

The Great Collects

A "collect" is a brief prayer to collect people's attention when they have collected themselves for worship (usually, for Communion). Many go back to the ancient Church. Most express a single prayer, its thought signaled in the salutation; & are of general use--some are for specific occasions. If one Person of the Trinity is in the salutation, another or both others often will appear in the conclusion. Human destiny is pictured either as resurrection (the usual biblical way) or as soul-survival (on the common body/soul dualism). The language is lofty & solemn (on the 1611, King James Version model)--& with "thee"s, "thou"s, and the late-middle-English verb endings.

Translators have full freedom to convey what they believe to be the original intent: versioners must preserve, as much as meaning allows, the flavor/cadences/balances of the original. This Thinksheet is my versioning of what I consider the greatest collects coming down to us in the history of the English language. The page-numeral preceding each collect refers to THE BOOK OF ENGLISH COLLECTS (Harper&B/40). I use modern English & horizontal inclusive language (no verticle: no change in language for deity).

The order? I put first the better-known collects, the ones all consider great.

256 ALMIGHTY GOD, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

257 O GOD, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us do; that the spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

174 O ALMIGHTY GOD, pouring out on all who desire it the spirit of grace and of supplication: Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind; that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

173 Grant, O LORD, that whoever confess their sins and offer up their prayers to your Divine Majesty in this place, may be kept from all worldly and wandering thoughts, and may draw near to you with such steadfastness of faith and devout affection of mind, that they may be graciously accepted in your sight. O LORD, pardon their sins, compassionate their infirmities, enlighten and sanctify them by your Holy Spirit, and enable them so to serve and worship you here below, that finally they may be received into your presence, to praise and glorify you forevermore. Amen.

187 ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, who in days of old caused your Word to grow mightily and to prevail: We praise and magnify your holy Name for the manifestation of your presence in this our day; and we beseech you to pour out your Spirit upon the Church, that your way may be known upon earth and your saving health among all nations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

187 O GOD, who made of one blood all nations to dwell on the face of the whole earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to them who are far off and to them who are near: Grant that all everywhere may seek after you and find you. Bring the nations into your fold, pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten your kingdom; through the same your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

104 Be mindful, O LORD, of your people present here before you, and of those who are absent through age, sickness, or infirmity. Care for the infants, guide the young, support the aged, encourage the faint-hearted, collect the scattered, and bring the wandering to your fold. Travel with the voyagers, defend the widows, shield the orphans, deliver the captives, heal the sick. Relieve those who are in tribulation, necessity, or distress. Remember for good all who love us, and all who hate us; and those who have desired us, unworthy as we are, to pray for them. And, O LORD, remember those whom we have forgotten. For you are the Helper of the helpless, the Savior of the lost, the Refuge of the wanderer, the Healer of the sick. Knowing each one's need and having heard each one's prayer, grant unto each according to your merciful lovingkindness and your eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

153 O GRACIOUS FATHER, we humbly beseech you for your holy universal Church--that you would be pleased to fill it with all truth, in all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, establish it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of him who died and rose again and ever lives to make intercession for us, Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

154 O GOD, of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; and by the tranquil operation of your perpetual providence, carry out the work of humanity's salvation, and let the whole world feel and see that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and all things are returning to perfection through him from whom they took their origin, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

107 ALMIGHTY GOD, who has given this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech you that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of your favor and glad to do your will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom, in your Name, we entrust the authority of government; that there may be justice and peace at home, and that through obedience to your law we may show forth your praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble permit not our trust in you to fail. All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

114 O LORD, OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, the high and mighty RULER OF THE UNIVERSE, who from your throne behold all the dwellers upon earth: Most heartily we beseech you with your favor to behold and bless your servant the president of the United States, and all others in authority; and so replenish them with the grace of your Holy Spirit that they may always incline to your will and walk in your way. Endue them plentifully with heavenly gifts; grant them to live long in health and prosperity; and finally, after this life, to attain everlasting joy and felicity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

31 O GOD, teaching the hearts of your faithful people by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit: Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort and strength; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Savior, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God world without end. Amen.

xlii O MOST MERCIFUL REDEEMER, FRIEND, AND BROTHER, may we know you more clearly, may we love you more dearly, may we follow you more nearly. [This 12th-century prayer is not a collect, but it's too good to leave out of the list. It's widely known from its use in the musical "Godspell."]

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

57 O GOD, who on the holy mountain revealed to chosen witnesses your well-beloved Son wonderfully transfigured: Mercifully grant unto us such a vision of his divine Majesty that we, being purified and strengthened by your grace, may be transformed into his likeness from glory to glory; through the same your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

284 O LORD, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen.

OTHER GREAT COLLECTS: 103, 178, 204, 216, 228, 260, 261, 290, 293, 304, 305, 329.