

Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC]
Mystagogical Reflection on the Collects of the *Roman Missal*
Link to Mystagogy Project on FDLC home page: <http://www.fdlc.org>.

CHRISTMAS TIME

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD [CHRISTMAS], Solemnity
December 25, 2012

At the Mass during the Day
Collect:

O God, who wonderfully created the dignity of human nature
and still more wonderfully restored it,
grant, we pray,
that we may share in the divinity of Christ,
who humbled himself to share in our humanity.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

On this Christmas Day, we celebrate the Incarnation of Jesus, the Word made flesh. We remember that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son to walk among us, to dispel the darkness of the world, and restore it to its proper order.

The Collect prepares us to hear the Gospel of the day. The Collect reminds us that God created us wonderfully in his own image, and even though humanity has fallen, we have been wonderfully restored to God's own likeness by Christ's Incarnation, his becoming one of us. In a similar way, John's Gospel speaks to us about the Word made flesh, the Word that restores a world darkened by sin to a world bathed in the light of Christ.

We give thanks this day for the Incarnation, for Jesus' willingness to humble himself to become one of us. We rejoice in great hope of the transformation of our world, praying that all humanity recognize the light that Christ brings to us.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you are the Word that walks among us. Be light for our world, be light for our minds and hearts that we may be restored to our true nature and share in the divine life of God.

Submitted by:
Karen Kane
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THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH, Feast
The Sunday within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord [Christmas]
December 29, 2012

Collect:

O God, who were pleased to give us
the shining example of the Holy Family,
graciously grant that we may imitate them
in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bonds of charity,
and so, in the joy of your house,
delight one day in eternal rewards.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This Feast was instituted by Pope Leo XIII in 1893 and was made a universal Feast by Pope Benedict XV in 1921. Before the reforms of the Second Vatican Council this Feast was celebrated on the First Sunday after Epiphany.

The Collect emphasizes the example of the Holy Family as worthy of our imitation. It calls for the practicing of the virtues of family life with charity. Likewise by living these days with the joy of the home of the Holy Family, we may delight one day in the joy of heaven.

God is thanked for giving us the example of the Holy Family. We ask him to grant us the grace to imitate the very essence and joy of that family and that holy home which both reflects and is a participation in the very life of heaven. We are challenged to live that example for our own sanctification and for the evangelization of all families.

Prayer:

May our families be true examples of the Holy Family such that our homes, and all who live there, may truly be a domestic church, a small community which reflects the very heavenly abode of all the Angels and Saints.

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The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord [Christmas]
SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD
January 1, 2013

Collect:

O God, who through the fruitful virginity of Blessed Mary
bestowed on the human race
the grace of eternal salvation,
grant, we pray,
that we may experience the intercession of her,
through whom we were found worthy
to receive the author of life,
our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This Collect (Opening Prayer) reflects the Church's rich devotion to the Blessed Mother. We celebrate that devotion with ancient hymn texts that are regularly part of our prayer life: *Ave Maria*, *Salve Regina*, *Alma Redemptoris Mater*. In all of them Mary is our advocate. Hers is the fruitful womb. Through her intercessions we hope for our salvation.

This Collect is taken from the Roman Breviary (now the Liturgy of the Hours). It ended *Alma Redemptoris Mater* sung at the end of Night Prayer from Christmas Eve until the Purification (now the Presentation of the Lord).

Praying this prayer during Christmas Time adds to our understanding of the Incarnation. The Lord took on flesh so that he could experience, as do we, the suffering of death. But, Incarnation leads to Resurrection and thus we have a hope that transcends death. This is the blessing of the fruit of Mary's womb. This is the gift of the author of life.

Prayer:

Lord, through the intercession of Mary we raise our hearts to you. Strengthen us that we may be truly worthy of your gifts of life and salvation.

Submitted by:
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THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, Solemnity
January 6, 2013

At the Mass during the Day
Collect:

O God, who on this day
revealed your Only Begotten Son to the nations
by the guidance of a star,
grant in your mercy
that we, who know you already by faith,
may be brought to behold the beauty of your sublime glory.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This is a very old prayer included in the *Hadrian Sacramentary*. It has been used on Epiphany since the latter part of the eighth century. This prayer and this feast expand that the revelation of God is not to just the followers with Jewish roots but to all those beyond the borders, that is, to all the nations.

This prayer admits that the Son of God, born human like us [in all things but sin], is given to everyone. The Latin word “gentibus”, translated “to the nations”, is the same word used in the Second Vatican Council Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church. Its Latin title is “Ad gentes” because it begins with those words that translate “To the nations”.

There is any number of bright stars, new fads, popular figures ready to lead us. But they may guide us to places we should not go. This prayer and this Epiphany show us, manifest to us that there is a luminous One alone, the Only Begotten Son, who is worthy to guide us. We know him by faith. And in that relationship, we follow him to live and work and be among the nations. No one is excluded from our fellowship.

Prayer:

Help us grasp the full meaning, O God, that your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is given not just to the baptized, not just to us, but to all. Help us behave like everyone is your son and daughter and thus our sister and brother.

Submitted by:
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THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, Feast
January 13, 2013

Collect:

Almighty ever-living God,
who, when Christ had been baptized in the River Jordan
and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him,
solemnly declared him your beloved Son,
grant that your children by adoption,
reborn of water and the Holy Spirit,
may always be well pleasing to you.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

There is a lot of imagery captured in this prayer! Your ears will need to be readied to hear and comprehend all that is being said in this prayer.

First, the prayer recalls for us the image of Jesus being baptized in the River Jordan. We also recall that the Holy Spirit descended upon him and God said, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Finally, we pray that we, God's children by adoption, God's children who have been reborn of the water and the Spirit, be pleasing in God's sight. Really, the prayer is quite simple. We are asking that our lives, baptized into Christ, be pleasing to God.

Not always do the Collects reflect the Gospel of the day, but this one clearly refers us to the Feast we celebrate and the Gospel proclaimed. This prayer can lead us to appreciate the importance of our Baptism. Through Baptism into Christ, God has adopted us as his own. We belong to God!

Prayer:

Lord God, we give you thanks for adopting us as your children through the waters of Baptism and the power of the Holy Spirit. Strengthen us to live our baptismal calling that we may indeed live according to your will.

Submitted by:
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Director of Worship
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End Christmas Time