

"The Collects": Origin & Structure

The **collect** is a short general prayer of a particular structure used in Christian liturgy.

Collects appear in the liturgies of Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian churches, among others.

The word comes from Latin *collēcta*, the term used in Rome in the 5th century and the 10th, although in the Tridentine version of the Roman Missal the more generic term *oratio* (prayer) was used instead.

The Latin word *collēcta* meant the gathering of the people together (from *colligō*, "to gather") and may have been applied to this prayer as said before the procession to the church in which Mass was celebrated. It may also have been used to mean a prayer that collected into one the prayers of the individual members of the congregation.

A collect generally has five parts:

1. Invocation or address: indicating the person of Trinity addressed, usually God the Father, rarely God the Son
2. Acknowledgement: description of a divine attribute that relates to the petition (who ...)
3. Petition: "for one thing only and that in the tersest language"
4. Aspiration:
 - a. The desired result
 - b. Indication of a further purpose of the petition
5. Pleading:
 - a. Conclusion indicating the mediation of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Response by the people: Amen

In some contemporary liturgical texts, this structure has been obscured by sentence constructions that depart from the Latin flowing style of a single sentence.

The collects in the *Book of Common Prayer* are mainly translations by Thomas Cranmer (d. 1556) from the Latin prayers for each Sunday of the year. At Morning Prayer, the *Collect of the Day* is followed by a *Collect for Peace* and a *Collect for Grace*. At Evening Prayer the *Collect of the Day* is followed by a *Collect for Peace* which differs from the version used at Morning Prayer, and a *Collect for Aid against Perils*, which starts with the well known phrase; "Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night ...".

At Holy Communion (BCP 1962), the *Collect of the Day* is followed by the readings.

- C. Frederick Barbee, Paul F.M. Zahl, *The Collects of Thomas Cranmer* (Eerdmans 1999 ISBN 9780802838452), pp. ix-xi
- Edward McNamara ZENIT liturgy questions, 28 August 2012 Archived 30 August 2012 at the Wayback Machine
- Fortescue, Adrian (1914). *The Mass: A Study of the Roman Liturgy* (2nd ed.). Longmans, Green and Co.