



## *Praying the Mass Anew*

*The New Translation of The Roman Missal  
and Our Actual Participation at Mass*

### 12. The “Collect” and other prayers of the celebrant.

Throughout the Mass, there are particular prayers that are designated as “**presidential prayers**.” The **Eucharistic Prayer** (the name for the whole prayer that the priest prays during which the consecration of the bread and wine takes place) is the most important of these prayers. Three other prayers are also considered presidential: the **Collect** (or “Opening Prayer” as it was called in the previous translation) that is said before the readings, beginning with the invitation “Let us pray”; the **Prayer over the Offerings** (prayed after the gifts have been received, blessed, and placed on the altar), and the **Prayer after Communion** (this prayer is prayed after the distribution of Holy Communion, when all stand at the words “Let us pray”). These three prayers, along with the Eucharistic Prayer are explained as “presidential prayers” in paragraph 30 of *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), as they are prayers that are prayed by the priest and “are addressed to God in the name of the entire holy people and all present...who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ.” Hence, while it is only the priest who speaks during these prayers, all who are present are invited to unite their minds and hearts with that spoken (or sung) prayer, offering themselves and their intentions within that one prayer. We will focus here on the other three presidential prayers, looking at the Eucharistic Prayer in a later column.

Each of the prayers of the celebrant is offered for a specific purpose, as is made clear by their timing and placement within the

Mass. The Collect is offered as the end of the Introductory Rites, inviting the people to silently call to mind those persons or needs for which they desire to pray, “collecting” these prayer intentions together as one prayer to the Father. This prayer also serves to expressing the meaning or “character” of the celebration, providing proper context for our prayers to be collected and offered as one. The Prayer over the Offerings invites all to unite themselves more perfectly with Christ in his offering, which is about to be made to the Father in the Eucharistic Prayer. Finally, the Prayer after Communion completes the Communion Rite. This prayer implores God so that the mysteries of Christ in the Eucharist may have an effect in all our lives. Each of these prayers is fittingly concluded with the people’s response of “Amen,” as they unite themselves to that for which we all pray in the name of the entire Church.

In the new translation, it is noteworthy that a more literal approach has given a more poetic style and language in these prayers. In the former version, many of these prayers are translated as multiple sentences. Here, they main text of the prayer is given as one sentence, yielding a more coherent text. In addition, the choice of language in these texts invites us to express a deeper sense of reverence and awe in approaching God. Finally, each prayer no longer contains the words “We ask this,” but follows the literal Latin that says “Through Christ our Lord,” or “Who lives and reigns...” The next page gives us a sample from the Second Sunday of Advent:

## ***Previous Version***

## ***New Translation***

### **Collect (Opening Prayer)**

God of power and mercy,  
open our hearts in welcome.  
Remove the things that hinder us  
from receiving Christ with joy,  
so that we may share his wisdom  
and become one with him  
when he comes in glory,  
for he lives and reigns....

Almighty and merciful God,  
may no earthly undertaking hinder those  
who set out in haste to meet your Son,  
but may our learning of heavenly wisdom  
gain us admittance to his company.  
Who lives and reigns with you...

### **Prayer over the Offerings**

Lord,  
we are nothing without you.  
As you sustain us with your mercy,  
receive our prayers and offerings.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble prayers  
and offerings,  
and, since we have no merits to plead our cause,  
come, we pray, to our rescue  
with the protection of your mercy.  
Through Christ our Lord.

### **Prayer after Communion**

Father,  
you give us food from heaven  
Teach us to live by your wisdom  
and to love the things of heaven  
by our sharing in this mystery.  
Grant this through Christ our Lord.

Replenished by the food of spiritual nourishment,  
we humbly beseech you, O Lord,  
that, through our partaking in this mystery,  
you may teach us to judge wisely the things of earth  
and hold firm to the things of heaven.  
Through Christ our Lord.

### **Noteworthy elements:**

- **Style of Prayer:**  
The new translation is “elevated” and more “sacral” in style, while using more humble language: e.g. “we humbly beseech you,” etc.
- **Literal translation and use of syntax:** The Collect is given as one sentence as in the original Latin text. Likewise, words are more faithfully translated, such as “merits,” “beseech,” etc.

## ***Questions of the Week:***

### ***➤ Why do the Collect, the Prayer over the Offerings, and the Prayer after Communion change all the time?***

You may have noticed that each Sunday (or if you are able to participate in Mass on weekdays, at the various weekday Masses) that these prayers are typically prayed by the priest while he is paying close attention to what is “in the book.” He must read them directly from the book as these prayers are not the same from week to week – or even day to day in the case of Masses that honor the saints. These prayers, which come from various times in history (some more ancient than others) are written according to the liturgical seasons (think Advent, Lent, Ordinary Time, etc.) or for the particular feasts of the Lord or of the saints. Likewise, these three prayers usually come as specific sets: one particular Collect will be accompanied by a particular Prayer over the Offerings and a particular Prayer after Communion that are used together. Thus, these prayers are written for particular Masses on particular days or occasions, and are followed in union with the liturgical year of the whole Church.

### ***➤ Who writes these “presidential prayers?” Can the priest ever make up his own prayers?***

For the presidential prayers, no priest is permitted to make up his own prayers. As mentioned in the first question, these prayers have been composed over time throughout the history of the Church. Some are very ancient, going back at least to the early 6<sup>th</sup> century, by such persons as Pope Leo the Great or other popes. Others have been composed more recently – such as those for more recently canonized saints. As these prayers are offered in union with the Church throughout the world, and because it belongs to the Pope and the bishops in communion with him to decide what prayers are used, these can never be freely changed or replaced by prayers composed by individual priests – no matter how eloquent or holy these prayers or the priest who offer them may be.