typickými obraty se objevuje perifráze (z řečtiny, opis), která přibližuje známý a běžný název předmětu pomocí jeho opisu (*your watchful care reaches from end to end and orders all things in such power that even the tensions of tragedies of sin cannot frustrate your loving plans* – the omnipotence) a líčí nám Boží všemohoucnost. Tato modlitba má slavnostní nádech a nezaměnitelný jedinečný styl. Překvapilo mě však, že v textu neexistoval žádný archaismus, který jsem v liturgii sama očekávala. Je pravděpodobné, že předposlední vydání Římského misálu takové archaismy zřejmě obsahovalo. Také je možné, že je text kolekty příliš krátký a archaické vlivy se projeví až v delších modlitbách. Text anglického sakramentáře (The Sacramentary, The Roman Missal, 1985) tedy žádné archaismy neuváděl, a to ani ve formě osobních zájmen „thee, thou" – naopak užíval velmi důsledně „you". Zde by bylo třeba nahlédnout hlouběji do textu misálu, zda se ještě v dnešní liturgii tyto obraty vůbec používají, anebo zda je liturgická komise pozvolna odstraňuje a přežívají jen v tradičně formulovaných modlitbách z minulosti, které věřící znají zpaměti.

Votivní modlitba má spontánní ráz, je upřímná až bezprostřední a často nese emocionální náboj. Nedodržuje strukturu textu, některé části jí mohou chybět (oslovení, závěr) a jednotlivé části nemusí být ani rovnoměrně dlouhé, jako je tomu u kolekty. Oslovením se může obracet k Bohu, ale i k modlitebnímu týmu, nebo se může zcela vypustit. Řečnické ozdoby (např. typu perifráze) může získat jen intertextuálním vlivem, který pramení z úzkého spojení mezi liturgickým a biblickým jazykem. Přímluvná modlitba má tendenci vyjadřovat se přímo a transparentně (pokud se v ní neobjeví tendence k utajování předmětu rozhovoru).

K zajímavému zjištění došlo u textové linie votivní modlitby. Jednotlivé prvky prosby jednoho autora se často „lepí" na sebe, mohou se náhle rozvětvit, a pak se zase vrátit nazpět k hlavní linii. Stavba kolekty je v tomto smyslu pevně daná a žádné další odbočky celebrantovi neumožňuje.

Votivní modlitby nejsou pečlivě upravenou řečí, jde spíše o shluk krátkých a bezprostředních projevů. Prosby se na sebe vrství, často i bez další souvislosti, a mohou vyústit i ve dlouhý výčet, který už nic z modlitby nepřipomíná.

Text votivní modlitby leží na rozhraní mezi mluveností a psaností, ale četné jazykové útvary svědčí o prvenství mluveného jazyka v psané podobě (elipsy, zkratky, stažené tvary nebo nevhodně zkrácená slova, nedodržování interpunkce, hovorovost, neverbální znaky křížků znázorňujících polibky, dětské kresby). Na jedné straně jsou tak přímluvné modlitby nositelem majestátnosti a září poetickým výběrem slov, intertextuální pasáží či ritualizovaným obratem, na druhé straně ovšem obsahují i rysy zcela opačné (rysy hovorovosti, ale i torzovitosti). Některé prosby jsou tak více zakotveny v sakrum, jiné mají blíže profánnímu vidění světa. Tak mají votiva poněkud nehomogenní, polymorfní ráz.

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