



Reflections on the Collects

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

A dear aunt said to me recently, “Your church is different from ours. You Anglicans just read out of a book.” She is, of course, both right and wrong. We do indeed read out of a book, but we do not “just” read out of a book. We use our Prayer Books to give us the words to pray and to praise and worship God, and to do so together, in one voice.

Words matter. God reveals Himself in and through His Word, written in the Holy Scriptures and incarnate in Jesus Christ. God’s Word is the life and the light of the world. When Archbishop Thomas Cranmer undertook the task of transforming the Latin liturgies into the language of the English people, compressed into a single book called The Book of Common Prayer (BCP), he followed the practice of Christians going back to the early Church. In the BCP, we find the very words of the Bible itself, arranged for prayer and beautifully articulated, designed both to instruct our minds and also to direct our hearts and wills aright.

For Holy Communion, there are what are known as “Propers” appointed for each Sunday of the Church year. These Propers include two scripture readings and a prayer, which is called the Collect of the Day. This Collect is to be prayed at every service of Holy Communion and of Morning and Evening Prayer during that week. The Collects were either translated or composed by Cranmer for the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549, and they remain with little alteration in the 1662 BCP, which became the standard of worship as Anglicanism spread throughout the world.

I think it is a worthwhile exercise to meditate briefly each week on the Collect for the week, as found in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. These prayers have been prayed in their English form for over 470 years, and most of them were used in worship for over 1000 years before that in their original language.

All Christians are part of one Body, and the primary activity of that Body is to pray, led by the mind of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. I invite you to join me each week, beginning next week, to reflect upon these prayers, and to pray them each day, joining our voices with the faithful throughout the ages.

In His Grace,

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