

APPENDIX A

A STRUCTURAL – LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF *THE PRAYER OF ST. BENEDICT*

PRAYER OF ST. BENEDICT

O GRACIOUS AND HOLY FATHER,
GIVE US WISDOM TO PERCEIVE YOU,
INTELLIGENCE TO UNDERSTAND YOU,
DILIGENCE TO SEEK YOU,
PATIENCE TO WAIT FOR YOU,
EYES TO BEHOLD YOU,
A HEART TO MEDITATE UPON YOU,
AND A LIFE TO PROCLAIM YOU;
THROUGH THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT
OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

AMEN

O GRACIOUS AND HOLY FATHER,

O Indicative of our fundamental stance in relation to ultimate reality. We acclaim almost spontaneously when confronted with ultimate transcendent truth with a feeling of awe and a profound sense of our being overwhelmed by a *Mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.

Gracious The Immanent nature of God.

Holy The Transcendent nature of God.

Father Our relationship to God is determined by our socio-historical context and the categories of human relationship.

GIVE US

(*Give*) Denotes our primary condition of dependence and need before ultimate reality; (*us*) indicates that a complete act of faith is possible only within the social and communal context of human life.

The following six petitions express the desire for a relationship with God, assuming that a relationship takes place within the parameters of self-disclosure. The petitions reveal that the capacity desired is conditional for knowledge in the mode indicated by the verb.

WISDOM TO PERCEIVE YOU,

- Wisdom** The deepest level of knowledge. Wisdom is the gift of an insight that includes and goes beyond the intellectual, to grasp with certainty, and to penetrate intuitively the very essence of the object in a manner comprehensive, certain, and immediate.
- Perceive** Knowledge through a perspicacity that penetrates the reality of the object apprehended. The mind takes possession in a non-material sense the substance of the object of perception.

INTELLIGENCE TO UNDERSTAND YOU,

- Intelligence** The rational function of the spiritual intellect.
The ability to reason in a deliberate, critical, and methodical manner.
- Understand** To know the dynamic identity and action of the object, through apprehension, discernment, and judgement.

EYES TO BEHOLD YOU

- Eyes** The gift of sight – physical, sensory perception, applied to the faculties of the mind.
- Behold** To apprehend in a substantial and demonstrable sense, applied to the faculties of the mind.

DILIGENCE TO SEEK YOU,

- Diligence** To persevere untiringly and methodically, employing care and effort in a process of critical discernment.
- Seek** To search in the hope of discovery and without acknowledging limits.

PATIENCE TO WAIT FOR YOU,

- Patience** A necessary virtue of humility and openness in the theological and spiritual quest. A preparedness to accept the often inexplicable wisdom of God in this pursuit.
- Wait** A willingness to submit to provisional acceptance in anticipation of further confirmation.

A HEART TO MEDITATE UPON YOU,

- Heart*** Indicative of ‘faith seeking understanding’ not being a purely rational endeavour. The affective dimension of knowing.
- Meditate*** To discern and reflect at a level including and beyond the merely intellectual/cerebral.

The seventh petition indicates that a depth of knowledge is attained through expression in praxis. It also indicates that it is the outcome of the above petitions.

Finally, it indicates that if knowledge of God is attained in these modes, the final outcome is an existential imperative – it compels the knower not only to live out the truth that has possessed him/her, but through this living out, to proclaim this truth to others.

AND A LIFE TO PROCLAIM YOU;

- Life*** One's whole being; its identity and function is now ordered to a specific end.
- Proclaim*** Knowledge and faith in God is now communicated primarily through an attitude and lifestyle that is informed by faith. Orthodoxy flows into orthopraxis.

The final petition indicates an awareness that all the above is only possible through the mission of the Holy Spirit, who confirms us in the truth, as promised by Jesus Christ. It enfolds the entire prayer in acknowledgement of the identity and action of the divine missions of Christ and the Spirit

THROUGH THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

The possibility of knowledge of God and faith in him is produced by the Trinitarian missions. A proportion of correlation is created between the knowing subject and the known object through the Incarnation and the procession of the Holy Spirit. The capacity for knowledge of the infinite is created in the finite subject, through the incarnation of the eternal Word, who is himself the definitive self-revelation of God. Furthermore, the action of the Holy Spirit actualises this capacity for knowledge of God and faith in him.