



Liturgical Thought

EXPLANATION AND GUIDE TO THE LUTHERAN LITURGY¹

Why does the Church pray the Collect each week?

After the singing of the **Kyrie** and **Gloria** by the congregation and pastor, the **Collect** is **chanted** by the pastor. The second **proper**, the **Collect is a succinct prayer**, reflecting the content of the **theme of the pericopes (readings appointed) for the day**, and is prayed before them in the liturgy of the **Divine Service** and at the conclusion of **Matins and Vespers**, as a summary of the **theme of the pericopes**. The term “**Collect**” indicates a **collecting of all the petitions of the congregation into one prayer**. The **sacramentaries**² provide us with the earliest known anthologies of collects used by the priest in the Mass. The most ancient of these is the **Leonine Sacramentary** which bears the name of Pope Leo the Great (440-461). Later came enlarged collections, the **Gelasian** and the **Gregorian**, named after Pope Gelasius I (492-496) and Pope Gregory I (590-604) respectively.

In the historic tradition of the Church, the **Collect** has always been chanted by the pastor alone as a symbol of the **congregation's unity of faith**. Still, the **Collect** is not only the collected prayers of a single congregation, but the **prayers of the faithful everywhere** God's people are to be found. By praying the **Collect** alone, the pastor is praying in the stead of the whole Church. We respond in **unity of faith** with “**Amen**” indicating our agreement with the **Collect** as one Body in Christ.

Traditional collects follow a classical pattern:

- **Address**—names **the person of the Trinity** to whom the prayer is particularly addressed.
- **Rationale**—notes the **particular characteristic of God** upon which this prayer is predicated.
- **Petition**—states the prayer, the **blessing being asked**.
- **Benefit**—gives the **goal** toward which the petition is directed.
- **Termination**—“*who lives and reigns...*,” a **doxology**.

¹ Much of the content of this series on the Liturgy of the Church is found in *Why? A Layman's Guide to the Liturgy*, by Rev. Burnell F. Eckardt Jr., Repristination Press, (Malone, TX.), and first published in *Gottesdienst, The Journal of Lutheran Liturgy*, in a series by the same name between the years 1985-2005. Used by permission.

² A sacramentary contains the prayers and directives (known as rubrics) for Mass, and a number of sacramental formulas, but does not include the readings of the Mass. Much of the sacramentary was retained by Luther in his conservative reform of the Mass and forms the foundation for our Lutheran liturgy.

- Collects may be chanted or spoken.

Collect for Palm Sunday

(Address) Almighty and everlasting **God the Father**,
(Rationale) who sent Your Son to take our nature upon Him and to suffer death on the Cross that all mankind should follow the example of **His humility**,
(Petition) mercifully grant that we may both follow **the example of** our Savior Jesus Christ in **His patience**
(Benefit) and also **have our portion in His resurrection**;
(Termination) through **Jesus Christ**, our Lord, who lives and reigns with **You** and the **Holy Spirit**, one God, now and forever.

***** Soli Deo Gloria *****