



The Book of  
Common Prayer

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*The History and Meanings of Prayers*



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Prayers*

Compiled by  
Sujith. S

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Thank You

*Rev. Dr. Peter Toon*

*(1939 – 2009)*

*A priest*

*and theologian*

*and*

*an international advocate of traditional Anglicanism*



# Christmas Day & The Sunday after Christmas



*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

## Collect

Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

The Missal of Sarum (the Communion Office of the Church of England before the Reformation) provided for three Masses for Christmas Day and thus also provided three Collects. The Book of Common Prayer (1549 -1662) only provided for one Order for Holy Communion and thus one collect (printed above). However, in more recent editions of the BCP a second set of readings with a collect have been provided (e.g. in the American BCP, 1928).

We shall only examine the Collect in the BCP 1662 which is used daily until the eve of January 1st; but, in an appendix the other Collects will be printed.

The Collect is addressed to the Almighty Father, as in the Creed --- I believe in one God, the Father Almighty.

In addressing the Father, and in his holy presence, we remind ourselves with due reverence and awe, of the supremely important Event that lies behind Christmas Day. That the eternal Father has given to the world, has sent into the world, his only-begotten Son, and in doing so has caused him to assume as his own, to take unto himself, our very human nature; and to achieve this by taking that human nature within the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary and being born from her, both as her son and as the Incarnate Son of God. Thus the One Person of the Only-Begotten Son by making his own our human nature became One Person with two natures, one divine and one human. He is Immanuel, God with us.

On the basis of this Fact and this Truth, we are well placed in genuine humility to offer our earnest petition to the Father in the Name of this Son.

"Grant" is a verb that suggests that what we ask for only God can supply. We pray that we (who have been baptized by water and the Spirit and made God's children by being adopted into his family) may daily be renewed by his Holy Spirit. That is we need God's immediate assistance through the presence of the Holy Ghost in order to live daily as faithful children of God, disciples of Christ, who call his Father, "our Father."

We celebrate the Incarnation at a specific time ("as at this time") in the Christian Year; but, we are to live as God's born-again people every day.

The Son of God may be said to have had two "births" - an origin/birth of the Father (and beyond our understanding) in eternity, and a birth as man from the Blessed Virgin Mary in space and time. Likewise his disciples may be said to have had two births - one from their mothers and one from above (in holy Baptism with regeneration). By their second birth they are united through the Holy Ghost with the Incarnate Son and in him to the Father.

The Collect ends with a full recognition of the sovereignty of the one God as Three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

In the Epistle we hear of the superiority by nature and office of the Incarnate Son of God to all angels and all creatures. In the Gospel we hear that the Incarnate Son is also the Incarnate Logos/Word, by whom the Father created the whole cosmos. The Word made flesh is the Light of the world and the one in whom sinners become the adopted children of God.

## **Appendix.**

The Second Collect for Christmas Day (when there is a second celebration of HC)

O God who makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of thine only Son, Jesus Christ; Grant, that as we joyfully receive him for our Redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our Judge, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

The Sarum Missal -at cockcrow, dawn and mid-morning.

God, who madest this most sacred night to shine with the brightness of the true Light; Grant, we beseech thee, that, as we have known the revelations of the Light upon earth, so we may also have the fruition of his joys in heaven. Who with thee and the Holy Ghost... Amen.

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, to us upon whom the new light of the Word made flesh is shed forth, that the light which shines by faith in our hearts may also shine brightly in our works. Through the same Jesus Christ... Amen.

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the new birth of thy only-begotten Son through the flesh may set free those, who are held fast by the old bondage under the yoke of sin. Through the same... Amen.

## Fourth Sunday in Advent

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

### Collect

O LORD, raise up (we pray thee) thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through the satisfaction of thy Son our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

### The Advent Collect

This Collect is to be repeated every day, with the other Collects in Advent, until Christmas-Eve.

ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and ever. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

This Collect is the last for the season of Advent and is used for the Sunday and such other days as they are up to Christmas Eve. The two major themes of Advent have been the First Coming in humility and the Second Coming in glory of the one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of the Father.

In this last period of Advent the emphasis is upon the Second Advent because from Christmas Eve the emphasis will most solidly be upon the First Coming, the Incarnation of the eternal Son from the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Collect is addressed to the Father, the first Person in order of the Holy Trinity, and it is an earnest request that he will gather up his power and descend to his people (by the Holy Ghost) in order to help, succour and sustain them in the race they are running in their earthly pilgrimage towards the goal & fullness of the kingdom of heaven (see Hebrews 12:1).

In making this petition, God's people recognize that due to their sins of omission and commission they have failed to run in God's grace as gracefully and swiftly as they are called to do and ought to have done. Thus they look to the Father to provide them through his Son and by his Spirit, and in grace and mercy, the help they need. In particular they look to the "satisfaction of thy Son", to his perfect obedience of the Father in his life and in his death, as the basis for asking for divine mercy and assistance (i.e., to his active and passive obedience).

If God's people are to live as those who expect the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, then they need not only to watch and pray but also to live as the obedient and faithful servants of God, engaged daily in his service and running the race that is set before them.

The Collect ends in doxology to the Three Persons of the Blessed, Holy and Undivided Trinity.

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

## Collect

O Lord Jesu Christ, who at thy first coming didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee: Grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at thy second coming to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

This Collect was written in 1661 by Bishop Cosin of Durham and inserted into the 1662 edition of *The Book of Common Prayer*, to replace the Collect that had been in there since the first edition of 1549. This was very brief: “LORD, we beseech thee, give ear to our prayers, and by thy gracious visitation lighten the darkness of our heart...”


**The Address.** In *The Book of Common Prayer* of 1662 only three Collects are addressed to the Incarnate Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Advent 3, St Stephen’s Day & Lent 1) while the rest are addressed to God, the Father. Here Jesus of Nazareth is thought of as the exalted Messiah, who has been given the name of “the Lord” by his Father. He reigns in heaven at the right hand of the Father as the Lord of lords and King of kings over the whole universe and also over the kingdom of the Father, wherein are all the redeemed and holy angels.

**The Recollection.** As we address the Lord Jesus Christ, we recall in his presence an aspect of that which he has done in salvation history in order for it to become the basis for our specific petition to him. And what we recall is that He as the Lord of history and salvation caused John the Baptist to prepare the way for himself, as the Messiah of Israel, and for his messianic ministry of bringing the message and power of the kingdom of God from heaven to earth. We are not here presuming to tell the Lord Jesus what He already knows perfectly; but, rather, we are remembering in his presence what we need to have in mind in this act of prayer.

**The Petition.** God’s people pray especially this Sunday and during the week for those who are ordained ministers, that they may be faithful heralds of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ even as John the Baptist was a faithful herald of the ministry of the Messiah at the First Coming. The description of a Christian minister (from the original Greek words of the NT) is in terms of a rower (*huperetes*) in the Church’s galley and as a steward (dispenser/housekeeper) in the household of God. As slaves/rowers in the Church’s galley, ministers receive orders and the timing of their rowing from the Captain, who is also their pilot on the voyage. As stewards or housekeepers, ministers also serve those who attend Christ’s Banquet with that which the Lord himself has provided (see the Epistle reading). If the ministers are faithful as rowers and stewards they will be God’s agents in bring people to repentance from sin and commitment to holiness and service of the Lord.

This prayer for clergy is particularly meaningful on this Sunday for Advent 3 is an ember week and Advent 4 is traditionally a time for ordinations. **The Aspiration.** No-one knows when the Lord Jesus will return to earth in power and great glory and accompanied by the



holy angels. Yet it is most necessary that the household of God, the disciples  **5** of the Lord Jesus Christ, be in such a state of faithfulness, godliness and preparedness, that they may be found an acceptable people at his Parousia/Appearing. They want to hear at the Judgement his words, “Well done thou good and faithful servant.”

The Termination. Since this Collect is addressed to the Second Person of the Holy, Blessed Trinity, the ending unites Him with the First and Third Persons in a brief doxology. There are three Persons, each of whom possesses in totality the One Godhead or Divinity/Deity and thus we say, “Three Persons and One God. A Unity in Trinity and a Trinity in Unity.”

## Second Sunday in Advent

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

### Collect

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Collect Commentary


The Second Sunday in Advent, BIBLE SUNDAY

The Collect in The Book of Common Prayer (1662) was written by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. It reflects the concern of the English Reformers that the Scriptures assume their proper authority and place, not only for doctrine and in worship, but also in daily living.

It is most fitting that at the beginning of the Christian Year the gift from God of the Holy Scriptures is celebrated by the Household of God. We, who are Christians, live in the light of the First Coming in humility of the Lord Jesus even as we look for his Second Coming in glory (see the Collect for Advent 1 for the Two Comings). All the time in this interim period of grace we are to be taught by his sacred Word, the Holy Scriptures.

This Collect is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is called “Blessed Lord.” We are familiar with such expressions as “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel” (Luke 1:68) and “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). The general idea is that God, the Creator, is blessed (praised and adored) by all his creation and/or by his covenant people - the Latin would be *benedictus*. Then there is the further idea (see 1 Timothy 1:11 & 6:15) of God being “blessed” in the sense that his character and attributes are glorious and full of eternal beauty - the Latin would be *beatus*. Here it is *benedictus* (*Benedicte Domine*). Thus the Father is the Blessed Lord who is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and praised and adored by all creation and especially by the redeemed thereof.

Having identified and addressed the One to whom we desire to offer prayer, we then engage in a moment of meditative prayer, or recollection, as we remember a most significant fact in the relation of grace between God the Holy Trinity and man. He has caused all Holy

Scriptures - the Canon with Two Testaments - to be written (and gathered and translated) for our benefit, salvation, sanctification, instruction and education.  6

And he has given this amazing gift to his people to be used under his perpetual care as a permanent possession for our good and his glory.

Being in the presence of the Lord Jesus and suitably recollected by the help of his Spirit, we are in a position to offer our basic and extensive petition. And this begins with a strong verb, "Grant." This verb carries the sense of being wholly and totally in need of the mercy of the One to whom supplication is offered. In other words, we who make this petition do really and truly need his favour and help in order to benefit from the supremely wonderful gift that he has placed in the hands of holy mother Church, even the Holy Scriptures.

The verbs used - hear, read, mark, learn & inwardly digest - are so arranged as to suggest perhaps the movement from initial, superficial acquaintance with the content of the Bible to the profoundest reception of that content deep in the soul, in the heart, mind and will, and in the fear of God. To hear is to hear both with the outer ear and with the inner ear and thus hear in the mind and the conscience, where the seed of the word of God must be sown. To read (which was not possible for all in the 16th century) is yet another route for the word to enter the soul. To mark is to pay close attention to what is heard and/or read, to meditate upon it, to chew the cud as it were. To learn is to commit to memory the essentials of what is heard and read. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). To digest the word of God can only occur when there has been the receiving, the noting, the meditating and the remembering, for, in digestion, the spiritual food (be it the milk or the solid food) enters the "blood stream" of the soul. "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103).

The result of the right reception of the Word of God is that (a) by patience; and (b) by the comfort of God's Word, we embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life ("blessed" here is *beatus*, pointing to the unique majestic glory of the Second Coming, which is the Christian hope). The patience is the patient waiting for the Second Coming of Christ to bring to an end this evil age and to inaugurate the age of the kingdom of God. And the "blessed hope" is also the glorious Appearing, the Second Coming of the Saviour. Thus a basic theme of the Collect is the right use of Scripture as a means of preparing for the Second Advent as we live in the Light of the first Advent. In other words, though it is a very appropriate prayer for the beginning of Advent and of the Church Year, it is also a prayer that is suitable every day and week!

And it ends with the full recognition that it is only through, by, in and with Christ Jesus that we go to the Father for succour and the Father comes to us with gifts and blessings.

The Gospel places before us one of the basic themes of Advent, the Second Coming in glory of the Lord Jesus Christ to judge the living and the dead. With the use of the Scriptures, we are to be prepared, to watch and to pray.

# The Sunday next before Advent



*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

## Collect

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## Collect Commentary

As this is the last Collect of the Christian Year, we may regard it as summing up in petition a major theme of the Collects, Epistles & Gospels for the Year past. And this theme may be simply stated: in the Christian life, unless the human will is engaged then all thought and feeling may be, or even are, wasted.

One of the great spiritual diseases of the Church and of individual Christians is lethargy. We remain content with where we are on the highway of holiness and in the climbing of Mount Zion. There is always tomorrow, we say to ourselves; then we can strive the more. Today we can relax! As pilgrims heading for the celestial city we are tempted to take too many rests on the way and thus do not seek to conquer more of the terrain & path in front of us.

The call is to press on towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14). We are often deaf and stationary and do not pay heed to that call. We need to be awakened, stirred up and energized to make headway!

So the major petition of this Collect is that God the Father will cause the Holy Ghost to stir up our lazy and inactive wills and to rouse us from the slumber of complacency. Yet, as we know, a fire when stirred up does not always blaze and a sleeper, when roused, does not always get up! In the final analysis we are given a measure of freedom by our Creator so that we can respond to his call as persons with dignity and freedom and in love. This said, it is also true to say that our wills are naturally weak and need divine inspiration and assistance in order to be directed towards the glorifying of God in good works.

Thus there must be both stirring up from heaven and wholehearted cooperation by ourselves to the motions of the Spirit in our souls.

We can have the best of intentions and we can have the sweetest of feelings about those intentions but unless the will is engaged then there is no action! And action by the will is inspired and energized by the Spirit in souls that are prepared to do what is right.

In this prayer, God is thought of as the Judge who is the Lord of the harvest. Our reward (though altogether undeserved) will be apportioned to the measure of the good fruit that we produce. Obviously, we cannot bring forth plenteously such good fruit without an un-failing perseverance and unceasing exertion which only a resolved will can supply. Let us ponder for a moment the amount of work that is necessary to produce a good harvest in the world of nature. The farmer has to accept the conditions and provisions of nature (e.g., sunshine & rain, wind and frost) and persevere week by week in his varied tasks for many months until he sees the purpose of his labour in the plenteous harvest. If he did not prune

and water, feed and protect, there would be a reduced harvest or none at all. Likewise, there is no fruit of the Spirit produced in our lives if we simply sit back and do not cooperate day by day, week by week, with the Spirit of the Lord, who assists us to cultivate our souls, intellect, emotions and will, aright.

The idea of plenteous reward for good works freely and lovingly done for the glory of God is a scriptural doctrine. Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:9); Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58). Of course, the rewards are at the end of the age and pertain to the life of the world to come.

Then, let us be clear, we offer this prayer not on the basis of our own merits and achievements (assuming we have any!) but through the one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, in and through whom alone there will be reward for the faithful in the age to come.

Finally, what would this Collect have been like if Cranmer had translated it fairly literally? Here it is:

Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they, more readily following after the effect of thy divine working, may obtain from thy fatherly goodness larger assistances [of grace]. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Here the reliance of the weak human will on the divine working, the action of the Holy Ghost, is very clear. Further, it is assumed that the more we co-operate with the action of God in and upon our souls, the more we shall experience the grace of our heavenly Father and grants of his mercy in our lives in all kinds of situations and ways. Thus the meaning of the original Latin Collect and that of Cranmers are complementary.

It is important to notice that both Collects do not reduce Christianity merely to a religion of and for strong wills. It is a Christian Faith which requires the involvement of the whole soul, including the will, but it is not a graceless religion for a will energized by the Holy Ghost looks to please and glorify God and not exalt human achievement.

Let us end this Christian Year. and enter into the new one beginning on Advent Sunday, as those who intend to persevere in the Christian pilgrimage even as we are energised and guided by the Spirit of the Lord. The Epistle and Gospel for this last week prepare us for the great theme of Advent ñ the coming of the Incarnate Son of God in humility and then in glory.



*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men: Grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

This prayer originated in the Gelasian Sacramentary and passed into the Sarum Missal before being translated from Latin into English for the 1549 Prayer Book. Finally, it was revised for the 1662 Prayer Book. As it stands, it is as near a perfect specimen of a Collect form of prayer as one could wish to see.

There is the Address or Invocation - to Almighty God; then there is the Recital of a specific doctrine concerning Gods power in relation to man, achieved grammatically by means of the relative clause; this is followed by the long Petition, beginning with the strong verb, Grant, which petition is wholly based upon the foundation of the doctrine already remembered and rehearsed; and in turn the petition is followed by the Aspiration - that so our hearts may surely there be fixed. The Collect closes with the Pleading in the Name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

The foundation for the petition recalls before God and recites the biblical teaching that he alone, and only he, is able to order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men. These words of the initial relative clause balance perfectly with the two clauses of the actual petition that follows. That is, the unruly wills corresponds to the love of that which God commands, while the unruly affections corresponds to the desire of that which God promises.

We know from sacred Scripture and the experience of the saints that God the Father brings the wills and emotions/affections of sinful persons into order out of disorder, by the secret and hidden operations of the Holy Ghost. In this way human minds, hearts and wills are transformed by grace, and the change wrought in them is of such a nature that those persons in whom the Holy Ghost has so worked can only say with certainty that they know and feel that a change has taken place. They cannot tell how it occurred for that belongs to the secret operations of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

The true Christian is one who delights in and loves what God commands. He is also one who seeks to obey Gods holy law, simply because he loves God and wants to do what God declares to be good and true and right. So the petition is that thy people may love the thing which thou commandest.

But it is also important that the Christian loves God and his law as, simultaneously, he also desires what God promises to his elect people - thus the aspiration. This will be so when his affections are set upon the heavenly realm where Christ rules at the Fathers right hand and where the society of angels and saints adore and praise Jesus Christ as Lord of lords and King of kings in all his authority and beauty.

The Christian who loves Gods law and desires to be with Christ in heaven will find that,

in the varied and many changing circumstances of life, his central focus will be not in this world as such but on Christ Jesus in heaven, the center of all true and lasting joy. And the more he is focused on Christ the more will he be desirous and able to love God and his law and readily and happily obey him. He will rejoice with exceeding great joy as he loves the Lord and does his will, with his eyes of faith looking above where Christ is in all his glory. And with such a godly mind he will be the more useful on earth!

It is by making men loyal to his will, and to the hope of glory which he holds out to them in the Gospel, that God joins them together in the same mind and the same judgment. His precept and promise are the magnetic power which draw them into union one with another, and they are also the cement which holds them there, beginning in this age and being fulfilled in the glorious age to come.

Since there is one High Priest and one Mediator in heaven, Jesus Christ the resurrected Lord, the Prayer is offered to the Father in his Name.

Thus we have here not merely a perfectly formed Prayer but also a perfectly biblical Prayer. All that remains is that we pray it and it is fulfilled in our lives.

## Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Grant, we beseech thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace; that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

God never does things by quarters, thirds or halves. The verb to grant from the Latin largire has the sense of grant largely or bountifully. We know that God is wont to give more than we either desire or deserve (Trinity 12, Collect), and that when he feeds a multitude there remain of fragments twelve full baskets (Matthew 14:20).

We can humbly yet boldly use the verb grant and address the Almighty Father as the merciful Lord because of the expiation and propitiation provided for our sins at Calvary by the Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The Father has demonstrated in the fullest and clearest way in the Incarnation, Death and Exaltation of Jesus that he loves us with an infinite and eternal love and that he is ready to give unto us pardon, remission and forgiveness of our sins, to reckon us to be righteous in his sight, justified by faith, and to adopt us as his children.

In fact not only is the Father, because of the merits of his Son, always ready to be in a state of peace or reconciliation with us, so that we are no longer his enemies, but he is also desirous to place in our souls by the presence of the Holy Ghost that internal peace, which passes understanding and which endures through pain and tribulation, persecution and trials.

In response to such a bountiful provision by the grace and mercy of the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, we ought to be enthusiastic about and consecrated to

the service of God, with a mind, heart and will that are focused.

The Epistle describes the armour that God supplies to his children so that they can truly be his soldiers, fighting for righteousness against sin and Satan.

The Gospel describes the second sign or miracle performed by Jesus. For those with eyes to see this sign reveals the identity of Jesus, the Son of God incarnate.

## Twentieth Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O Almighty and most merciful God, of thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech thee, from all things that may hurt us; that we, being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that thou wouldest have done; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### Collect Commentary

We address God the Father as both omnipotent, everlastingly and infinitely powerful, and as most merciful, abounding in mercy towards sinners such as we are. But that is not the end, for we also address him as possessing within himself towards his creatures bountiful goodness, an overflowing, inexhaustible reservoir of goodness from which it is his desire and determination to secure our true & everlasting good.

Of such a Lord God we not merely ask but we beseech that he will so watch over us in his superlative power, mercy and goodness that we shall be kept from all things ñ spiritual and physical, material and immaterial ñ that may hurt us as whole beings (as persons with body and soul). We desire to be preserved by the grace of God as whole creatures from any harm intended against us by the world, the flesh and the devil. There is a divine, unifying connection between body & soul and harm to the one affects the other.

The desire to be free from harm is not for self-satisfaction or for a sense of self-worth; rather it is so that we are alert and ready in mind, heart and will to do what God commands and calls us to do as his servants in his world for his glory. We are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world ñ being and doing that which we are taught by the Holy Ghost to be the will of God for us today. And, further, we are to do what the Lord commands and requires of us cheerfully, rejoicing! As the appointed Epistle declares: Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart.

And all our prayer is offered to the Father through the Incarnate Son, the only Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ who is the Lord. It is to his Messianic Banquet that sinners are called, as the appointed Gospel declares.

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O God, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee: Mercifully grant, that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

We can only genuinely desire to please the Lord our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, if and when he inspires us so to do. In and of ourselves, because our natures are infected by sin, we cannot produce by our own effort the purity of heart, mind and will that is necessary to worship the Lord God in the beauty of holiness and in spirit and in truth.

To recognize this powerlessness within ourselves is to begin to move into the sphere where we can worship God aright, for the confession before the LORD of our weakness and sin, our impotency and our spiritual sickness, is the beginning of his true worship and praise. And this beginning occurs because of his prevenient grace!

Therefore, we invoke our Father in heaven, by his great mercy and because of his marvellous grace, to send us the assistance that we need in order to be what he calls us to be. We ask for the gift and presence of the Holy Ghost ñ the One who comes in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, bearing his virtues and graces ñ to indwell our souls that we may be rightly inspired, directed and guided in how we are to please our Creator, Redeemer & Father, in what we think and say and do.

Let us so pray and let us be so directed by the personal presence of the Third Person of the Blessed, Holy and Undivided Trinity.

The Epistle is a vigorous call to holiness of life as we walk with Christ and the Gospel is a proclamation of the power of Christ to save, help and guide us.



*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

LORD, we beseech thee, grant thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow thee the only God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

The Almighty Father, who is the Father of the only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, is addressed as LORD, the self-existent holy Being, who is the Creator of heaven and earth, and Judge of all men.

He is not merely asked but he is also beseeched ñ that is, asked with a sense of urgency in a spirit of humility and submission before Him. Out of his great mercy and abundant grace he is asked to hear and grant ñ as a great favour to those who know they do not deserve favour ñ two petitions from his covenant people.

First of all, the inner strength and motivation to face real, daily temptations that if not resisted actually lead to the committing of sin against God. The temptations come from three basic sources ñ the world (human society and culture as organised and existing without submission to Gods law & with the influence therein of evil people); the flesh ñ human nature in its weakness and with its bias to assert the self and distrust God; and the devil ñ the spiritual being who has himself rebelled against Gods holy law and now seeks to persuade others to do the same. Resist the devil and he will flee from you, said James (iv.7).

In the second place, with contrite, cleansed and pure hearts and minds to follow with devotion and with zeal the will, purpose and commandments of the Almighty Father, as these are revealed and made known in the life, teaching, example and saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. While there are many kings and lords, rulers and authorities in the world, there is only ONE living and true God ñ thus the wording of the petition.

The first petition is made so that we do not go in the wrong direction while the second is made that we actually do go in the right direction, that is we follow Gods signposts and walk in his ways. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8).

In the original Latin this one-sentence Collect was composed in the fifth century and used in the Mass for many centuries. Archbishop Cranmer translated it for the original English Prayer Book of 1549 and Bishop Cosin improved the translation for the edition of the Prayer Book of 1662 (the edition that has been translated into around 150 languages).

From the Epistle the people of God are encouraged to receive the fullness that is available to them because of their union with Jesus Christ (they are in Christ); and in the Gospel they are reminded that their vocation on earth and in heaven is never less than to love God with the whole of their beings, with heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love others heartily in the love of God.

## Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

LORD, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

Here we address the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as the LORD, in Hebrew YHWH, the revealed Name of God given to Moses at the burning bush in the wilderness (Exodus 3). He is I AM WHO I AM and I AM WHO I SHALL BE and I AM & SHALL BE WHO I WAS. He is the utterly faithful One from generation to generation and from age to age. And his Son, the One Mediator between God and Man, who also shares the name of LORD is the same yesterday, today and for ever (Hebrews 13:8).

To this eternally existing, infinite and ineffable God, who came to us in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of the almighty Father, we are most highly privileged to be able to bring our petitions and to offer our praise and thanksgiving.

Here we use a verb Prevent whose meaning in this context is the old one *ñ* to anticipate, to forestall, to be beforehand with. And we make two petitions which are connected to each other. First of all, we ask that the grace (the personal presence and unmerited mercy) of God (that is as the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, present in the world as the Spirit of Christ) may always both go before us and come behind us, so that we are always surrounded on all sides by the divine omnipresence and infinite care. In the second place, being thus placed within the gracious favour of God, we ask that we shall continually respond in faith and faithfulness to be and do that which is pleasing in his sight -- loving God with all our being & loving our neighbour as ourselves.

There is great strength in the word always. We need Gods personal presence and assistance not sometimes, not even often; but, rather, always. We may wish to compare this Collect for Trinity XVII with the Fourth Collect at the end of the Order for Holy Communion where we pray, Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour That is, we ask God, as it were, to bring up the rear as his Church moves through space and time. The same Collect also asks, Further us with thy continual help. Here, we ask God to surround us and to go before us with his Presence.

Let us be clear that the LORD, the Blessed, Holy and Undivided Trinity of the Father, together with the Son and the Holy Ghost, is wholly desirous of being with his children in a complete and satisfying way for their salvation and their general good. His promises of his presence and his help are many. What he looks for in us is faith and faithfulness so that we are truly, consciously and continually his people and he is known by us always as our covenant God.

The Epistle reminds us of the Christian vocation which always includes maintaining the unity of the church. The Gospel proclaims the virtue of humility before God and amongst men.

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O LORD, we beseech thee, let thy continual pity cleanse and defend thy Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without thy succour, preserve it evermore by thy help and goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

Here we recognise that the Church on earth needs both cleansing by the Divine Pardon and defence by the Divine Providence.

The Church, militant here on earth, is engaged in a spiritual war against the world, the flesh and the devil, and this is so even when it seems that the local society & government are partially supportive of the presence and aims of the Church of God. It is so easy for the refinements and ethos of the world to be absorbed by the Church and for them to affect her worship, her doctrine, her discipline, her ways of operation and so on, so that she is compromised and falls short of the fullness of her vocation.

Thus the Church not merely asks but beseeches (asks with intensity of feeling and conviction) the Lord our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to help. In a vital sense this is what the Church does in part daily in her Morning and Evening Prayer and when she celebrates the Holy Communion. She confesses her sins and asks for the divine forgiveness. But this Collect contains a special, extra request because of a felt and real need. The Church needs the continued and continual Pity/Mercy of God both to cleanse her members and to defend them from all adversity, especially from enemies of the soul. And by members are meant both clergy and laity, bishops and doorkeepers.

Any society or organisation can get to the point where it begins to think that it is self-sufficient. The Church can begin to think that she is doing pretty well with a casual relation to God. But when she sees the true situation, that she is at war with real enemies of Christ & his Gospel, then she knows that she cannot continue as his army without his continued and continual succour. Further, she knows that she cannot stand firm today and tomorrow without his presence, help and goodness.

Today, it is common to speak of the secularisation of Christianity and of the accommodation of the agenda of the Church to that of humane and liberal society. And such is basically true of the denominations of the Western world. So this is surely a Prayer to be offered by all who know and feel that the Church in the West is far too much accommodated to the society and not sufficiently critical of its norms and ethos. We are to be in the world and for the world but NOT of the world.

The Epistle provides us with an example of the prayers of the apostle Paul and thereby encourages not only in prayer but in right praying. The Gospel presents Jesus who is the Resurrection and the Life and who has the power to bring back to life dormant and apostate churches.

## Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Keep, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy Church with thy perpetual mercy; and, because the frailty of man without thee cannot but fall, keep us every by thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

Let us notice here in the first petition a strange but most relevant fact. God the Father is implored to keep his Church (for which his Son shed his precious blood) not with his Fatherly Care, not with his Watchful Providence and not with the guardianship of his holy Archangels and angels, but with his Perpetual Mercy.

If man ñ we, all of us ñ is to be saved and secured from major spiritual and moral injuries with which Satan, the world (Zeitgeist) and the flesh threaten him, it can only be by the continual & perpetual exercise of the Fathers mercy in the name and for the sake of his Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our conviction is that from that heavenly mercy proceed abundant blessings of many and varied kinds, descending upon those who seek the Lord and find him.

Let us also recognize, as does the Collect, that considered as moral and spiritual beings who stand before God, the all-holy, the all-seeing and the all-knowing One, we are not only mortal but also frail. We possess the ancient disease of inbred, original sin and because of it we cannot truly, in and of ourselves, truly help ourselves into the way and enjoyment of Gods salvation.

Thus we pray again for help, the presence of the Holy Ghost indwelling our souls so that he elevates our affections, inspires our thinking and energises our wills in order to guide us away from that which will harm us and towards that which will protect and bless us. Many things exist to harm us, even things which, in and of themselves, are good but for you or for me. In practice, they are the cause of temptation and sin. Happily there are many things in Gods creation, and especially in the provisions of the new creation of grace and mercy, that are for the cleansing, renewing, inspiring and saving of our souls and bodies.

As the Household of God and the Body of Christ we are in the fishing boat, the Ark of the Lord, as it were on the high seas, and the Lord is with us to make sure that the boat does not sink, that the sea is calmed and that we arrive at our heavenly destination rejoicing in the Lord.

The Epistle points us to the Cross of Christ, in which alone we are to glory. The Gospel takes us into the Sermon on the Mount for instruction in the ways of the Kingdom of God.



*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope and charity; and, that we may obtain that which thou dost promise, make us to love that which thou dost command; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

Here the assembled people of God make two large requests of their heavenly Father. First of all, presuming that they have, at least in small measure, the basic Christian virtues in their souls, they pray for the increase of them, of their quality and scope. Give unto us the increase of faith, hope and charity. In the second place, because they long to receive what God has promised to his faithful people, both now and in the age to come, they ask that especially the virtue of love/charity [caritas, agape] grows in them so that they begin truly to love each day and with consistency what God commands.

It has been said that the theological virtues of faith, hope and love/charity are the right relation of the reason, the imagination, and the will, to the spiritual world presented in divine Revelation and called things invisible in the Nicene Creed. Faith is in the convictions of the understanding; Hope pictures the promised future by an exercise of the imagination, and Love is a preference for the true good and seated in the will.

Faith, hope and charity/love also have a certain correspondence to past, present and future. In large part Faith looks back to the revelation of God in word and in deed, and especially in the Incarnate Son, recorded in Holy Scripture and witnessed by tradition. But faith propels us into the future for it is the substance of things hoped for ñ the things God has promised in, through and with Christ. So faith is joined to Hope in and by which we truly look forward in humble confidence to the fulfilment of Gods purposes and will for us and for the universe. But we do not live merely in memories of the past and anticipations of the future, there is Love. We are to love our neighbour as ourselves, to love on another as Christ loved us, and to fulfil all the commands of the law by loving God and man.

Faith is well illustrated and presented in the Gospel for this week and in the Epistle the virtues as fruit of the indwelling Spirit are contrasted with the works of the flesh.

These extensive and profound requests can & should be made because they are address to the Almighty and the Everlasting GOD and furthermore they rise to Him in the Name and Person of the High Priest and Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ!

## Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service: Grant, we beseech thee, that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### Collect Commentary

This is most certainly a prayer that assumes that human beings are made in the image of God to be his servants not only in this life but in the age to come. They are creatures who by Gods mercy look forward to a rich, full and everlasting life in the kingdom of God, where their service of the Lord will be richer and fuller and progress from glory to glory. However, in this prayer is also the biblical assumption that the fullness and quality of the life to be enjoyed in the age to come is related to the type of life that is lived in this evil age.

The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is addressed as the Almighty (the Sovereign, All-powerful) and as merciful (showing pity and love to the undeserving). Then, in bowing before his presence (by the device grammatically of the relative clause) his people remember that their vocation in this world, as Christians in the Household of God, is that they serve God fruitfully even as they daily pray, Thy will be done. Also they remember that their right serving of their God and Father is dependent upon his gift to them of grace, mercy, wisdom and strength. The little word only emphasises that they are wholly dependent on Gods help to serve him aright.

If the vocation of the creature is to serve the Creator, who is the Father and the Judge, in the name and merits of Christ Jesus, then it is most appropriate for the people of God to ask for spiritual strength to offer this service daily in the right mind and attitude and with appropriate fervour and consecration. Grant, we beseech thee, is an emphatic way of showing total dependence and asking for total help with the intention of offering complete service.

The end of man is to enjoy and glorify God for ever. The Gospels and Epistles place before Christian believers an array of promises of eternal life with rewards for those who, in this world and life, faithfully serve the Lord and their fellow men. Implied in the words of petition is a warning ñ that we may fail to attain to the enjoyment of the content of the promises of heavenly bliss.

This prayer is offered not only through the one Mediator, Jesus Christ, but specifically through the merits of the same Lord, for the attainment of the promises is only possible by what he has done for us and for our salvation.

From the Epistle we learn of the centrality of Christ in the purposes of God and that it is in, with and through him that we have a right relation with the Father through the Holy Ghost.

From the Gospel we learn that loving God also requires the loving of the neighbour and who in reality and fact the neighbour is.

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Almighty and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve: Pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord. Amen

## Collect Commentary

Here we address the Lord our God on the basis of two convictions concerning him, convictions whose content we have learned from Holy Scripture from the Parable of the Prodigal Son, for example (Luke 15:20).

First of all, we speak to God knowing that in his infinite compassion and mercy he is always more ready and prepared to hear our prayers and than we are to engage in prayer, petition, supplication and intercession to him. This conviction serves to make us humble and confident.

Then, secondly, we speak to God knowing that he is wont (accustomed in his normal relation to sinners) to be much more generous to those who make supplication to him than they can possibly put into words or deserve. For they ask out of the human context of sin and finitude and God hears in the divine context of grace and infinite knowledge.

Thus, knowing Gods character, we are bold in our petitions asking that He pours down upon us, out of the abundance of the sea of his mercy, two gifts of his grace. First, we ask for forgiveness for all our sins, especially those concerning which we are especially embarrassed and fearful; and secondly we ask for those further gifts which are needed to perfect our Christian lives, making us worthy servants of such a gracious Master. What these gifts are for each and every one of us we leave to Gods wisdom, as we surely ask that they be given unto us as truly good things.

We make sure to offer all our prayer in the Name of and by the Merits of and through the Mediatorship of the Lord Jesus Christ. For in him and with him and through him we are heard by the Father in heaven as we ask in faith. As the Epistle declares Christians belong to a new era, a new epoch, a new covenant and a new relation with God who is their all-sufficiency. And as the Gospel make clear, Jesus hath done all things [for us and for our salvation] well.

## Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O God, who declarest thy almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity: Mercifully grant unto us such a measure of thy grace, that we, running the way of thy commandments, may obtain thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

The petition we offer to God the Father here is firmly based upon the doctrine that we remember in his presence from his Revelation as we make use of the relative clause (who declarest). This doctrine is the amazing teaching that God the Father manifests and reveals his omnipotence primarily when he makes known and shows his mercy and pity to undeserving sinners. And to state this is to speak of the great Event of propitiation and expiation at the Cross of Calvary where the Incarnate Son of God shed his blood as a sacrifice for sin, in order to reconcile us to God, his Father. Here the almighty power and generosity of God, that created the universe and keeps it in motion, dealt with the enormity of human sin and cosmic evil and by overcoming them brought in for the world salvation, redemption, reconciliation, pardon, justification and sanctification.

On the basis of the meritorious death of the Lord Jesus Christ, we ask God in his great mercy to grant us so large a measure of his abundant grace that we may live in such a way as to please him and arrive at our heavenly home. Without grace ñ the personal presence of the Holy Ghost representing the Lord Jesus with us ñ we cannot begin to please him! The way to please the Lord is to live faithfully in the way of his holy law, his commandments, for in such obedience we actually obtain, by his design, his promises concerning his abiding presence and the gift of everlasting life and heavenly reward. In fact, by his grace we shall become joint and fellow partakers of the heavenly reward with all the saints as we not merely walk but run in obedience to his Law. Thus we shall lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.

In the Epistle we read of the Saving Events of the Cross and Resurrection that assured the victory over evil, sin, death, Satan and hell. In the Gospel we read of the right relation we ought to seek and have before God our Father repentant sinners.



## Ninth Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Grant to us, Lord, we beseech thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do anything that is good without thee, may by thee be enabled to live according to thy will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

This is a powerful petition in which we ask God to conform us, both internally and externally, to his righteousness (to what is rightful). Further, there is the honest admission that, in and of ourselves, that is in our wisdom and strength, we cannot please God by seeking to live what we consider to be the righteous and good life. (Note that this Collect is true to the meaning of the original Latin prayer, which is so terse that a literal translation of the second part would be, that we, who cannot even exist without thee, may have strength to live according to thee.)

Today we learn from our society and in our education and culture that each of us is an autonomous being. That is, I am in charge of my life and destiny and so are you! We think of the human being as being the centre of the universe and if we think of God at all in relation to the world it is as an Extra.

In contrast, genuine Christian thinking sees a person in total dependence upon God for his creation, his existence, his sustenance, his salvation and his eternal destiny. Whatever measure of free will and free determination a person possesses is itself from God and is only beneficial if conformed to the known will of God.

True freedom is not known in the exercise of personal autonomy and pursuing ones own selfish will, but rather in thinking according to Gods ways and purposes and in doing his will, assisted and guided by his revelation and his Spirit. That is, the genuine life of righteousness and goodness is following the Way of Jesus Christ as his Spirit indwells the heart and mind and directs the will.

This Collect helps us to move from the mindset and spirit of the fallen world and evil age into the mindset and spirit of the kingdom of heaven and of Gods righteousness. And it presupposes that we are diligent readers of the sacred Scriptures where the mind and will of God is revealed to the Church.

The Epistle recalls the history of the Israelites in the wilderness in order to provide for us instruction in the moral and spiritual dangers we face and how they are to be overcome. The Gospel provides the Parable of the Unjust Steward in order to impress upon us the need and duty to make wise use of the present in providing for the life of the age to come.

## Eighth Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O God whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and on earth: We humbly beseech thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

Christians believe, teach and confess that God is in final and ultimate control of everything that occurs in the cosmos and in the heaven of heavens, where are the angels. There is no space or time which is not governed by his will. Hes got the whole wide world in His hand.

Since God is the sole Creator of the universe, of things visible and invisible, it follows that he is the Sustainer and Governor of the same. This is not to say that the world we know is without problems and pain. God governs it together with its sin and shame and does so according to his own pure and wise purposes and plans. In the End the whole cosmos will freely submit to his Authority, after which his providence will not need to take into account human and angelic rebellion, evil and sin. Then the whole created sphere will be filled with his glory.

God is the God of Order. There is holy Order within the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and so God looks to bring order to his world, our home which is disordered by our sin.

If God the Father by the working of his Spirit is truly governing all things and working events for the long-term spiritual good and salvation of his elect people, then it is appropriate that these same people should cooperate with him as far as in them lies. They should ask of him what they know is pleasing to him. So they ask that he prevents from harming them all hurtful things - including everything from evil spirits through bad friends to harsh employers; and at the same time that he gives them those things which will profit them as disciples of Christ and sojourners and pilgrims on earth - good Christian worship, teaching and fellowship, fine opportunities for meditation and prayer, open doors for Christian service and so on.

Gods providence brings good out of evil for his adopted children and so what may seem at first sight and on the surface to be hurtful things may prove to be profitable because what begins as apparently evil finally comes out as good! In fact, when Gods adopted children are submitted to him in faith, hope and love, then they find that all things that come their way turn out to be for their true good and everlasting salvation.

God not only guides his people by his providence but he also ministers to them within their souls through the indwelling Spirit (see the Epistle, Romans 8:12ff.). His desire is that his people shall enter the kingdom of heaven because they do his will on earth (see the Gospel, Matthew 7:15ff.).

## Seventh Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Lord of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of thy name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

God the Father is addressed as the LORD, the One who has Authority and Strength/Force, not merely authority but authority with power. He is well able to do what in his infinite wisdom and love he chooses to do. And such is what we would expect to be so of the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

The Father is also remembered and recalled as the Almighty Lord who is both the maker and the giver of all good things, the One to whom belongs everything that is most excellent. By these words we recall James 1:17, Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

The petition in this Collect is all about the increase of genuine religion in our hearts, which is only brought about by two divine processes. These are (a) Gods nurturing of what he has planted in our hearts; and (b) his guarding and keeping what he has nurtured.

Our human nature, even when highly educated and formed into good habits, does not love the Name of God, even as a garden does not grow rose trees naturally. God the Gardener has to plant the love of his Name in our hearts, He has to nurture that seed of love as he also has to feed it. It is important to recognise that for the biblical writers, the Name of God reflects his revealed character and thus in loving the hallowed Name we love God and what is made known to us from him.

One obvious duty arising from this petition is that of reading in the Bible of the character of God, of thinking about and meditating upon that character, and even rising to the heights of contemplating God as he is known through his revealed character.

Therefore we ask that God will graft, increase & nourish the seed he sows and will through his Fatherly mercy and affection keep that seed growing until it blossoms and magnifies his Name.

We ask through our Lord Jesus Christ the One Mediator between God and man and the one, as the Gospel for this week declares, feeds the hungry with good things. Further, we ask through the same Jesus Christ from whom comes to believers the gift of eternal life as the Epistle declares.

## Sixth Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O God, who hast prepared for them that love thee such good things as pass mans understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

It seems reasonably sure that this Prayer is based on the words of St Paul as he quotes from Isaiah the prophet in 1 Corinthians 2:9, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. Of course, this Collect had a history in Latin before it was made into an English Collect by Archbishop Cranmer in 1549 and then slightly revised in 1661 for the Prayer Book of 1662.

The doctrine contained in the relative clause - who has prepared - is the mystery and yet the confidence of the Christian Hope. To be with the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven in the company of the saints and with all the angels and archangels and there to enjoy the beatific vision of the Father Almighty are the good things that pass our understanding. To live in perfect communion with the Holy Trinity [with the Father through the Son by the Holy Ghost] and in heavenly blessedness is the goal of the true Christian soul and the fulfilment of the promises of the Gospel.

But the enjoyment of God and the glorifying him for ever are only desirable and possible in and to those who truly love God - that is those who not merely love him as one amongst many, but who love him supremely and love others in the light of that love for him. The true quality of a saint is that he loves the Holy Trinity, the Father through the Son and with the Holy Ghost, chiefly and supremely and evaluates all else in the strength and light of this love.

And, since we are both sinful and morally weak, we can only love God in a way that is appropriate for loving our Creator, Redeemer and Judge, when he, as the Father, grants to us the gift and presence of his Holy Spirit, who brings the very love of God into our hearts, minds and wills. Thus it is this love, this divine and heavenly love, for which we ask here so that we can fulfil the law of God which requires us to love Him and our neighbour. In so doing we can experience by grace the fruit of such loving, including especially the enjoyment of the beatific vision of heaven.

The Lord Jesus in the Gospel for this week (Matthew 5) tells us that only in the possessing of a perfect righteousness can we enter into the kingdom of heaven. Happily, this is provided for us by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, as the Epistle for the week teaches. However, what we are reckoned by God the Father to be in Christ we are to strive to be in daily living.

St. Paul in the Epistle (Romans 6) tells us that it is only in union with Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, in his death, burial and resurrection that there can be genuine righteousness and therefore union with his Father and thus union with the Blessed, Holy and Undivided Trinity.



*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that thy Church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

This Prayer is a Petition, an intense and rich petition which contains two strong verbs, each of which particularly belong to the vocabulary of traditional English prayer, public and private. The verb to grant is most appropriately used (a) by creatures when thinking of the relation of their beneficent Creator to human beings made in his image and after his likeness, and (b) by sinners when thinking of the relation of their gracious Redeemer to them as undeserving and without claims upon him, except the Name of Jesus Christ. Further, the verb to beseech is an appropriate form of asking by such creatures and sinners as they face their Lord. It suggests that they are bowing low before him in deep humility recognizing his Majesty. They come not as friends asking for a favour or for a loan. They come as weak and undeserving, but yet they come in the faith of Jesus Christ.

And what do sinners being saved by grace desire and hope God will grant in response to their beseeching? They deeply desire that by his providence as the Governor of the universe he will so guide events in space and time that the Church of God will be able not merely to serve the Lord her God as best she can, but that she will serve him joyfully and in a calm yet committed way.

The Church, as a school for weak sinners and a hospital for sick disciples, here prays that she will not be placed in a world of tribulation and persecution (which has often been her vocation), but that there will be civil peace. Further, that there will be peace within the Church herself, free from internal schism and controversy. In this situation she will be able, by his guidance and in his strength, to love and serve him with joy, exceeding great joy, and also with a quiet mind, a meditating and convinced mind. In other words, as it is expressed in the Lords Prayer, to do his will on earth as it is done in heaven, where there is perfect peace and joy.

Of course, each of us can personalize this prayer desiring that the circumstances of our lives make it possible for us to serve God joyfully and with a quiet mind!

This kind of praying is offered in the biblical, lectionary context of the apostle Peter saying to the Lord, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord, (Gospel) and the word of God telling us: The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open unto their prayers (Epistle).

## Fourth Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O God, the protector of all that trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us thy mercy; that, thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal: Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christs sake our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

In this Collect we recognize our total dependence upon the protection, strength, holiness, mercy, providence and guidance of God our heavenly Father for the true living of the Christian life in this evil age and sinful world, and in preparation for the world to come.

We ask not only for the increase of Gods mercy towards us but that it may also be multiplied. It is as though we have in mind the increase in the widows oil in the ministry of Elijah (1 Kings 17:10-17) and the multiplication of the bread and fishes by our Lord (John 6:5-15). We are as those who have experienced Gods mercy in part yet who know that they need it urgently in greater part - and need it to be not only increased but also multiplied! What a daring petition!

The world we live in is made by God but is poisoned by sin. Thus in it we experience both blessings and temptations, encouragements and tribulation. We rise and we fall; we feel good and we feel bad. It is possible to pass through this world and be wholly absorbed by it - as we clearly see happening to many at the present time in the West. It is possible virtually to forget God as Creator, Judge and Redeemer, and live in this world as though we are responsible only to ourselves and that we are merely creatures of space and time who exercise our rights in full.

But we are made to enjoy and glorify God for ever; we are called to serve him in this world and the next and to enter into the next through the resurrection of the dead and the redemption of the body. If we see ourselves as made for eternity and not merely for space and time, then we shall pass through this world as those whose eyes are set upon Christ Jesus, the Lord, and in obedience to his command and call. The intensity of the Christian hope is well stated by the Epistle where St Paul writes of longing for the redemption of the body.

We certainly need Gods mercy to surround and fill us, his rule over us and his guidance known in our souls, if we are to negotiate our way through this world in such a way as always to remain citizens of heaven and disciples of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the new Jerusalem. In this world we are to live as those who reflect in their lives the character and virtue of the life that is to come, as the Gospel declares.

So our prayer ends with the intense verb, Grant. Grant all this, we ask of our heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, his Son and our Lord.

## Third Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O Lord, we beseech thee mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may by thy mighty aid be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

The content of the Epistle warns us that our adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. It then bids us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God our Father. This Collect is the humble deprecation (a prayer against evils that are lurking near to us or hanging over our heads) by which we seek to follow St Peters advice.

When we are faced by problems and tribulations, there should arise in our hearts a desire to bring them to God (who has thereby given to us in the moment of impending danger a hearty desire to pray). There is intensity in the verb, Grant, and this force is present in this petition that we make to God because his Spirit is touching our souls and inspiring us to cry out for divine help.

We ask that we be both defended (protected & preserved) from all dangers, enemies and adversities and also comforted in and through them. Gods aid is our defence and the consciousness of its real presence becomes and is our comfort.

By the providential gracious aid of the Lord we can sing:

Ye fainting saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

And with St Paul we can testify:

Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the holy Ghost which is given unto us (Romans 5:3ff).

The Gospel reading contains parables from Jesus which make clear how precious the individual person is to God and how that when he responds in repentance to Gods grace there is joy in heaven amongst the angelic hosts. Such knowledge in the believers heart obviously encourages him to call upon God in humble confidence when things appear to be going either well or not so well for him.

## Second Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O Lord, who never failest to help and govern them whom thou dost bring up in thy steadfast fear and love: Keep us, we beseech thee, under the protection of thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

Previous to the 1662 edition of The Book of Common Prayer this Collect was similar but shorter: Lord, make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy name; for thou never failest to help and govern them whom thou dost bring up in thy steadfast love

Let us focus on the petition in both these Collects.

As baptized Christians, members of the Household of God, we ask from God our Father that we shall have perpetually in our souls - minds, hearts and wills - two profound affections towards God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. And, further, we ask that we may have these two affections in our souls concurrently, not one for a while and then the other for a while, but both there together and always. We ask both for a perpetual fear of Gods holy Name and for a perpetual love of Gods holy Name. In biblical terms, the Name of God stands for the revealed Character of God, thus the Name represents God himself - that is either God the Father or God the Father together with his only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. Most of us should have no difficulty in thinking that we ought constantly to love Gods holy Name since the first and great commandment is that we are to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. Yet perhaps some of us have real difficulty in thinking it a duty to fear God constantly. Does not perfect love cast out fear (see 1 John 4:18)? Yes it does, the fear of punishment by God the holy Judge, the fear of hell-fire and the fear of condemnation, for there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

But there is another meaning of fear in the Bible and it is a profound sense of awe, submission and reverence of the creature before the all-Holy, all-Majestic God, Creator & Judge of heaven & earth, the Blessed, Holy and Undivided Trinity. This filial and godly fear in the soul of the child of God is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom in terms of Gods ways, will and purposes - as the Psalter testifies. Even those, who within the new covenant are brought near to God by the blood of Christ Jesus, and in whom the Spirit testifies to their spirits that they are the children of God the Father, ought never be other than Christians also filled with reverence and awe in their relation to God, who is always and ever the Infinite, Eternal Glorious and Holy One. Love with filial fear is like a ship without ballast; it has no steadfastness and it is wavering, fluctuating, unstable and uncertain. When we love God in reverence and filial fear, our love is not sentimental and sloppy but solid and secure.

When we fear God in love toward him, this fear is not fear of hell-fire or everlasting condemnation, but deep and profound humility & awe before his overwhelming greatness and holiness.

The more ardently we love God the more we fear him with filial reverence and awe: and the more we ardently fear God the more we love him with all our being.

Make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy Name.



## First Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping of thy commandments we may please thee both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

The Christian Name of God is TRINITY (Trinitas, in Latin), for the simple reason that the one, true and living God is triune - the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons. Last Sunday was Trinity Sunday and for the rest of the Christian Year, until Advent, the names of the Sundays are after [the Sunday celebrating the] Trinity.

This ancient Collect is found in the Sacramentary of Gelasius in its original Latin form. It consists of (a) an address to God as our Strength; (b) an acknowledgement of our own natural inability to do true good without Gods assistance, and (c) a prayer for help from him in order for us to keep his commandments both internally and externally, in will and in deed.

To trust in God the Father through discipleship of Jesus Christ lies at the heart of Christian Faith. It is in such trusting that believers know practically the comforting strength that Gods presence supplies, as we go through the changing scenes and challenges of daily life.

Human beings are capable of doing all kinds of social and civic good as members of families, tribes and societies. But to do good, the good that God the Father accepts as good in terms of the kingdom of heaven, is not possible by sinful human beings if they are motivated only by human desires and power. The human mind, heart and will must be indwelt by the Holy Ghost in order for the willing and doing to be of that true good, which is acceptable to God and brings him glory. (The Epistle sets forth the love of God as the originating source of mans love of God and of man.)

We are commanded (as those loved by God and indwelt by his Spirit) to love God himself and also to love our neighbour/brother in Christ, even as Christ loves us - and to do so with divine assistance. In the Gospel (Luke 16) the rich man failed to care for Lazarus at his gate for he was too much taken up with and absorbed by what he could do and enjoy in his own strength, and he paid the consequences.

# Trinity Sunday

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of thy Divine Majesty to worship the Unity: We beseech thee, that thou wouldst keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

Trinity Sunday has been a Feast Day in the western Church since the fourteenth century. At the very centre of the Christian Faith is the Mystery and the Dogma of the Holy Trinity, into whose Triune Name we are baptized and by whose Name we are blessed. One cannot be a Christian without believing and confessing the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons, and one God.

This Sunday and this week is the only time in the Church Year that the Collect is addressed to the Holy Trinity as one God. Normally the Collect is addressed to the Father through the Son. The Collect, which adores the Holy Trinity in the divine Unity and Trinity, does not however fit well or naturally with the Epistle [Revelation 4:1-11] and the Gospel [John 3: 1-15] readings. This is because these readings were chosen centuries before the establishment of the Feast, when this Sunday was within the octave of Pentecost. So the readings were originally chosen to contain the great theme of Pentecost, the Gift of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son to the Church. Thus the EPISTLE with its reference to the seven lamps of fire was taken to point to the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Ghost (see the Confirmation service in the BCP for these). And the GOSPEL with its reference to being born again/from above by the Holy Ghost was taken to point to the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost in the souls of men.

Nevertheless in both readings there is the revelation of the one true and living God as a Trinity of Persons. The thrice Holy of the heavenly host in the EPISTLE has always been taken by the Church as a praising of each of the Three Persons, the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. It is used in the Liturgy for Holy Communion as such. And in the GOSPEL there is the constant reference to God [= the Father], the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ [the incarnate Son of the Father] and the presence and work of the Holy Ghost who regenerates believing sinners.

The Preface for Trinity Sunday within the Order for Holy Communion of the BCP (1662) is like the Collect unique in that it is addressed not to the Father but to the One Holy Trinity. It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places, give thanks unto thee O Lord, Almighty Everlasting God. Who art one God, one Lord; not one only Person, but Three Persons in one Substance. For that which we believe of the Father, the same we believe of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference or inequality. Therefore, with angels and archangels.

To become more acquainted with the dogma of the Holy Trinity, as that was worked out in the Early Church, we turn to the Quicunque Vult (Athanasian Creed) which is appointed to be used at Morning Prayer on Trinity Sunday in the BCP of 1662. And for a less logical presentation we read the Nicene Creed, which is appointed for use in the Order for Holy Communion on Trinity Sunday. Though we seek to understand, our main vocation on this Sunday and during this week is to adore the Unity and the Trinity of the LORD our God!

GLORY BE TO THE FATHER AND TO THE SON AND TO THE HOLY GHOST; AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING, IS NOW, AND EVER SHALL BE, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN.

# Whit Sunday

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

God, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit: Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort: through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

Pentecost or Whit Sunday is a major festival of the Church of God, following after the Feasts of the Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the celebration of the Gift of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the exalted Christ, to the Church of God on earth. It is White-Sunday because of the historical connection with white baptismal robes, for in the West it was a major day for baptisms.

Not only should we pray this Collect before reading the Epistle and Gospel in Divine Service but also privately after reading them.

The Collect, addressed to the Father of the only-begotten Son, begins with the people of God recalling the Event recorded in Acts 2, the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples to bring heavenly light, inspiration, guidance and power to them, so that they could go into the whole world to preach the Gospel. The Lord Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, as he promised in the Gospel (John 14), has ascended: and the Father has sent in his Name and for his sake the Gift of his Spirit to be unto the disciples and in the Church the Paraclete, the Advocate, the Comforter and Counsellor of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Spirit comes to the heart, the biblical word for the very centre of human thinking and feeling and willing.

The earnest petition is that, indwelt by the same Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Christ, we today as the people of God will have spiritual insight, discernment and judgment in all things - in worship, in prayer, in reading the Scriptures, in evangelism, in pastoral and social work and so on. For only as our hearts are aligned with the will of God and the mission of Christ in the world are we able to rejoice always (Philippians 4:4) as the Spirit witnesses with our inner spirits that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). We are to walk in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost (Acts 9:31).

Here the heart is to be seen as the centre of the human being, that which makes him to be a person created in the image of God, even though sinful. The entering of the Spirit of the Lord into the human heart is his entering into the emotions/affections, the mind and the will. In his natural state, because a sinner, mans mind is clouded so that he cannot see spiritual truth aright, his emotions are disordered so that he cannot love God aright and his will is in bondage to sinful intentions. The Holy Ghost finds a way to regenerate, renew, re-order, enlighten and sanctify the heart so that the emotions are rightly ordered, the mind is able to think Gods thoughts and the will is empowered to do the divine will. Of course this does not happen all at once, but the Spirit of God is patient! And he works in different people in different ways according to their make-up and his wisdom.

The petition made by the Church today is that this one and the same Holy Ghost do for us what he did for the Church on that Day of Pentecost. We pray for a right judgment - for a sound mind, ordered affections and an obedient will - not occasionally but always and in all things. Sanctification is for all space and time! We also pray that, because the Comforter

dwells within our hearts (see John 14-16), we shall rejoice always in God and in his salvation, as we know the strengthening and comforting of the indwelling Spirit of God. Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice (Philippians 4:4).

Few of us doubt but that our churches know too much formality, human activity and pride and thus too little of the presence, power, teaching and light, that the Holy Ghost is seeking to make our possession by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is available to us not only at Whitsuntide but also throughout the whole Year.

The Collect ends with a doxology which both celebrates the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, as Saviour and that of the Holy Ghost as the One who is the Unity of Love in the Blessed, Holy and Undivided Trinity. So we are prepared to contemplate and adore the same TRINITY as we move to Trinity Sunday in a weeks time.

## Sunday after Ascension Day

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O God, the King of glory, who hast exalted thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto thy kingdom in heaven: We beseech thee, leave us not comfortless; but send to us thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

Forty days after he rose from the dead, the Lord Jesus visibly ascended into the cloud of glory, the Shekinah, the luminous cloud known in the Old Testament as the symbol of the immediate and localised Presence of YHWH, the LORD. The Festival of the Ascension is the climax of the festivals of the Lord Jesus for it celebrates the conclusion of his presence on earth in a form that was visible and touchable and his exaltation to the right hand of the Father in glory to be the King of kings and Lord of lords & the Mediator, Prophet and Priest for his people.

When the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, exalted to the right hand of the Father, placed on the seat of authority in heaven and earth as the King of kings and Lord of lords, the angels and archangels, the cherubim and seraphim, sang a new song of praise and joy. For with the arrival of the Son of God with his perfected human nature, all Gods enemies - Satan, sin and death -- had been defeated by him. Thus the exaltation of the Incarnate Son by the Father was a great triumph and the cause of magnificent Hallelujahs! In fact heaven as heaven was transformed by his arrival for through and in him redeemed humanity was now more than welcome there!

For the theme of great triumph see Colossians 2:15 & Psalm 24:7.

Therefore, in the Collect the device of the relative clause [who has exalted.] is used to provide the means of remembering before God these pertinent and holy facts about the Lord Jesus as a preparation for earnest petition.

The petition assumes that Christians are living within the ethos and spirituality of the Christian Year and Calendar. A week ahead is the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost, at which, fifty days after the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the Father, in the Name of this same Lord Jesus, sent the gift of the Holy Ghost to the Church to be the Paracletos



(Counsellor/Advocate/Comforter - see John 14-16 & Acts 2) of his people. The Gift comes from heaven in order to lift up the people of God to heaven. There is a divine Descent in order for there to be a human ascent!

So the prayer is offered not only for the receiving of the Gift but also that the Holy Ghost will perform his sanctifying and uplifting work of grace and enable sinners who are earth-bound by nature to become heaven-bound by grace. For the true home of the pilgrim people of God is the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God.

## Ascension Day

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

Forty days after he rose from the dead, the Lord Jesus visibly ascended into the cloud of glory, the Shekinah, the luminous cloud known in the Old Testament as the symbol of the immediate and localised Presence of YHWH, the LORD. Thus from the fourth century or so the Church has celebrated the 40th day after Easter Day as a major Feast Day, the Feast of the Ascension (regrettably in modern times it has been transferred by some churches to the Sunday following for human convenience!). This Festival is the climax of the festivals of the Lord Jesus for it celebrates the conclusion of his presence on earth in a form that was visible and touchable and his exaltation to the right hand of the Father in glory to be the King of kings and Lord of lords & the Mediator, Prophet and Priest for his people.

This Collect begins with an intensity of petition with the use of two strong verbs, grant and beseech. And there is good reason for intensity of mind, emotion and will for what is being desired and asked for is nothing less than a translation of human focus from earth to heaven, from the physical world to the sphere where God is known perfectly and adored completely.

The petition itself is based upon the belief that Jesus Christ is not only risen from the dead but in his transformed, resurrected body, is exalted to the right hand of the Father, far above all physical existence, where he is given all authority in heaven and on earth. It is also based upon the conviction, made very explicit in the Epistles of St Paul, that baptized Christian believers are not only acceptable to the Father through Christ (as Mediator) but that in Christ, that is as members of his Body, they rise and ascend with him so that in union with him by the Holy Ghost they are exalted into heaven. That is, in the reckoning of the Father, they belong with Christ in heaven for this is their true and final home.

Thus in this petition what is true objectively of Christ and his relation to his Body is made into a request to become a spiritual and moral experience for members of this Body in prayer, meditation and worship. Only after the general resurrection of the dead will God's children know fully the experience of the joy of heavenly existence. Now they can enjoy the initial but significant taste of it in their union by the Holy Ghost with Christ exalted, as members of the Body of which he is the head.

## Fifth Sunday after Easter

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O LORD, from whom all good things do come: Grant to us thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

The Lord God who is our Creator and Sustainer provides us in the created order -- in its water, heat and light, fruit and vegetables -- with all good things for our bodily and material needs. Further, the same the Lord our God, who is our Saviour and King, provides for us in the ministries of holy, mother Church with all good things for our eternal salvation in a right relation with him.

In the light of such plenteous provision for body and soul, it is the vocation of his creatures, who are his adopted children, to think and to do what pleases him. By the presence and inspiration of his Holy Spirit, and through the growth of the word of God in their hearts, baptized, faithful Christians are enabled to think not only that which is right but also that which is good. Further, by the merciful guidance of the same Spirit they are also able to perform good works, as faith works by love, to glorify their heavenly Father.

This Sunday is also called Rogation Sunday for the week following contains the Three Rogation Days, being the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before Holy Thursday, or the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord.

If we follow the old tradition of the Ecclesia Anglicana (& the western Catholic Church) and of the reformed Church of England, then we receive the three days immediately before the Feast of the Ascension as both Rogation Days and as days of fasting and abstinence in preparation for this Festival, which crowns the other festivals of our Lord.

If we are going to have a Harvest Festival (Great Britain) or Thanksgiving Day (USA) in the Autumn/Fall then we should also have Rogationtide [supplication to God for fruitful seasons and a good harvest] in the Spring. And, if we are to prepare rightly to celebrate the Ascension of our Lord, we need to fast before the festival. So we ought to fast and pray on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

The origin of these Rogation Days seems to be an order by the Bishop of Vienne about AD 470 after an earthquake that special litanies be offered for Gods care and protection, asking for provision by the God of heaven and of earth of the fruit of the earth. The custom spread through Gaul, to England and to Rome. In England the custom was required by Canon 16 of the Council of Clovesho in 747.

It was continued through the Reformation in England so that we find Queen Elizabeth in 1559 by Royal Injunction requiring the restoration of a perambulation of the parish boundaries/fields to pray for a good harvest; and there appeared in the official [Second] Book of Homilies (1562) An Homily for the Days of Rogation Week, divided into three parts for the 3 days of Rogation Week. And it is followed by An exhortation to be spoken to such parishes where they use their perambulation in Rogation Week for the oversight and limits of their town. This was written by Archbishop Parker. When there was no walking around the boundaries of the parish, the Litany (from the BCP) was sung in church.



A serious proposal made by Bishop Cosin of Durham in 1661 to put a Collect, Epistle [James 5:13-18] & Gospel [Luke 11:1-10] for Rogation in the new edition of the BCP, that of 1662, was not followed through. However, the Collect he wrote provides an insight into how this period of intercession and abstinence was viewed by the faithful then:

Almighty God, Lord of heaven and earth, in whom we live, move and have our being, who does good unto all men, making thy sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sending rain on the just and the unjust; favourably behold us thy people, who do call upon thy name, and send us thy blessing from heaven, in giving us fruitful seasons, and filling our hearts with food and gladness; that both our hearts and mouths may be continually filled with thy praises, giving thanks to thee in thy holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the 1928 BCP of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the USA, provision of a Collect (based upon Cosins), Epistle [ Ezekiel 34:25ff.] and Gospel [Luke 11:5ff.] is provided for the Rogation Days. There are also two Collects For Fruitful Seasons, provided to be used on Rogation Sunday and the Rogation Days, in the section of this Prayer Book called Prayers and Thanksgivings.

Let us be fully aware that the members of the Church militant on earth need to be fed both by the fruit of the earth [thus the need for supplication in Rogation and thanksgiving at Harvest] and by the gifts, graces, virtues and characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ, who ascends into heaven to be our exalted Prophet, Priest and King. The week containing Holy Thursday and the three Rogation Days is thus very important within the Christian Year and for Christian fruitfulness.

## Fourth Sunday after Easter

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men: Grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

This prayer originated in the Gelasian Sacramentary and passed into the Sarum Missal before being translated from Latin into English for the 1549 Prayer Book. Finally, it was revised for the 1662 Prayer Book. As it stands, it is as near a perfect specimen of a Collect form of prayer as one could wish to see.

There is the Address or Invocation - to Almighty God; then there is the Recital of a specific doctrine concerning Gods power in relation to man, achieved grammatically by means of the relative clause; this is followed by the long Petition, beginning with the strong verb, Grant, which petition is wholly based upon the foundation of the doctrine already remembered and rehearsed; and in turn the petition is followed by the Aspiration - that so our hearts may surely there be fixed. The Collect closes with the Pleading in the Name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

The foundation for the petition recalls before God and recites the biblical teaching that

he alone, and only he, is able to order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men. These words of the initial relative clause balance perfectly with the two clauses of the actual petition that follows. That is, the unruly wills corresponds to the love of that which God commands, while the unruly affections corresponds to the desire of that which God promises.

We know from sacred Scripture and the experience of the saints that God the Father brings the wills and emotions/affections of sinful persons into order out of disorder, by the secret and hidden operations of the Holy Ghost. In this way human minds, hearts and wills are transformed by grace, and the change wrought in them is of such a nature that those persons in whom the Holy Ghost has so worked can only say with certainty that they know and feel that a change has taken place. They cannot tell how it occurred for that belongs to the secret operations of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

The true Christian is one who delights in and loves what God commands. He is also one who seeks to obey Gods holy law, simply because he loves God and wants to do what God declares to be good and true and right. So the petition is that thy people may love the thing which thou commandest.

But it is also important that the Christian loves God and his law as, simultaneously, he also desires what God promises to his elect people - thus the aspiration. This will be so when his affections are set upon the heavenly realm where Christ rules at the Fathers right hand and where the society of angels and saints adore and praise Jesus Christ as Lord of lords and King of kings in all his authority and beauty.

The Christian who loves Gods law and desires to be with Christ in heaven will find that, in the varied and many changing circumstances of life, his central focus will be not in this world as such but on Christ Jesus in heaven, the center of all true and lasting joy. And the more he is focused on Christ the more will he be desirous and able to love God and his law and readily and happily obey him. He will rejoice with exceeding great joy as he loves the Lord and does his will, with his eyes of faith looking above where Christ is in all his glory. And with such a godly mind he will be the more useful on earth!

It is by making men loyal to his will, and to the hope of glory which he holds out to them in the Gospel, that God joins them together in the same mind and the same judgment. His precept and promise are the magnetic power which draw them into union one with another, and they are also the cement which holds them there, beginning in this age and being fulfilled in the glorious age to come.

Since there is one High Priest and one Mediator in heaven, Jesus Christ the resurrected Lord, the Prayer is offered to the Father in his Name.

Thus we have here not merely a perfectly formed Prayer but also a perfectly biblical Prayer. All that remains is that we pray it and it is fulfilled in our lives.

## Third Sunday after Easter

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Almighty God, who shewest to them that be in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness: Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christs religion, that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ.

### Collect Commentary

This ancient Collect assumes greater meaning if we remember that Easter Eve is one of the great occasions for Baptisms, for the admittance of converts into the fellowship of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church by joining the local congregation. So this Prayer was used in the ancient Church a few weeks after many new members were in her fellowship.

The first part of the Collect, where we remember in Gods presence aspects of his relation to the world, recalls that God in Christ Jesus as the Good Shepherd seeks the lost sheep and, further, as the Light of the world gives to lost travellers light to find their way to everlasting salvation. Does HE not enlighten those who have been baptized in the Triune Name, who repent of sin, believe the Gospel and follow the Lord Jesus? Yes! In the Gospel reading the coming of the Lord to his disciples is a source of great joy and encouragement.

The petition in the Collect has a primary reference to the newly baptized, but also applies to all the baptized. All are called to die daily to sin and to live unto righteousness in the power of the Holy Ghost. All Christians are called to holiness of life and consecration unto the Lord and his purposes, and thus they are to think and do only that which they know to be a part of his will for them.

The verb, to eschew, emphasizes that baptised believers are to shoo away, to drive away (as birds from a fruit tree) all that is evil and contrary to holiness in their lives. And this is what is called for in the Epistle reading - as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh.

In Baptism we promise to reject the world, the flesh and the devil and to accept and follow Christ in the way of self-denial and of grace. This Collect thus recalls us to our vocation as the elect people of God, saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Second Sunday after Easter

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life: Give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit, and also endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

The Father sent his only-begotten Son into the world as a PERSONAL GIFT to humanity. The Son took unto himself in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary human nature, body and soul, and lived as a Man, calling himself “the Son of Man”.

That is, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity in his human nature and without ceasing to be God, lived as the Messiah, revealed the Kingdom of God in word and deed, suffered and died, was buried and raised from the dead to be exalted to the Father’s right hand in heavenly glory. The focus and centre of the Incarnation on earth was the passion and crucifixion where the sinless One died for sinners, where the Lamb of God offered himself a sacrifice for human sin, and where in all that he suffered Jesus Christ our Lord provided a perfect example of loving submission to the demanding yet perfect will of God.

The Gift of the Gospel of God the Father is the Son, for he that hath the Son hath life, everlasting life, abundant divine life, says St John. In the proclamation of good news the Church of God offers this amazing Gift that is beyond price, and blessed are they who receive HIM in penitence and faith, in joy and consecration.

In the petition of this Collect we recognize that the presence in baptized Christians, of the effects of sin, even as they aspire to holiness, need to be dealt with. These effects stay with us as long as we are in our mortal bodies with our human nature on this earth in this evil age. Thus the prayer is for grace, the assistance of divine help and mercy, for a thankful, receptive, believing and trusting heart, to recognize and appropriate the amazing and eternal nature of the GIFT that is in the Gospel. A truly thankful heart is a great motivation to seek to do God’s holy will.

The petition is also a request for the commitment, determination and help needed by a baptized Christian to imitate the life of Jesus, to see him as the supreme example for the Christian to follow, day by day until his life’s end. (“To endeavour oneself” is a reflexive verb not much in use today - cf. “The Form and Manner of Making Deacons” in the Ordinal, found bound within the BCP, and the seventh answer to the questions, “I will endeavour myself, the Lord being my helper...”).

The particular feature of Christ’s example brought out by the Epistle is the bearing patiently undeserved indignities and rough treatment ( 1 Peter 2:23).

Thus Jesus, the Christ, the Saviour of the world, is for the Church both God’s GIFT and God’s EXAMPLE; and, in receiving the gift and following the example, Christian people will be truly what they are called to be - the Body of Christ on earth. This is a most appropriate message for Eastertide!

The Collect above was written by Archbishop Cranmer in 1549 and replaced this Collect found in the Sarum Missal: O God, who by thy Son’s humbling himself hast raised up a fallen world: Grant unto thy faithful people perpetual joy, that they whom thou hast snatched from the dangers of perpetual death, may be brought by thee to the fruition of eternal joys. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



## First Sunday after Easter

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Almighty Father, who hast given thine only Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification: Grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, that we may always serve thee in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### Collect Commentary

This one sentence Prayer is an excellent example of how to express reverence, doctrine and petition in a concise way.

Only in this Collect in The Book of Common Prayer is the specific invocation, “Almighty Father” actually used to begin a prayer. And in Eastertide this is most apt for, by the almighty power of God, the Father, Jesus was raised from the dead and by his resurrection his disciples are given the privilege of calling God, “Father”, since they are adopted as his children, to be the brethren of Jesus Christ, the true Son.

The recital of what the Son of God has done for us is based upon Romans 4:24-25. “Jesus was delivered for our offences and raised for our justification.” Jesus died as the Substitute for our sins, bearing them in his own body on the Tree (1 Peter 2:24). He was raised for our acquittal and justification. That is, God the Father raised him from the dead and by this glorious act proclaimed his acceptance of Christ’s Atonement for the sins of the world and the basis of the receiving by him of repentant, believing sinners. Thus in the Gospel for this day (John 20:19-23) the Resurrected Jesus comes on the day of his Resurrection to his disciples in the upper room with the word of peace, grace and forgiveness.

The petition (“Grant us so to put away...”) is based upon what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:7,13: “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore, let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness.” It is a firm prayer that we shall put away all forms of spiritual and moral evil and serve God both in moral soundness and doctrinal soundness. Both immorality and heresy can cause great harm to souls, individually and corporately. (The reference to leaven makes sense when we remember that for seven days after the Feast of the Passover the Jews sought to keep themselves clear from every kind of leaven.)

The Collect ends with a recalling that our salvation is not earned by us or deserved by us or won by us; but, it is only given to us by the grace and mercy of God the Father through the merits of his Son, Jesus Christ. He died as our Substitute and Representative and rose again for us to bring us acquittal before God the Judge and salvation from sin into the family and kingdom of God the Father almighty.



# Easter Day

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

ALMIGHTY God, who through thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; We humbly beseech thee, that, as by thy special grace preventing us thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

Here we recognize that he who died upon the Cross and was raised from the dead was really and truly the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. It was he who died, that is died in his human nature, and by this dying he opened the gate for us into eternal life, the very gate that had been closed by the Cherubim (Genesis 3:24). Thus, as it were, we walk through an open gate/door into a way of life wherein our vocation is to do the will of God gladly and joyfully. "Special grace preventing [going before] us" is what Christ gives to his people as they walk with him in the Spirit. Good desires are not enough for those who live in the power of the Resurrection; they are to be brought to good effect for the glory of God and the good of souls.

The EPISTLE from Colossians 3:1-7 is an exhortation to live as those who truly believe not only that Jesus Christ has been exalted to the Father's right hand in heaven but that also those who are united to him by faith have been exalted together with him. Holiness and righteousness of life flow from union with the Lord Jesus who has conquered sin and evil and is raised to the highest heaven as the Lord of lords.

The GOSPEL from John 20:1-10 tells how Mary Magdalene visited the tomb of Jesus only to find that the stone across its entrance had been moved. She hastened to tell Peter and John. They ran to see for themselves and entering the tomb found to their amazement that it was empty. So the empty tomb becomes the first sign that Jesus has been raised from the dead.

Naturally Christians who hear the story so far want to know what happened next and of they read on in John's Gospel. They find out that Jesus actually appeared to Mary, spoke to her and made her - a woman with a certain questionable reputation -- into the first witness of the Resurrection! Thus she can go and tell the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!"

So it is a woman not a man, a disciple and not an apostle, who is chosen by God to be first person to see the Lord Jesus Christ as the Resurrected Master and Saviour. (See Luke 24:1-12 for more details of the role of woman as witnesses of the Resurrection.)

**LET US CELEBRATE WITH ALL JOY THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD not only on Easter Day but for the whole of Eastertide.**

But let us be wholly clear that it is Resurrection not Resuscitation that we celebrate!

What happened to Jesus on Easter morning was not resuscitation. The human soul did not reunite with a revived body to form a resuscitated, revived Jesus. In no way whatsoever, could Resuscitation have ever been the proclamation of GOSPEL by God the Father to those with ears to hear of the victory of the Incarnate Son over sin, evil, darkness, death and demonic power.

Resuscitation could never have been the statement that a new covenant between God and man was in place, that the old Mosaic covenant was obsolete, and that there was atonement, redemption, salvation, reconciliation & forgiveness of sins available through the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And neither could modern views of resurrection as “the spirit of Jesus surviving death” (with his body lost) be the statement of God’s victory over darkness, evil, sin, death and Satan. What happened on Easter morning was a miracle that was more, much more, than the resuscitation of the dead body of Jesus and its reuniting with his soul. The Miracle of Easter is that Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, was raised from the dead into a new order of being and as a new form of humanity. His resurrection from the dead, while a continuance in personal identity, was at the same time a transformation of his human nature and body so that he became a resurrected, glorified, supernaturalized and immortalised Man (yet more than Man). His humanity, wholly transformed by the Spirit of God, contained and displayed the new order of being that is the kingdom of God. The Person of the Son of God now had not only his eternal divine nature with a human soul (as from Good Friday through Holy Saturday) but also a totally perfected, glorified, supernaturalized and immortalised human nature, body and soul.

Thus the cry, “Jesus is risen from the dead”, is also the announcement that the new covenant between God and man is in place and is centred on the Mediator, Jesus. The new order and covenant reveals perfect human nature glorified through a perfect response to the Spirit of the Lord. It shows us the goal for which human nature was created by God, and to which it will be raised when the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets men free from the law of sin and of death. It shows both the crown of the purpose of God set forth in holy Scriptures and the crown of his purpose in the created world, wherein a new, dynamic, everlasting level & order of life succeeds to old levels that pass away. Jesus rose as the new Adam, the head and representative of a new humanity, the firstfruits of those who would follow him (see 1 Corinthians 15).

This explanation of the raising of Jesus as the Resurrected Lord of life and not as the resuscitated Rabbi makes it possible for us to see why Jesus did not appear to those who had handed him over to death (the Jewish Sanhedrin & the Roman Procurator and their helpers). By the laws of the new covenant and of the kingdom of heaven, the miracle of the Resurrection could only be made known to those who responded in penitence and faith to the new level of spiritual existence which it disclosed. It was not a portent that could be shown to anyone & everyone to press them or to scare them into belief! It was a miracle belonging to the realm of the kingdom of God and only those with eyes to see could see it. The new Order of Being manifested and revealed in the risen Lord Jesus, the Messiah, needed a corresponding spiritual discernment to see its nature and reality. Thus Jesus appeared only to the disciples and to them on several occasions. In them he had sown the seed of faith and insight and they, as quickened by the Spirit of God, were able to begin to see him in his new identity, in his transformed and glorified manhood. That is they were able to receive the Revelation of his true identity as the Risen Lord and then worship him (as did Thomas) as “My Lord and my God”.

To state all this is to agree with the Gospel records which make it absolutely clear that Jesus made no attempt whatsoever to appear to any others than his disciples. However, to make this essential point about the revelation of a new order of being is not to discount historical evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus. There is historical testimony that points to the Resurrection of Jesus with overwhelming probability - for example (a) the disciples did not really expect the Resurrection; (b) the existence of the Church despite the great setback of Good Friday; (c) the claims of the disciples that Jesus actually appeared to them; (d) the empty tomb and (e) the absolutely new appreciation and understanding of the Scriptures by the apostles and disciples.

Ultimately, we must say that what it took on Easter Day and during the next 40 days first to SEE and then to receive Jesus as the Resurrected Lord, with his new covenant and kingdom, is ultimately what it takes now - a penitent, believing heart. “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

# Good Friday

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Almighty God, we beseech thee graciously to behold this thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross, who now liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before thee for all estates of men in thy holy Church, that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve thee; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

O Merciful God, who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that thou hast made, nor wouldest the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live: Have mercy upon all Jews, Turks [Muslims], Infidels and Hereticks, and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word: and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

These Three Collects are united not only in that they are appointed for this most solemn of all days in the Christian Year, but also in that they are based upon the content of the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus (John 17) uttered on the eve of his Crucifixion, as well as upon the achievement of his sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction offered on the Cross for the sins of the whole world.

As Jesus first prayed for his band of disciples, his little flock, so the first Collect is for the specific congregation - "this thy family". As Jesus consecrated himself to the Father's will for the sake of his disciples, so he also gave himself up as a sacrifice for the sins of each and every congregation and very member thereof.

The second Collect recognizes that the Church throughout the world and also in its local expressions is composed of many different kinds of persons - "all estates of men" - and thus prayer is offered that each kind of person and each member will serve the Lord truly in his vocation and ministry, led by the Holy Spirit.

In his Priestly Prayer Jesus moved on to pray for those who would believe on his Name, asking that they be brought together in unity and communion with the Father. So the third Collect, mindful that in the death of Jesus is a propitiation not for our sins only but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2), makes intercession for those living outside the fellowship of the Church of God. Prayer is offered for the Jews, who, while they acknowledge the Father, deny the Son, whose very office is to reveal the Father. Intercession is offered for the Turks [Muslims], who while they admit that Jesus is a prophet, deny that he is truly the Son of God made flesh. Supplication is made for Infidels, who know neither the true God nor Jesus Christ whom he has sent into the world. And petition is made for Heretics, those who have once known and received the truth as it is in Jesus and then have corrupted and perverted it. Such prayers are wholly appropriate if it be the case that in the message of Christ crucified is the real and true salvation of the world. The aim is that they will not be merely one flock of Christ but one fold, with all divisions removed that



have separated them.

The origin of the three collects is of interest. In its Latin form the first was the final prayer of the Mass on Wednesday of Holy Week. The people were asked to bow their heads and this prayer was said over them. The second was one of eighteen prayers said after the Gospel on Good Friday in the ancient Church. In the Sarum Missal used widely in England it comes between a prayer for the bishops and one for the king. The third is a compilation based on several of these prayers said after the Gospel on Good Friday. When these prayers were first composed and used in the fourth and fifth century there were no Muslims and so they were not prayed for. However, all other kinds and types of non-Christians were prayed for as their conversion was desired.

GOOD FRIDAY - this name is peculiar to the Church of England (and thus to English culture where the Church has had an impact).

Of all Fridays of the year, there are profound reasons for giving this one the title of "GOOD."

It is the Day when the only One who was GOOD enough as a Person (for he was righteous and without sin) to pay the price of our sin, actually paid that price as the sacrificial Lamb on the Cross.

It is also the Day when the supreme GOOD of mankind - communion and friendship with the Lord - was made possible when the Son of God incarnate took away all barriers to realizing and experiencing that good. The supreme end and good of man is to enjoy and glorify God forever and this is only possible through the reconciliation wrought by Christ Jesus on the Cross.

Further it is the Day when GOOD triumphed over evil as God the Father turned what could have been the world's greatest tragedy - the crucifixion of the most innocent of men - into the salvation of mankind, and as He turned an evil act and apparent defeat into the victory over Satan, sin and death and showed it in Resurrection.

Finally, it is the Day which provides the world with GOSPEL, that is GOOD NEWS, a message of hope to all the nations. The GOOD news is that there is forgiveness, a right relation with the Father, eternal life in the age to come, and friendship with God through the saving work of the Lord Jesus on the Cross.

Yet, while it is most certainly and surely a GOOD Friday, it is also a day of Fasting for the Church, the Bride of Christ, since it is the Day when the Bridegroom is taken away from his Bride [the Lord Jesus from his disciples - see Mark 2:19-20] as he descends into Hades to announce and proclaim his finished, saving and good work to those who have died and wait for their full redemption.

Thus the Church fasts for this whole day, or even for this day and the next day, until the great cry - CHRIST IS RISEN. ALLELUIA - is heard on Easter morning. Then with the victorious and faithful Bridegroom returned she can eat with him at his banqueting table and her first food is his sacramental body and blood, at the Easter Eucharist.

The Book of Common Prayer (1662) provides Collects, an Epistle and Gospel for this GOOD Friday and the general Anglican tradition has been to have only Ante-Communion this day and to encourage meditation, prayer and quiet in church and at home.

## Sunday next before Easter

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Almighty and Everlasting God, who, of thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

The content and meaning of Holy Week is brought before us as we fervently and meditatively pray this Collect. Its moving content takes themes from the Epistle and Gospel in order to lead us to God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. We have learned from the regular reading of the Gospel Lessons through the Christian Year of the great love, mercy and compassion of God the Father for the world, even for those who being his creatures, still rebel against his authority and goodness. Thus we remember, as we address the omnipotent and eternal Father, that it is of his tender love towards mankind that he sent his only-begotten Son into the world to be the Saviour of the world and to care for us in our sinfulness.

We also remember from hearing the Christmas message that the same Son of God took to himself human flesh and nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that is a complete human body and soul. Thus he became by his incarnation (to use the language of the Church) One Person made known in two natures [divine & human]. And having become the Incarnate Son he assumed the vocation of the Suffering Servant of God, set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, and took upon himself suffering, crucifixion and death in a representative and substitutionary capacity, for the world - for us and for our salvation.

From the Epistle, we learn of the great humility of the eternal Son of God, who being equal with the Father in divinity and Godhead, he nevertheless took upon himself our human nature and became a servant, so as to save us from our sins and bring us into a right relation of love with the Father. Thus we also remember before God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, his Son, that (by his help and grace) we are called to follow the example of his great humility in life, which we see especially in the narrative of his Suffering & manner of Death in Holy Week.

From the Gospel we learn of the patience of the Lord Jesus so that our petition, "Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of his patience", has solid meaning for us. In Matthew 26 - 27 (which was the older longer Gospel for the Day in the Sarum Use) we learn of the patience of Jesus under the agony (26:42), patience towards Peter (26:40), patience towards Judas (26:50), patience towards those who arrested him (26:52), patience when being mocked and spat upon (26:67; 27:29,30), patience before the high priest (26:62,63), patience before Pilate (27:13-14); patience before revilers (27:29-30) and patience when abandoned by God (27:46). By imitating his patience we learn humility and in being humble before God, we believe that by his grace we shall be made partakers of the resurrection from the dead and life eternal with the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. We pray this Collect daily until Good Friday even as we also read further accounts of the Passion from the other Gospels for the next five days, as provided in printed Lectionary of The Book of Common Prayer. his Sunday is called Palm Sunday because it was on the first day of the week in which Jesus was crucified that Jesus entered Jerusalem and there was placed on the way in front of him branches of Palm. This event can be commemorated at the beginning of the Sunday Service by the reading of a Gospel account and by the blessing of the Palm Branches/Crosses, provided for distribution to the congregation, and by the singing of an appropriate hymn on the theme.



## Fifth Sunday in Lent

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

WE beseech thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon thy people; that by thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

The Church has arrived in her Christian Year at the point when she is only 14 days from Easter. In the Jewish Year there is 14 days of preparation before the Passover when on the 14th Day of Abib the Passover Lamb was slain. So this Sunday is called Passion Sunday as the suffering and death of Jesus as the Lamb of God is much in view - see the Epistle, Hebrews 9, which makes mention of the shedding of Christ's blood.

Human kings that faithfully do their duty take care of the governing of their people according to righteousness and the preserving of their subjects in peace. The King of kings, Almighty God, the Omnipotent One, also takes care of his people and preserves them unto everlasting peace. And he does so in their total being, for the Christian hope is not merely of the immortality of the soul but also the resurrection of the body to life everlasting in the courts of heaven. The reason he cares for the whole person, soul and body, is because of "thy great goodness".

As the worst that the world can do to the Son of God incarnate - reject and crucify him - is to be the theme of some of the Church's reading and meditation until Good Friday, it is good and right that on this day the Church asks her King in his mercy and grace, and by his great goodness, to hear her prayer and to govern and preserve his Church in this particular time. In this part of the Christian Year God's people especially need to know that, despite all the evidence to the contrary in a world of sin, the sin that caused the substitutionary and expiatory death of Jesus, God is still not only the LORD but the bountifully good Lord.

Further, as the Gospel declares, Jesus as the Son of God, existed as the only-begotten Son of the Father before he took flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. "Before Abraham was, I am," said Jesus. Therefore, as they approach Holy Week Christians have the assurance that he who dies for their sins and rises from the dead for their justification is none other than the pre-existent Son of God in human nature, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone.

In 1689, in the proposed revision of The Book of Common Prayer, it was decided to replace the present Collect with another written by the Bishop of Chichester and focused on the Passion. Though this revision scheme failed, the Collect is worth remembering and praying for it does fit neatly into the theme of the latter part of Lent, as the Church moves quickly to Holy Week.

"O Almighty God, who hast sent thy Son Jesus Christ to be an High Priest of good things to come, and by his own blood to enter in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us; mercifully look upon thy people, that by the same blood of our Saviour, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to thee, our consciences may be purged from dead works, to serve thee, the living God, that we may receive the promise of eternal inheritance; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

## Fourth Sunday in Lent

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

The Gospel, Epistle and Collect for this Sunday, the mid-point in Lent, are a threefold cord. The Epistle spiritualises the Gospel; the Collect takes it up as spiritualised and turns it into a prayer.

The Gospel provides the account of the feeding of the 5,000 - thus the ancient title for the day, *Dominica Refectionis*, Refreshment Sunday. This miracle of providing bodily sustenance and physical healing to weary souls may be seen as a fulfilment of the promise of Jesus: "Come unto me all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you" (Matthew 11:28). The bodily refreshment is symbolic of our higher refreshment by his grace.

The Epistle describes another kind of weariness, that of guilt under the law of God, which Christ also relieves. There are two covenants, that of the Law and that established in and by Christ. The terms of the covenant of the Law are, "The man that doeth the works of the law shall live" but none of us can fulfil it! In contrast, the terms of the new covenant are "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (who fulfils the Law and bears its curse) and you shall be saved". So there is comfort and refreshment for the guilt-laden soul in union with Jesus Christ and in membership of the new Jerusalem, the heavenly Mother of those who believe the Gospel (so this Day is also called Mothering Sunday, - "Jerusalem above is free and is the mother of us all" [Galatians 4:26]).

The Collect begins by recognizing that before God's court we all stand condemned as those who both break his commandments and fail to obey them; thus in our consciences we know that we deserve his punishment (as the Covenant of the Law clearly states). But it does not stop there. It prays that by the comfort of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be relieved or refreshed (here we hear the invitation - "Come unto me all that travail...").

This is a perfect Collect for mid-Lent if we have been taking Lent seriously and are much aware of our sins through self-examination and penitence.

The modern transformation of this day in Great Britain into the celebration of human motherhood, as Mother's Day [or Mothers' Day], has occurred in the Church because Lent is not being taken seriously!

When Lent is taken seriously then this Sunday is a day when the Church encamps in a green pasture to be relieved, refreshed and fed by the Lord Jesus Christ so that we may serve his Father not only in the rest of Lent, on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, but also in Easter power and grace unto our life's end.

Below is a 17th century description of a Lent taken seriously.

"To Keep A True Lent" by Robert Herrick (1647)

Is this a fast, to keep The larder lean, And clean, From fat of veals and sheep?

Is it to quit the dish Of flesh, yet still To fill The platter high with fish?

Is it to fast an hour, Or ragged to go, Or show A downcast look, and sour?

No; 'tis a fast to dole Thy sheaf of wheat And meat Unto the hungry soul.

It is to fast from strife, From old debate, And hate; To circumcise thy life;

To show a heart grief-rent; To starve thy sin, Not bin, And that's to keep thy Lent.

## Third Sunday in Lent

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

We beseech thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of thy humble servants, and stretch forth the right hand of thy Majesty, to be our defence against all our enemies, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

The verb, “to beseech”, is more appropriate than the verb, “to ask”, when addressing Almighty God, our Creator and Judge, because it presents us as his loyal subjects and servants. After all he is the King of all kings and Head of all presidents and we speak in this prayer of “thy Majesty”.

Before praying this prayer we need to be spiritually prepared to address God. We call ourselves “thy humble servants” and humility is not a normal characteristic of our souls. It comes after due self-examination and penitence before God. Further “hearty desires” (praying with earnestness, fervour and sincerity) only arise when we are bowed before God in the right spirit.

The petition is for the omnipotent Lord God to defend us against all our enemies. While this always has reference to some human enemies, it also covers the spiritual enemies (Satan and his assistants - Ephesians 6:12) who seek to damage our covenantal relation of grace with God the Father through Jesus Christ. “The right hand of thy Majesty” echoes various petitions in the Psalter (see Psalm 138:7 & 74:10-11); but, it also refers to the One who is seated at the right hand of the Father in glory, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who is One with the Father; and it is, of course, in the Name of this same Jesus that we pray, for he is our Mediator before God the Father Almighty.

Let us in Lent celebrate the power of God to bring us into his kingdom of grace and save us from our enemies. “Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them” (Exodus 15:6,12). As this Collect is fulfilled in us we shall walk in love (Ephesians 5: 1-14) and we shall be preserved from Satan and Beelzebul (Luke 11:14-28).

## Second Sunday in Lent

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Almighty God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended against all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### Collect Commentary

If there is one time in the Church Year when we ought to feel the need to exercise faith and to pray fervently in faith -- as the Gospel illustrates - it is Lent. If there is one period of the Church Year when we should hear clearly the word of the Epistle - God's will is your sanctification - it is also Lent.

The usual tendency in our prayers is to ask God to help us, to aid us, to assist us and to strengthen us. All well and good, but sometimes hidden in such verbal requests is the general idea that we can do so much for ourselves and we only need God to come along and give us the extra push, to top up our strength. But in this prayer we begin by recognizing as we meditate before almighty God our Father, who is the Omnipotent One, that in fact we need more than a push and a topping up: we need his help, power, grace and strength completely and wholly. For we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves in the real battles of life against adversaries much stronger than we are.

Therefore, from the position of total dependency upon God's gracious power we ask the Father in the name of his well beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that in body and soul we may be daily preserved and protected from all forms of evil and sin. We cannot predict as each day begins what bad things can and will happen to our body, from accident, disease, carelessness, or the evil will of others. Further, and significantly, we cannot predict what can and will happen to our soul - our mind, emotions and will - as it is open to testing and temptation. Evil thoughts, desires and imaginations can be generated within our souls by all kinds of stimuli, by the world and the devil.

This prayer of wholehearted submission to the Almighty Father is entirely suitable for LENT as we engage in self-examination, fast inwardly and outwardly in union with our blessed Lord (who himself fasted forty days and forty nights) and look forward to the Victory of Christ at Easter over the world, the flesh and the devil in which, by union with him, we share. In fact, like the Canaanite woman in the Gospel we need to be so intent of being united to Jesus that he can say to us what he said to her: "O woman, great is thy faith!"



## First Sunday in Lent

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O Lord, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

This is one of three Collects in the BCP of 1662 addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ instead of to his Father. The others are for Advent III and St. Stephen's Day. The reason why this Collect is addressed to Jesus is because of the desire at the beginning of Lent to identify with him in his forty days & nights fast and by the Father's grace to reap the spiritual benefits of union with him.

It was composed for the first Book of the Common Prayer of 1549 and replaced one, addressed to the Father, that had been used in the medieval Church. This Latin prayer in the judgment of Archbishop Cranmer put too much emphasis upon the value before God as a good work of fasting. As translated it is: "O God, who purifiest thy Church by the yearly observance of the Lenten fast: Grant unto thy household, that it may follow out in good works those holy inspirations which it endeavours to obtain from thee by abstinence. Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

So the new prayer does not lessen the obligation to fasting but identifies fasting with the Lord Jesus (the Gospel for the Day describes his fasting) who as the New Man, the Second Adam, fasted in body by abstinence from food and drink, and in soul, by his bearing our sins. In our Lord there was no sin and since fasting is the expression of penitence, humiliation and mourning, his fasting was not for himself. He fasted for us both in his identification with man as a sinner before God, his Father, and also as providing an example of godliness to man.

Perhaps the petition in this Collect is inspired by Romans 8:13. "If ye live after the flesh [as your natural bodily desires and affections propose] ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit (by his presence, power and guidance) do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." By the discipline of fasting in Lent, which is offered in love to the Lord Jesus as a service unto him, we place ourselves in the position where the Holy Spirit is able to help us mortify, or put to death, the worldly, fleshly desires of our human nature and body, and in their place follow the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Ghost, thereby enabling us to obey Christ's teaching. In all this Christ is our Strength and our Example.

The Collect ends with an ascription of praise and glory to the Holy Trinity for the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Incarnate Son, is the Second Person thereof.

On this Sunday and during the week the Church continues to pray the Collect for Ash Wednesday.



## Ash Wednesday

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

Since we pray this Collect morning and evening for over 40 days - for we use it on the Sundays of Lent, as well as the 40 days of Lent - we really need to be clear as to its meaning.

To get to this meaning, I think that we should be clear that for the reformed Catholic mindset of the English Reformation, fasting/abstinence was seen as having two aspects, the outward and the inward. Even as the two Gospel Sacraments are outward and visible signs of an inward and invisible grace, so fasting (though not a sacrament) has both the outward and the inward dimensions.

The Collect takes for granted that the devout people of God are actually fasting during the 40 days (by fasting is meant either reducing significantly their intake of food or else not eating from dawn to dusk, or from dawn to after evening prayer). This fact is not immediately obvious to the person who merely has *The Book of Common Prayer (1662)* before him, but in the context of the sixteenth century it was generally known and acknowledged that good Christian people fast in Lent. Today, without the context of a Christian country providing us with the information, we rely upon the parish priest to instruct us in this duty of uniting with our Lord in his 40 day fast.


Therefore, what we have in the Collect is a petition to God the Father to assist us in performing the good work of fasting and specifically of engaging in the inward fast, without which the outward fast cannot be a good work in God's sight.

The Collect begins with remembrance of particular aspects of the nature and character of God the Father ---"who hatest nothing that thou hast made and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent." Thus as we open in prayer we celebrate the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as our Creator and the God of mercy and forgiveness.

Then we come to the petition based upon what we know of the nature and character of God: "Create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ..."

The inward aspect of fasting is the mortification of sin - through careful and devout self-examination and humble confession - and on this basis the creation or making of a new heart (that is a cleansed and renewed heart wherein are godly principles).

Now while the outward aspect of fasting can be done in our own strength and will power (and can therefore lead to weight loss, better cholesterol readings, lower blood pressure and so on) the inward aspect, though intimately related to our desiring, is dependent upon the activity of the Holy Ghost in our souls to energize and to make worthy before God our mortification and vivification.

The Christian soul desires above all else “perfect remission and forgiveness” of his sins and to gain this from the God of all mercy through Christ the Lord he must worthily offer to God a humble penitent and obedient heart; and he only can do so when he is being led by the Holy Ghost.  **51**

So in order to engage in inward fasting the saying of this Collect -- or a prayer like it - is absolutely necessary for the people of God to offer to the LORD.

“Worthily” is a word that “Protestants” tend to avoid, but here it emphasizes that our self-examination, our sense of guilt for sins, our sorrow for sins, our penitence for sins and our looking unto the Lord for relief must be in the name and for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ to be counted worthy before his Father. Thus our dependence on the presence and grace of the Holy Ghost to bring that worthiness into our offering of this good work of fasting to the Lord our God.

Let us pray it in sincerity and with understanding and as part of a practical commitment to the keeping of Lent as a duty unto the Lord.

## Quinquagesima

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O LORD, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth: Send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee: Grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen

### Collect Commentary

This Collect is closely related to the Epistle, St Paul's hymn of charity or love, which is 1 Corinthians 13. The opening words recall the third verse. “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity it profiteth me nothing.” And these words also point back to the opening of the Collect for Sexagesima, “O Lord God who seest that that we put not our trust in anything that we do...” When we trust in what we actually do, that is in our good intentions and deeds, they break down under us as we lean upon them for “without charity they are worth nothing” - and perfect charity is never found in our souls.

As we approach Lent, when we are called to engage in both personal asceticism and good works in order to please our Lord in preparation for the celebration of his Atonement and Resurrection, we need this solemn reminder - that unless what we do for others is inspired by the faith that works by charity and love it will not be acceptable in the kingdom of heaven or pleasing to our God.

Thus it is most clear that we need the presence of the Holy Ghost in our souls and lives so that he who is God can bring to us the actual love of God, the gift of charity. Then we can both love God and love man as the two great commandments calls for us to do.

The gift of divine love and charity becomes for us the bond that brings peace to the soul and peace between the brethren. From it also spring the virtues or the doings of charity - the almsgiving, the endurances, the labours and the serving and evangelising. These which are “our doing” need to proceed from, be united in, and be surrounded by divine love so that they truly are means for the promotion of the kingdom of Christ and for the glory of God

The last part of the Collect presents a very strong assertion, yet one taken from Holy Scripture. Without the love of God in our hearts we are as dead persons before God. “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:14). “Though I have all faith and have not charity, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:2).

What an excellent prayer to use in the week that includes Ash Wednesday & the beginning of the 40 days of Lent.

## Sexagesima

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O LORD God, who seest that we put not our trust in any thing that we do: Mercifully grant that by thy power we may be defended against all adversity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

This Collect is not a straight translation of the old Latin Collect. It was edited to remove a reference to the Apostle Paul. The petition originally asked, “Mercifully grant that by the protection of the teacher of the Gentiles we may be fortified against all adversities”. The Reformers of the 16th century did not allow any prayer to the saints, any request of saints to pray for us, or the treating of a saint as if he were a guardian angel. Thus they changed “by the protection of the teacher of the Gentiles” to “by thy power”.

Yet they retained the Epistle, 2 Corinthians 11:19-31, which contains St Paul’s descriptions of the variety of sufferings he had endured for the Gospel. In this physical and mental pain he could, if he wished, have boasted for the pain was much more than any other apostle or evangelist had experienced, and it was for the sake of Christ. Yet he did not believe that this pain and tribulation was the basis for his acceptance with God. It was part of his willing service of Christ Jesus.

It is a very difficult thing, even for saints, not to put any trust in the things that they do. For most of us it is a natural thing and certainly a temptation to think that there is virtue before God and man in the really good things that we think we do. Especially is this so if what we do brings us persecution or suffering for the sake of the Gospel.

God sees all and everything! To him all hearts are open and all desires known and from him no secrets are hid. He is watchful and persuades us by many means (the example of Paul, the instruction in Scripture and so on) to trust only in him for he alone is the source of all life, power, knowledge and wisdom.

Therefore, we pray that we shall be defended from all adversity be it in the form of testings or temptations, pain or suffering, trial or tribulation, the desires of the flesh or the wiles of the devil. “When I am weak then I am strong” said the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 12:10). Only as we know our own weakness and rest in God’s strength are we making progress towards Christian maturity. In order rightly to approach Lent and benefit from its disciplines, we surely need to learn this lesson.

The Gospel for this week is the Parable of the Sower and the Seed. And the purpose of this is to place before Christians the goal of being so receptive to the word of God in all situations, and at all times, that they, in an honest and good heart, bring forth fruit with patience.



## Septuagesima or The Third Sunday before Lent

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O LORD, we beseech thee favourably to hear the prayers of thy people; that we, who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by thy goodness, for the glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

Introduction to Septuagesima

As the Church moves through the Christian Year from Epiphany to Lent she passes through three Sundays which have to modern ears strange titles. Septuagesima, Sexagesima & Quinquagesima are in fact three Latin words and they indicate how far away we are from Easter - that is, 70, 60 & 50 days respectively. From the fifth century after Christ these Sundays emerged as a preparatory cycle for Lent in the West.

The Latin names arose by analogy with Quadragesima, the first Sunday in Lent, known as the “fortieth day” before Easter. Quinquagesima is exactly fifty days before Easter but Sexagesima (60) and Septuagesima (70) are only approximations.

In Rome and the West, Septuagesima (the 70th) day before Easter was regarded as the beginning of the preparation for Easter and thus it was natural to attract to itself the theme of The Beginning, that is the Creation of the world by the Father through the Son and with the Holy Ghost. (Thus there began the reading of Genesis on this day in the monastic Daily Offices.)

In the Church of the East in the Byzantine tradition there also emerged a cycle of preparation before Lent proper, with the last two Sundays being known as “Meatfare” and “Cheesefare” Sundays. There is partial fasting between these two Sundays and then Lent begins on the Monday which is known as “Clean Monday,” with no meat or cheese.

In the West, in the modern post 1960s Roman Catholic and Anglican Prayer Books, the “Gesimas” have been abolished. However, they remain part of the Christian Year in The Book of Common Prayer. They serve to place worshippers today in a long tradition of regarding Lent to be so important as a preparation for Easter, the Feast of Feasts, as to require for itself a preliminary preparation. So the “Gesimas” are a preparation for the Preparation.

The Collect for Septuagesima which begins the short cycle anticipates two chief ideas of Lent - the confession of our sin and its just punishment, and the prayer for forgiveness from God’s mercy in Jesus Christ. Thus in these three weeks the faithful begin to turn their minds to Lent, its solemnity and how they will keep it, in joining with their Lord in his fasting, meditating, praying and resisting temptation in the wilderness.

This week the Church in the West has traditionally begun her initial preparation for Lent. In this period of three Sundays and eighteen days until Ash Wednesday the Church as a whole and each member in particular are given the opportunity to work out the approach to Lent and the discipline to be followed in Lent. The Gospel through a parable of Jesus declares that God is debtor to no man and that everything he gives us is of his amazing grace. In contrast the Epistle urges us to give ourselves wholly to the service of God and to dedicate ourselves totally to his kingdom.

The spiritual tone that this Collect calls for and presents is one of penitence and humility before the all-seeing, all-knowing, wholly just and yet wholly merciful God, the Father of Jesus Christ. Our sins represent disobedience to him as the Law-giver, rebellion against him as the Master, pride before him as the Holy Lord, and irreverence before him as the universal Judge.

Yet, after self-examination, with repentant hearts and penitent souls, and looking unto Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son and Mediator between God and man, we can and must place ourselves before him, casting ourselves upon his goodness and mercy, made known unto us in the same Lord Jesus Christ. This is the spirit that will be deepened and extended during Lent, as we seek to draw near to God the Father through the sole merits and mediation of his Son.

The key verb in this Petition is “delivered”, that we may be mercifully delivered or liberated from the captivity and bondage of sin, by which we are tied as with chains that we cannot break.

Happily, the emphasis upon our sinfulness is matched in this Collect by the full emphasis upon the mediation of the Son, who in the final words, we recall and recognize is truly exalted to the Father’s right hand in glory to reign there as the King of kings and to be unto us the exalted Prophet, Priest and King. In fact the Collect ends with the glorifying of the Blessed Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.



# The Presentation of Christ in the Temple

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Almighty and everliving God, we humbly beseech thy Majesty, that, as thy only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in the substance of our flesh, so we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts, by the same thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

Jesus was presented in the Jerusalem Temple at the age of forty days, according to the requirement of the Law of Moses for a first-born male child. There he was greeted by both Simeon and Anna and thus there was a meeting of the five - these two, Mary, Joseph & Jesus.

From the fourth century, this event has been commemorated in the Church by a festival which was first simply called in Greek, Hypapante (the Meeting). Later in the Latin West it has been called "The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary" and "The Presentation of Christ in the Temple." The word, "Candlemas" is a northern European name for the festival because there had long been a procession with lighted candles at the mass on this day.

The Gospel reading describes the bringing of Jesus by Mary and Joseph to the Temple and their offering of a sacrifice as required by the Law (Leviticus 12:8; Luke 2:24) after the birth of a first-born son (Exodus 13:2,15). It continues by presenting Simeon, a devout Jew, who was waiting to see the Messiah of his people. On seeing Jesus, he knew that he was looking at the Messiah and so taking him in his arms, he praised God and uttered the prayer we now call "Nunc dimittis." Then Simeon turned to bless Mary and Joseph and prophesied concerning the messianic vocation and work of Jesus. This small group was then joined by Anna, a godly widow, who also was waiting for the advent of the Messiah. After she had seen Jesus and also recognised him as the Messiah, she thanked God and spoke of the him as the Messiah to many people.

The Epistle reading from the prophecy of Malachi speaks of the Messiah coming to the Temple of the Lord to purge and to save. "The Lord whom you [Simeon & Anna] seek shall suddenly come to his temple..."

The reason why there has been a profuse use of candles in the keeping of this festival over the centuries is simple. It is to proclaim by visible sign the words uttered by Simeon concerning Jesus, "a Light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel."

The Collect in The Book of Common Prayer (1662 & 1928) is ancient and comes from the Latin through the history of the Western Church into English for the English Prayer Book of the sixteenth century. True to the original intention of the Feast, the whole emphasis in this prayer is upon Jesus, who was the center of attention in the Temple on his fortieth day. It is the commemoration of the first appearance of the Lord of the temple in the temple, that temple which he came to love, from where in his boyhood he found it so difficult to tear himself away, and the very temple that he honoured so highly as to cleanse twice during his ministry (John 2:13-18 & Matthew 21:12-13).

Of course, Mary, his mother, is there in the background, for after all she had given birth to the Messiah and, as a faithful Jewess, she had to offer sacrifice for her own ritual purification after giving birth to her first-born son. This is why in the West the feast has been

also named for her.

Let us now turn to the actual content of the Collect.

“Almighty and everliving God, we humbly beseech thy Majesty.” God the Father is both all-powerful and all-alive. He is not merely everlasting but everliving. And he is “Majesty,” a most appropriate word here as what is being remembered actually happened in the temple of Jerusalem, the LORD’s earthly palace in the time of the old covenant. He is the “great King over all the earth” (Psalm 47:2). Did not Isaiah see “the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up” with the train of his robe filling the whole temple (Isaiah 6: 1)?

“That, as thy only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in substance of our flesh.” As Jesus is the Incarnate Son of God, One Person made known in two natures, divine and human, he is both of one substance with the Father and also of one substance with us. He shares our human nature, our humanity, our flesh and blood. As the infant of 40 days he appeared in the temple as boy, as human, as flesh, but Simeon and Anna were given eyes to see also that he was/is the Son of God who has taken to himself our human flesh.

“So we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts.” We fervently ask the Father for the sake of his Son and by his Holy Spirit to assist us in our self-examination and penitence that we may know his forgiveness and cleansing, and thus approach him with purified hearts.

Perhaps here we can think of infant baptism followed later by confirmation and whole-hearted commitment to the Lord and his work. In such baptism we are presented by sponsors/godparents and then later we take unto ourselves the promises they made for us and we receive the strengthening of the Lord in order to be full and active members of his Church.

The ending of the Collect, by the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is the only use of “by” in the Collects of the editions of the Prayer Book from 1549 to 1662 in this way. Usually it is “through Jesus Christ.” Perhaps it was directed against any idea of addressing intercession to the Blessed Virgin Mary by making it absolutely clear that Jesus is the sole and only Mediator between God and man.

One final comment. As the festival occurs in Epiphany, the season wherein the emphasis is upon the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, at his Baptism, and in other ways, it fits into this theme, being his earliest manifestation inside the house of his heavenly Father.

## Second Sunday after Epiphany

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who dost govern all things in heaven and earth; Mercifully hear the supplications of thy people, and grant us thy peace all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

In addressing, God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, the Church recalls that not only is this Lord God the Creator of all that is, but he is also the sovereign ruler of all that is. He governs all things in his providence and does so in such a way as to allow for the exercise of the wills of human beings, even when they rebel against his law.

Since the Lord our God does actually rule and guide all things at all times in all places, then he can hear the petitions, prayers and supplications of his people wherever they be within his created order, and whatever language they speak. So it is most appropriate for the Church to ask him in his great mercy and compassion to hear the prayers of his people, whether they are private or public, uttered or unexpressed.

One supplication that Christians make daily (see the Second Collect for Morning & Evening Prayer) is for the peace of God, the peace that is experienced deep in the soul and that passes understanding, remaining there in trial and tribulation. Christians need God's peace not one day or one week, but all the days of their life on this earth, where they are pilgrims and sojourners, labourers and ambassadors, servants and soldiers for the kingdom of heaven. Further, they hope for peace on earth and good will towards men, as the angels sang.

And all prayer, private and public, arises to the Father Almighty by one route, through his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, and by the energising presence and power of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in the souls of true believers.

The Epistle reminds the congregation of the spiritual gifts given unto it from the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit. They are to be used to manifest and make known Jesus, his Gospel and his way of life.

The Gospel continues the great theme of Epiphany, the Manifestation of Jesus as the Messiah, Saviour and Son of the Father. By the miracle of the turning of water into wine, Jesus performs a sign which points to his real and true identity. He shows himself to be - in the words of the dogma of the Church - One Person made known in two Natures, divine and human. Jesus is obviously a person to whom Mary speaks and whom Mary knows well, her Son. Yet the miracle reveals that he is a complex Person, more than Man while also being Man. He reveals the Father.

The Manifestation of the identity of Jesus at the first miracle in Cana of Galilee is linked in Christian celebration with his Manifestation when visited by the Magi and when he was baptized by John in the Jordan. On all three occasions his true identity was made known and manifested in Epiphany.

## First Sunday after Epiphany

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people which call upon thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

Having prayed since the Feast of the Epiphany to be given the grace to contemplate the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in heaven, five days later the Church makes two further and inter-connected petitions of her heavenly Father, the Lord our God, in the name of her Saviour and Mediator, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The first is that God will receive in mercy and compassion the desires, vows and prayers of his people who supplicate, with bended knee, before him. However, the Church does not ask God to answer them as asked, but rather to receive them and then in the judgment of his perfect wisdom and mercy to respond to them for the true good of his people. For, if God gave to his people merely what they desired and asked for, he would not be a merciful God, since we often desire and ask for that which is not for our short-term or long-term good!

The force of the verb “grant” in prayer is that of “give and supply for no other is able to do so.” Of God the Church asks that she will be inspired by the Holy Ghost to recognize and see what is her duty according to the divine will, and that, further, she will have the will and strength to perform that duty in its totality.

In relating to God, we need to know him, to perceive by his inspiration what is his will and then knowing the will, to perform and do the same. It is so easy for us to assume that our own best human wisdom and insights are in fact God’s will for us and his Church. Such an assumption is best avoided and in its place there should be a humble recognition that we need to know from God what is his purpose and plan, and then we need his help to fulfil the same!

The Epistle calls for wholehearted commitment to the Lord and his service by each and every member of the congregation of Christ’s flock and that they all be conformed to his perfect will. The Gospel provides us with an example of the developing consecration of Jesus to the Father’s will and his growing sense of being uniquely the Father’s Son. Thus he is the One to whom we go in order to know and come to the same Father.

Because of the Gospel lesson, this Sunday is sometimes called “A Feast of the Holy Family”.

A final comment. If the original Latin prayer in the Gregorian Sacramentary had been translated literally by Archbishop Cranmer, it would have been something like this:

“O Lord, we beseech thee, regard with the compassion of a heavenly Father the fervent desires of thy people, who make their supplications unto thee, that they may both see what things ought to be done, and may have strength to fulfil what they see. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

It will be observed that each prayer seeks the same blessings from the one and the same Lord God.



# Epiphany

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O GOD, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles: Mercifully grant, that we, which know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Collect Commentary

The Feast of the EPIPHANY, the twelfth day after Christmas, begins the season of EPIPHANY, which continues in the Church Year to the beginning of Lent. The Book of Common Prayer (1928) makes provision for up to six Sundays in Epiphany, depending on the date of Easter.

If we think that the Feast (or even the season) of the Epiphany is only about the visit of the (three) kings or magi or wise men “from the east” then we only partially appreciate it! There is much more to it.

The word EPIPHANY is Greek and means MANIFESTATION or APPEARANCE. It is a Greek name because the Festival was in origin, and for its first period of celebration, an Eastern Mediterranean Christian feast, not a Roman one. Originally the Greek-speaking Church celebrated both the Birth of Christ and the Manifestation on one and the same day, January 6th, while the Latin-speaking Church celebrated Christmas on December 25.

From the early fifth century, both East and West celebrated both Christmas Day (Dec 25) and the Epiphany (Jan 6) but with different emphases. The West celebrated the Nativity on December 25th and the Manifestation to the Gentiles on January 6. Possibly the focusing of the feast in the West of the Manifestation particularly on the visit of the magi/kings is related to the moving of their relics from Constantinople to Milan in the fourth century, when Milan was capital of the western half of the Roman Empire.

Related to the Epiphany/Manifestation of the Son of God incarnate to the Gentiles are two other central Manifestations of God observed at this time - very particularly so in the East on the feast day, Jan 6, but also in the West during the season of Epiphany.

These other two are (a) the Manifestation of the Holy Trinity at the Baptism of Jesus when the Father speaks to the Son and the Spirit from the Father descends upon the Son (Mark 1:1-11), and (b) the Manifestation of Jesus as the One Person made known in two Natures when he performed the “sign” at Cana of Galilee - the miracle of water into wine (John 2:1-11). (For the use of these two Events in the West see the Gospels for Epiphany 2 & 3 in the 1928 BCP.)

If we put these three Manifestations together we have in its primary, biblical, narrative form what was achieved dogmatically by the first four Ecumenical Councils of the Church up to AD 451. That is, the setting forth by Gentile Christian bishops the dogma of the One, Blessed, Holy and Undivided Trinity and of the One Person of Christ Jesus made know in two natures, divine and human.

Returning to the Western celebration of the Epiphany feast proper on January 6, it is an old tradition that states that there were three visitors (because three gifts) and that they were kings. In fact prophecy encouraged the idea that they were kings, “The Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Psalm 72:10 & Isaiah



60:3). That the new king should be born in Canaan was seen in the prophecy of Balaam (Num. 24:17) and so the magi took the main road from Persia to Jerusalem, and from there to Bethlehem in particular, because of the clear prophecy in Micah 5:2 that the Messiah would be born in the city of David.

The Manifestation to mankind by Jesus Christ & the Holy Trinity has for its ultimate purpose the deification of man through salvation, sanctification and glorification. Thus the Collect for the Feast in the BCP itself prays that “we may have the fruition (= enjoyment) of thy glorious Godhead” - the beatific vision, the seeing of the glory of the Father in the face of the Incarnate Son.

O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles: Mercifully grant, that we, which know thee now by faith may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This Collect in its original Latin wording is based upon (a) the biblical narrative of the visit of the magi as recorded in Matthew 2; and (b) the thought that “we walk by faith and not by sight” on earth ( 2 Corinthians 5:7).

The translation provided in the BCP of 1549 and thereafter, however, does not bring out as clearly as possible, the second of these themes, the walking by faith now towards the future contemplation by sight in heaven. The petition in Latin may be more literally translated: “Mercifully grant that we, which know thee now by faith, may be led onwards until we come to gaze upon thy Exaltation [Majesty] by sight...”

It seems that in 1549 Archbishop Cranmer had in mind the writings of St. Augustine of Hippo and others, who had written of the beatific vision in heaven as “the fruition of thy glorious Godhead.” So he used this expression rather than literally translating the Latin before him. The translation provided above points to the same glorious conclusion as Augustine & Cranmer had in mind, but it picks up more clearly on the theme of “being led onwards” (in the case of the magi by a star and of ourselves by faith) and of “contemplation/gazing” (the magi gazed at the heavens and then upon the Only-Begotten Son Incarnate, while we shall see the glory of the Father in the face of the exalted Jesus Christ).

What this Collect actually prays for in Latin or in English is of course the important thing. The people of God make petition for divine assistance so that, after being faithful sojourners and pilgrims here on earth in this evil age, they will experience the full realization of Christian hope and see the Glory of the Father in the face of Jesus Christ in the glorious age to come. But we must first walk by faith in order later by grace to walk by sight! This is a message for the whole of the season of the Epiphany.

# The Circumcision of Christ

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

“By the mystery of thy holy Incarnation; by thy holy Nativity and Circumcision...” (Litany). ALMIGHTY God, who madest thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man: Grant us the true Circumcision of the Spirit; that, our hearts, and all our members, being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey thy blessed will; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## Collect Commentary

The Book of Common Prayer (1662) makes no special provision for the Second Sunday after Christmas (which occurs 4 out of 7 times), but directs that what is provided for the Feast of the Circumcision be used on this day also. Editions of the Prayer Book since 1928 do, however, usually provide Propers for the Second Sunday .

The Collect is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by adoption and grace is also our Father. Circumcision was the entrance into the covenant of the Law (Genesis 17:12) and to receive it implied taking on the whole obligation of the Law. It was the Father’s will that his Incarnate Son should, as one born of a woman and under the Law, submit to that Law. Thus “when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus” (Luke 2:21). Yet he did not submit to the Law for his own sake, but for ours in order to fulfil in our place our debt to the whole Law of God, ceremonial and moral. He was born to be our Representative and Substitute, whether we be Jew or Gentile. And the shedding of the drops of blood at his circumcision point to the greater shedding of his precious blood for us at Calvary, thirty or so years later. In the light of this crucial doctrine about the Incarnation, Circumcision and Obedience (active & passive) of Christ Jesus, we earnestly pray for an internal gift of grace, the true circumcision of the Spirit. Not the old circumcision of the flesh but “circumcision of the heart, in the spirit” (Romans 2:28-29). That is, we ask for the action of the Holy Spirit upon our spirits that energised by heavenly power we shall be enabled to cut away all sinful desires from our hearts and to put them to death (mortified - see Colossians 3:15). For it is only when the power of evil desires and habits is dispelled from the various faculties and recesses of the soul, that we are able seriously to obey the will of the Lord, our God, in the name of his blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, when spiritually circumcised and whether male or female, we are able to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (Romans 12:1). Hands, cleansed and ready to work on God’s assignments; feet, washed and ready to run his errands of mercy and love; eyes, purified from lust, ready to meditate upon and contemplate God’s works and words; ears, cleansed of flattery and enticement, ready to hear the voice of God and the cry of the needy; the tongue, mortified of evil speech and idle words, ready to praise the Lord - in all a living sacrifice!

It seems that Archbishop Thomas Cranmer created this Collect not by translating the Collect in the Sarum Use, but by using and adopting the Latin benediction for this feast. Translated this Benediction runs, “Almighty God, whose only-begotten Son on this day received bodily circumcision, purify your minds by the spiritual circumcision from every allurements of vice, ...”

In conclusion, even as the Litany joins together the Nativity (“made of a woman”) and the Circumcision (“made under the law”), so let us celebrate these Events by our faithful use of this Collect to the salvation of our souls and the redemption of our bodies.

## Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

O GOD, our refuge and strength, who art the author of all godliness: Be ready, we beseech thee, to hear the devout prayers of thy Church; and grant that those things which we ask faithfully we may obtain effectually; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

In this Prayer we address the Father, who is simply called God, through Jesus Christ, his Incarnate Son, who is also the Lord of all lords and Head of the Church of God. We speak through because the Lord Jesus Christ, very God and very Man, is the one Mediator between God and man. And we anticipate that we are to bring to him some large petitions.

In addressing the Father, we recall in his presence, certain aspects of his nature and several of his characteristics and attributes, in order that in the light of these, we can make effective petition.

In images often used in the Old Testament, we think of God as our Refuge the One in whom we can hide from the storms of life -- & God as our Strength ñ the One to whom we can look in time of storms. (See Psalm 46:1, God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble.) Further we recall that, from him, through his Spirit ministering to Christian believers, proceeds all true faith, faithfulness, virtue and sound religion the author of all godliness).

Since God is all this and more to us, his Church, we ask humbly, yet with confidence, that he will hear our devout (= as inspired by him) prayers. Further, we ask that he will not only hear but he will also answer for the good of the Church these petitions which we make as the faithful congregation of Christs flock.

1 John 5:14. This is the confidence that we have of him: that if ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.

The Epistle places before us the Return of Christ in glory to encourage our prayers and move us towards godliness. The Gospel presents to us Jesus, our Mediator, in his manhood, one with us.

## Advent Sunday

*Author: The Revd Dr Peter Toon*

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

### Collect Commentary

This beautiful and moving prayer was written specifically for The Book of the Common Prayer (1549) by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. Its structure, style and contents reveal just how perfectly he had mastered in English the grammatical structure of the traditional Latin Collects. It is a most appropriate prayer with which to begin the Christian Year for it is addressed to the Father, Almighty God, is centered upon the Lord Jesus Christ, thy Son, and looks for the direct help in daily living of the Spirit of the Father and the Son (the Holy Ghost). And it takes specific guidance and inspiration from the Epistle.

Here in remembrance before Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we remember both (i) the Advent/Coming of the Only-Begotten Son when he humbled himself, took to himself our human nature and was born from the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Bethlehem, and (ii) the future Advent/Coming of the same Son as the Lord of lords and King of kings to earth at the end the age in great glory, to raise the dead and to judge the peoples, and to inaugurate the kingdom of God.

As baptized believers, living in a world darkened by evil and sin, but given Light by Jesus Christ who is the Light of the world, we ask for the personal help of the Father, through the Holy Ghost, in order to live not as children of darkness but rather as children of light. Indeed, we pray to be protected by the armour of light (see Romans 13:12). When Christ Jesus returns to earth in his Second Coming he will dispel all shadows and darkness, clear up all doubts, chase away all sorrows and cause the new dawn of the new day of the new age to appear. Then we shall cast off our sleeping apparel and put on the shining dress of the kingdom of God, as we are raised to the life immortal.

Prayed each day at Morning and Evening Prayer and whenever the Lords Supper is celebrated during the four weeks of Advent, this Collect is a real means of grace whereby we prepare rightly during the four weeks of Advent to celebrate the Incarnation at Christmas and the Epiphany a little later. In some forms of churchmanship Advent is regarded as a time of penitence, a kind of short Lent. Such may be based upon the words cast away the works of darkness, which requires not only effort (assisted by divine grace) but self-examination to become aware of sin and darkness in the heart, mind and soul. Further, the theme of the Second Advent calls forth from the people of God, fasting and prayer as they watch and pray.

Let us make full use of it and pray its words with appropriate piety and reverence.

The Gospel for the week sets forth another Coming, the coming of the Lord Jesus to Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week. He enters the city as the Messiah, the Son of David, the Prophet of God, bringing salvation for Israel and the world, and he is welcomed as such by those who have previously heard his teaching and witnessed his exorcisms and miracles. Let us in Advent also prepare ourselves heartily to welcome the same Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, the Saviour of the world and the Judge of the peoples.

இந்த புத்தகத்தின் தமிழாக்க பணி நடந்து கொண்டிருக்கிறது.  
இந்த புத்தகத்தின் தமிழாக்க பணியில் நீங்களும் கலந்து கொள்ளலாம்.

உங்களுக்கு விருப்பம் இருந்தால் தொடர்பு கொள்க

Christianhistorical@gmail.com

sujithrex@pm.me

sujithicmacat@gmail.com



## **For More Info :**

**Sujith . S**

**Email : [sujithrex@pm.me](mailto:sujithrex@pm.me)**

**[sujithicmacat@gmail.com](mailto:sujithicmacat@gmail.com)**

**Mobile : +91 7538812218**

**On Cloud : [tchsportal.co.in](http://tchsportal.co.in)**

