

Understanding the Mass

Part 8 in a series

The Collect – (from the Latin, *Collecta* or *Colligo*) – The Opening Prayer

While the “official” name for the opening prayer may sound a little strange, it makes perfect sense when we dig a little deeper into why it is called “The Collect”. The Latin word *Colligo* is defined as “to tie together, to collect or consider.” For you grammar nerds, it is a transitive verb, meaning it needs an object to complete it. In this case, the object is our prayers! The priest, through this prayer, is “Collecting” the prayers (tying them together) of all of us present and presents them to God the Father.

There is a short moment of silence prior to the start of this prayer and this time is intended to give us an opportunity to offer our various prayers to God. We have been praying since we first entered the church: in the silence of our hearts as we prepared for the start of Mass, with our singing (prayers of praise!), with the Confiteor (petitions for forgiveness). Now, at this moment, we have the opportunity to add any and all other prayers and offer them to God with the knowledge that our priest will gather them together and offer them as one on our behalf.

This prayer also has an additional function. With this prayer, the mood, focus, and theme of each particular Mass are summarized. It has four distinct parts. Let’s look at the Collect of Palm Sunday and see how it unfolds.

Part 1 – It begins with an address or invocation to the Father, *“Almighty ever-living God”*

Part 2 – Next follows praise of Him or reference to some Divine attribute or act as reason for the prayer, *“who as an example of humility for the human race to follow caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross,”*

Part 3 – We offer our petition, *“graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering and so merit a share in his Resurrection.”*

Part 4 – It concludes by offering the prayer through the priestly mediation of His Son and in unity with the Holy Spirit, *“Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.”*

Notice how this ties into the Mass of Palm Sunday where we hear the Passion Narrative of Jesus Christ. In this particular Collect, the priest acknowledges the example of true humility that God gave us to emulate and asks that we may learn from Jesus’ patient suffering and so merit everlasting life. The Passion Narrative is the example of humility the priest spoke of in the prayer.

We make the Collect prayer our own by saying “Amen”. The word, “Amen”, is a Biblical affirmation, meaning “so may it be,” and signifies ratification and acceptance. In other words, we agree with what has been said. This concludes the portion of the Mass known as the *Introductory Rites*.