

Devotion on Collect for Epiphany - 9 January 2013, Anno Domini



**The Epiphany, or the Manifestation of Christ
to the Gentiles.**

[January 6.]

The Collect.

O GOD, who by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; Mercifully grant that we, who know thee now by faith, may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ This Collect is to be said daily throughout the Octave

Devotion for Collect for 1st Sunday after Epiphany 15 January 2013 Anno Domini

The First Sunday after The Epiphany.

The Collect.

O LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people who call upon thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Collect echoes sharply the counsel given in 2 Chronicles 7:14 – "*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*" There are no edifying words of prayer that will suffice save those petitions made in and through the Name above every other name – Jesus Christ!

This Collect is taken from the Gregorian Sacramentary and was adapted to the Book of Common Prayer through its use at Salisbury Cathedral. It is a votive prayer, in nature, thereby linking the Wise Men and their gifts to the original Epistle for the Day, Romans 12:1-5. (Collects of Thomas Cranmer, Erdmans 1999) *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of*

another.

(Romans 12:1-5)

What can we offer God that He shall account a worthy offering? Shall we, as Cain, offer the fruit of our labors from a corrupted source; or, shall we offer Him a living sacrifice as did Abel? And if a living sacrifice, of what nature shall it be? The only possession that we own for a time limit is our bodies and souls. If we invest our hearts in Heaven, our souls and bodies shall follow as surely "*the night, the day.*" If we have taken on that Mind which was in Jesus Christ, our old desires and sinful inclination will wither away. In churches in which that Mind has been generally assumed, there will be no division, for Christ is not divided against Himself.

The first line of the Collect is actually a completed prayer in, and of, itself. *O LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people who call upon thee* There are some absolute qualifiers included in this line:

1. The prayer must be directed to the rightful recipient just as a letter addressed to the one to whom we wish to communicate. – The LORD! The LORD is the `addressee.'
2. The prayer is a Communal prayer in that it begins with the pronoun, `WE.' WE are the addressors very much like the Communal LORD'S PRAYER which begins with Our! It is not my Father alone to whom we pray in worship, but OUR Father.
3. We desire mercy in the grant of the prayer we shall ask of the Lord. Every prayer request can only be granted out of a Heart of Mercy of the Father, for we deserve nothing from His Hand. Neither can we make demands of Him. All we ask, we ask out of the hope of mercy.
4. We only ask that He RECEIVE our prayers – the prayers of His people; just as a good father will listen to, and grant if wise, the pleas of his children. We may ignorantly make requests of God that are not in His will to grant. We will offer the prayer with the known reservation that it shall be HIS will, and not ours, that will be done.
5. We see that there is only a certain lot who are privileged to have their prayers received of the LORD. They are **His People!** When we look at the decadence of our once-fair land, we wonder at the depths of sin and debauchery to which we have settled. Is this condition hopeless? Not at all! Read again the 14th verse of 2 Chron 7. We see that their remains a remedy for the apostate nation. What is the remedy? The remedy is for those people – not all people – just those people who are called by the name of the Lord (Christians), to humble themselves and pray, and seek the face of the Lord, and TURN from their wicked ways, then that gracious Lord by whose name we are called will hear, forgive and heal.

The next great line of this Collect is a request that the Lord will "grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do." It is impossible to KNOW what the Lord wills if you have not read His marching orders to His people. We must "study to show ourselves approved of God." (2 Timothy 2:15) And once we have learned the Father's will for our lives, that knowledge must be translated into ACTION! (what things they ought to do.) *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to*

him it is sin. (James 4:17) and *But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?* (James 2:20) A fundamental law of education is this: Meaningful learning results in a **change of behavior!**

Please note in the last line "*and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same*" that no good works come by our own merit, but that of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we pray with a believing heart, there is an immeasurable grace that comes from the very hand of God to grant us the power to follow through. Our resulting works of righteousness, therefore, are not our own, but Christ who works *through* us. Just as we have prayed *through Jesus Christ our Lord*, it is *through Jesus Christ our Lord* that our prayers are granted and our works of righteousness, pleasing to God, follow. "*.....that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*" (Col 1:28-29)

I have hear far too many clergymen boast of the fine and growing church "*they have built;*" or a Christian worker boast of the souls he has brought to Christ; or of the number of times a scholar has read through the Bible (as if they have established a righteousness of their own – but **a self-righteousness**). Are your good works, friend, of your own hands, or of God's?