

# Transitioning to the new Roman Missal

Part 5 in a series (Prepared for St. James Cathedral, Seattle by Corinna Laughlin)

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Formerly called the "Opening Prayer," the Collect brings the Introductory Rites of the Mass to a close. We have gathered together as a community of faith; we have confessed our sinfulness and praised the triune God; and now this prayer, led by the priest, unites or "collects" our hopes and intentions into one short prayer to the Father.

The Collect is usually quite broad in its scope, and almost always says something about how we should "know and love God, and do good according to his will," in the words of the Catechism. We ask God to intervene in our lives, to shape us so that we can do his will in thought, word, and deed.

In the Collects for Ordinary Time, we ask God to give us the strength to do what must be done (Week 1), to grant "peace in our times" (2), to "direct our actions" according to his will (3), to keep us safe (4), to "fashion us" by his grace (6), to "keep from us... all that might harm us" (9), to fill us "with holy joy" (14), to give us "the grace to reject whatever is contrary to the name of Christ" (15), to deepen "our sense of reverence" (22). The Collects for other liturgical seasons have a different emphasis. In Advent, many of the Collects focus on being ready for Christ, "worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom" (Advent I), to "gain admittance to his company" (Advent II). In Lent, we pray to "grow in understanding" (Lent I), to be nourished inwardly with God's word (Lent II), to "hasten" towards Easter (Lent IV). The Collects of Easter emphasize our joy in the Resurrection of Christ, and our hope to participate fully in that Resurrection in heaven.

Many of the Collects have a venerable history, reaching back centuries or even millennia – the Collect

## THE COLLECT (Opening Prayer)

Let us pray.

O God, who have prepared for those who love you good things which no eye can see, fill our hearts, we pray, with the warmth of your love, so that, loving you in all things and above all things, we may attain your promises, which surpass every human desire. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

*Collect for the 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time*

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above, which is prayed on the Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, was first written down in a Sacramentary in the 7th century.

## The Shape of the Collect

In the Roman liturgy, the Collect is a formal prayer that follows a clear and consistent pattern. First comes the invitation, "Let us pray," which is to be followed by a brief period of silent prayer. Then the Collect begins with the **address**, which takes

many variations – in this example, it is very simple: "O God." In other Collects, we call on God as "almighty," "eternal," "ever-living." Sometimes the address is followed by an **amplification**, a clause which tells us more about God – here, we recall that God has "prepared for those who love you / good things which no eye can see." There is a **petition** – "fill our hearts... with the warmth of your love." There is a **motive**, suggesting why our prayer should be granted--here, because we love God "in all things and above all things." Finally, there is a **result**, which expresses why we are making this petition: "that we may attain your promises." The Collect concludes with a **doxology**, which may be simply "Through Christ our Lord," or more extended, as in the example above. In these words, which conclude not only the Collects but some of the other Mass prayers as well, we recall Jesus's words: "whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you" ( John 16:23).