



Book of

Prayers in

Common

2013

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*As you pray the prayers in this book
know that you are praying them with the majority of Christians
throughout history,
and the bulk of Christians today.*

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Introduction

What is this book?

This book is my gift to you. It is a gift I make to the church. You can find different formats of this book at www.liturgy.co.nz/bookofprayersincommon

This book is a growing compendium of collects, a compilation of some prayers that many Christians, especially Western Christians, share in common.

A collect is a particular type of prayer. It is used in a variety of ways and contexts. At a Eucharist, a collect is the prayer that concludes the gathering of the community, the introductory rites that prepare us to hear God's Word in the scriptures and to celebrate Communion.

This book brings together some collects that the majority of Christians share in common today; and we have shared these with each other for the bulk of Christian history. It is appropriate to call this common prayer.

This is a work in progress. It is collecting what has been produced so far.

I look forward to your feedback and suggestions. Email liturgy.co.nz@gmail.com

What you see here has been a slow, lengthy process already. Each prayer here has been shared on my website (www.liturgy.co.nz). Each has been read there, usually by a couple of thousand people. Many of these people have then used the prayer in a variety of contexts, and fed back with comments and recommendations, both publicly and privately. Thank you to those of you who have been part of this already. Now you too, the reader here, are also part of this process.

This collection is now on the way to fulfilling the goal of producing a complete set of prayers for the year.

As more prayers are prepared, or with other revisions, new editions of this work will be made available. Keep up to date on www.liturgy.co.nz

You can find commentaries on the background as well as a reflection based on each collect at www.liturgy.co.nz [Use the search box on the site if you cannot easily find what you are looking for.]

It was a significant discovery of mine that Roman Catholics and Anglicans (particularly Episcopalians) so often prayed the same collect, in slightly different renditions, on the very same day. Whatever else can be said about the 2010 English translation for Roman Catholics, it increased the realisation of this shared collect tradition mostly prayed on the same day.

What is the role of the collect?

The collect, I believe, is a key to liturgy, to worship, to common prayer. But not as we so regularly experience it. The unreformed entrance rite has rightly been called “our cluttered vestibule”. Unfortunately, in many places that clutter is still evident. The collect is often experienced as a few seconds of just another little prayer early on in a service, even read together from a printed pew-sheet or overhead screen. It is often merely another nice little prayer cluttering this vestibule of the start of our liturgy.

The word “collect” in Latin is *collecta* – *gathering together*. A collect gathers a litany (list of petitions) together into a final, single prayer. Or a collect gathers silent prayer together into a single prayer. This gathering together, of the silent prayers of the people who are gathering for worship, is essential to the role of the collect at this point. It gathers these particular individuals into a praying community.

Ideally, at the Eucharist, individuals arrive and are greeted by the presider – whose greeting is returned. Then we have the unifying experience of singing together. As part of this Gathering we are called to a moment of shared, deep silence in the presence of the great mystery we call God. This deep silence is concluded, “collected,” by the presider praying aloud the collect which we then all affirm with our “Amen.” This describes the central dynamic of gathering to hear what the Spirit is saying to us, the church, through the scriptures proclaimed. The silence is at the heart of the dynamic of using the collect.

The collect, like that other great prayer, the Great Thanksgiving (Eucharistic Prayer), is at the heart of what prayer is for us, and so traditionally the collect is addressed to God (the first Person of the Trinity), through Christ (into whom we are being drawn, and in whose name we, the Body of Christ, pray), in the power of the Holy Spirit.

What is the structure of a collect?

Just as a sonnet or a haiku has a particular, recognisable structure, so does a collect. A collect has a five-fold structure. Three parts are always present (marked *):

***You**– the Address:

God,

Who – the Amplification (and possibly the motive), the foundation upon which our request is made, an attribute or act of God:

*you have prepared for those who love you
good things which no eye can see,
and which surpass our understanding;*

***Do** – the Petition:

pour into our hearts such longing for you,

To – the Purpose (and possibly the motive, the aspiration, the reason for which we ask):

*that we,
loving you in all things and above all things,
may obtain your promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;*

***Through** ... the Conclusion:

*through Jesus Christ,
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

What is the history of the collect?

If you went back in a time machine seventeen centuries you could find the very same prayer being prayed on the very same day in the Christian community at worship! These prayers are old. They are the results of people mulling over the message prayerfully century upon century. They have been worn smooth by constant repetition, in Latin, and then, in the sixteenth century, by Cranmer into memorable English. They have been memorised by generations, these short, prayerful statements encapsulating deep spiritual truth and insight.

In this collection I have attempted to rework them into our context where language has changed.

How can I use a collect in worship?

Their primary use is as part of the gathering of a community. For this, the collect can be understood as being at the heart of a four-fold movement:

1) **A bidding.** Each collect in this book is provided with a bidding. As the leader, you can use simply as, “Let us pray”. Or you can have a more extended bidding: “Let us pray in silence that...”, or “Let us pray that ...”. Brackets indicate possible options. The suggestion in the bidding is something broad to pray for, that all can pray for with integrity.

If the community is standing at this point, there is no need to plummet to one’s knees. This may need a reminder, “As we remain standing, let us pray...”

2) **Silent prayer.** This is the heart of what we are doing. This deep silent praying of the gathering community is what the collect is collecting. If there is no silent praying, what is the collect collecting? Individuals have arrived from a variety of contexts. They are now being gathered into a community. Those gathering need to have confidence that the time of quiet prayer is sufficient for each to be able to form a

silent prayer. It is worth repeating: without this silence the “collect” is in grave danger of being reduced to merely another little prayer cluttering the vestibule at the start of our service.

3) The leader proclaims the collect in the name of the gathering community.

After sufficient silent prayer the presider proclaims the collect, gathering the prayers of the community, and articulating the prayer of the church – the body of Christ. As Christ’s body we address in Christ’s name, on Christ’s behalf, God the Source of all Being, and we do so in the power and unity of the Holy Spirit.

4) The community affirms the collect, we make the collect our own, by together declaring a strong “Amen”, our “so be it”.

The collect when well understood and aptly used can powerfully gather the community, deepen our prayerfulness, and profoundly express much at the heart of Christian spirituality.

What are some ways I can vary or adapt a collect?

I have already mentioned some of the different ways that the collect can be introduced (the bidding).

In this book, I also regularly add a suggestion for an alternative Address, to the right in square brackets. Often the original Latin Address is simply “God” (Deus). Some find that too bald. It can be softened as, “Oh God”, for example. Or you can expand the Address using what I offer in the square brackets.

The Conclusion can also be varied. Most importantly, I suggest there be a consistency of the last word(s) that will cue in the gathering community’s enthusiastic “Amen”. Otherwise you can end up with a rolling echo of an “Amen” (said by the leader), followed by “Amen”, said by those alert; followed by “Amen” from the stragglers.

I suggest a full Trinitarian Conclusion when the collect is used in the Gathering of the Community, at a Eucharist, for example. I will mention shorter endings below, for the Conclusion, if the collect is used in other contexts.

In the text I consistently offer the same Conclusion. There are other conclusions that are equally appropriate, and there is no reason why one would not rotate through different Conclusions (with my proviso that the cue remain constant, my suggested one being, “... for ever.”)

Cistercians in *Prieres au Fil des Heures (Proclaiming All Your Wonders)* present a thought-provoking Conclusion:

“...through Jesus, the Christ, our Lord...”

which one can then continue in the way that is customary in your community, eg:

through Jesus, the Christ, our Lord,

who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

This may appear at first sight to be a somewhat unusual and even difficult Conclusion. It is inspired by the progression in New Testament Christology, from ordinary man, through recognition as Christ/Messiah (eg. Peter's confession, Mark 8:9), to accepting him as "Lord" after the Resurrection (Acts 2:36; Philippians 2:9).

Then, of course, there are a variety of traditional Trinitarian Conclusions, such as:

through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Spirit,
one God now and for ever.

If the prayer is not being used to gather the community (eg. as part of the Daily Office, or to conclude prayers), a shorter Conclusion may be appropriate:

This we ask through Christ our Mediator/ Saviour/ Redeemer/ Lord.

If a pattern is established, including in the inflection of the one proclaiming the prayer, it should be possible to avoid the rolling, echoing "Amen" that I described above.

Misguided search for themes in Ordinary Time

The three readings and the psalm set down in the Revised Common Lectionary, and the Roman Catholic three-year cycle on which it is based, do not start from themes! The readings on Sundays in the seasons (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter) may tie together and, hence, a collect, when there is a clear focus, can link to that focus.

But the search for a collect to link to a "theme" for every Sunday in Ordinary Time across the three years is a disastrous error.

At the very least the second reading is following its own course alongside and independent of the course of the Gospel reading. Often, all three readings are independent. [To emphasise this insight, the Church of England, in *Common Worship*, has removed the link between the collect and readings completely for about half the year]. What is required is not a detailed prayer which forms and introduces a straight-jacket theme into which the understanding of readings must then be squeezed.

The inherited collect tradition provides a collection of general prayers that each person, whatever their situation, can make her or his own, and to which we can all say "Amen" to together. There is, hence, also no need or even point in having three different years of collects. A year's worth provides sufficient variety, but not so many that they do not easily become memorable.

The Collects

The Season of Advent

First Sunday in Advent

Let us pray (in silence) [that we long for the advent of Christ]

Pause

Almighty God, [or God of hope or God of justice and peace]
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness,
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in the which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
so that that on the last day when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal,
through him who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit now and for ever.
Amen.

The Season of Christmas

Christmas Day *December 25*

Let us pray (in silence) [that through celebrating the Incarnation we will deepen our relationship with Christ]

Pause

God, [or Eternal God]
year by year you make us glad
with the hope of our redemption,
grant that we who joyfully receive your only begotten Son as our Redeemer
may with sure confidence behold him when he comes as our judge;
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

or this

Let us pray (in silence) [with joy and hope as we await the dawning of God's brightness]

Pause

God, [*or* God, our Creator]
you have made this most holy night
radiant with the splendour of the true light,
may we who even now obscurely share the mystery of your light
come to enjoy your light in fullness,
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

or this

Let us pray (in silence) [that we may grow into the life promised at Christmas]

Pause

God, [*or* God of incarnation]
you wonderfully created
and yet more wonderfully restored
the dignity of human nature;
grant that we may share the divine life
of the one who came to share our humanity,
Jesus Christ, our Saviour
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Epiphany *January 6*

Let us pray (in silence) [that we may manifest God's love for all]

Pause

God, [or God of mystery]
by the leading of a star,
on this day you revealed your only begotten one
to the gentiles,
lead us,
who have already come to know you by faith,
all the way to the contemplation of the beauty of your glory,
through Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Ordinary Time

After Epiphany and After Pentecost

The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday between 14 and 20 January

Let us pray (in silence) [that God direct our lives in the way of peace]

Pause

Almighty and everliving God, [or God of revelation]
you govern all things in heaven and earth;
mercifully hear the prayers of your people,
and guide the course of our days in your peace,
through Jesus Christ, our Saviour
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Seventeenth Ordinary Sunday (Proper 12)

Sunday between 24 and 30 July

Let us pray (in silence) [that we may put God at the heart of our lives]

Pause

O God, [or Living God]
the protector of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy;
enfold us in your gracious care and mercy,
that with you to govern and to guide us
we may so use your gifts in this fleeting world
that we do not lose the good that is eternal;
through Jesus Christ
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Proper 15)

Sunday between 14 and 20 August

Let us pray (in silence) [that we may love God in all things and above all things]

Pause

God, [or Gracious God or Living and gracious God]
you have prepared for those who love you
good things which no eye can see,
and which surpass our understanding;
pour into our hearts such longing for you,
that we,
loving you in all things and above all things,
may obtain your promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
through Jesus Christ
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Proper 17)
Sunday between 28 August and 3 September

Let us pray (in silence) [that what is good within us may flourish]

Pause

God of power and might,
source of all good,
graft in our hearts the love of your name,
and bind us more closely to you
so that you nourish the goodness you sow in us
and, by your watchful care,
you tend and guard the good you have nourished;
through Jesus Christ
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

[*or Faithful God*]

Amen.

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Proper 21)
Sunday between 25 September and 1 October

Let us pray (in silence) [that we may run to receive God's gift of God's divine life]

Pause

O God,
you declare your almighty power
above all by showing mercy and compassion;
grant us the fullness of your grace,
that we, who are running to obtain your promises,
may be partakers of your heavenly treasure;
through Jesus Christ
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

[*or God of heaven and earth*]

Amen.

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Proper 22)

Sunday between 2 and 8 October

Let us pray (in silence) [that we may be open to God's goodness]

Pause

Almighty everliving God, [or Compassionate God]
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray,
and to give more than we desire or deserve;
pour upon us the abundance of your mercy,
forgiving us those things
of which our conscience is afraid,
and giving us those things
for which our prayer dares not ask;
through Jesus Christ
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Proper 23)

Sunday between 9 and 15 October

Let us pray (in silence) [that we may know God's love and grace before, in, and after anything we do]

Pause

Lord, [or Lifegiving God]
we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us,
that we may continually be given to good works;
through Jesus Christ
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Proper 25)

Sunday between 23 and 29 October

Let us pray (in silence) [that God's love strengthen us to do God's will]

pause

Almighty everliving God, [or God of holiness]
increase within us your gifts of faith, hope, and love,
and make us cherish what you command,
so that we may obtain what you promise;
through Jesus Christ
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time (Proper 26)

Sunday between 30 October and 5 November

Let us pray (in silence) [that God's love strengthen us to do God's will]

Pause

Almighty and merciful God, [or Living God or Eternal God]
it is your gift alone
by which your faithful people
offer you true and laudable service,
grant, we beseech you,
that we may run, without stumbling, towards your promises;
through Jesus Christ
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Reign of Christ. Last Sunday in Ordinary Time (Proper 29)

Sunday between 20 and 26 November

Let us pray (in silence) [that the reign of Christ may live in our hearts and come to our world]

Pause

Almighty ever-living God,
it is your will to gather up all things
in your beloved one,
reigning in the universe
in the power that is love,
mercifully grant
that the whole of creation,
freed from slavery,
may serve and praise you
through Jesus Christ
who is alive with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

[*or* Sovereign God]

Amen.

Prayer after communion

Stir up, O Lord,
the wills of your faithful people;
that they, richly bearing the fruit of good works,
may by you be richly rewarded;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

[*or* Stir up, O God]

About the Author



Bosco Peters is passionate about worship that works and spirituality that connects.

He runs a website, www.liturgy.co.nz that has had about two and a half million visits, and he is followed by about 75,000 people on Twitter as @liturgy.

His publications include *Celebrating Eucharist* which, like this book, is available free. For this, go to www.liturgy.co.nz/celebrating-eucharist