



The Sunday called Sexagesima, or the
second Sunday before Lent.

The Collect.

O LORD God, who seest that we put not our trust in any thing that we do; Mercifully grant that by thy power we may be defended against all adversity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O LORD God -The devil and his wicked minions can also refer to Jehovah as God, but they cannot refer to Him as LORD GOD because they believe that they reject His rule and authority; however, they believe wrongly for it is the LORD'S business to execute a final judgment on those who are wicked. The wicked, in their sins, only build a strong case against them at the Final Bar. Those alone who are servants and family of the Lord of the Heavenly Manor may so call Him LORD GOD and be justified in the title.

This COLLECT comes from the Gregorian Sacramentary but was justly altered to omit, following the term `defended' the phrase "*by the protection of the Doctor of the Gentiles.*" This is Roman error that attributes active and divine intercession of the Apostle Paul. As you will remember, there is only one intermediary between God and man: *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Tim 2:5)

The only true and infallible trust is centered upon the Lord. "...*who seest that we put not our trust in any thing we do.*" Do you trust in your own heart, or in the labors of your own hand, or in the trustworthiness of friends? If you do, you do so to your own peril, for our trust is rightly placed in the LORD alone. *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.* (Psalms 115:1) Can you say with certain knowledge that you would go all of the way to the burning stake rather than renounce the Word of God? You may FEEL that you would do so, but do you KNOW it? Do you have the courage of Hus, of Latimer and Ridley, of Cranmer, or of the martyred missionaries to China, John and Betty Stam? If you do not KNOW if you will do the right thing at a time of peril and decision, do not worry about it for, when the moment comes, the Holy Ghost will empower you to glorify God even to the point of death. But that decision of Righteous Will is not your own, but God's who strengthens you. It is popular today to rely upon government for our every personal failing, but government, unrestrained, only leads to tyranny, chains, and enslavement. This is such an important truth that God placed it squarely in the center of His Word: *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.* (Psalms 118:8-9) It is so needful of

remembrance that the Peter reminds us: *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.* (Acts 5:29) If a lie, or untruth, is told by a minister or an infidel, it is still and untruth. So we trust those in authority over us only insofar as their words and actions can be confirmed by Holy Scripture.

God will see to it that we learn, if not by His Word, then through hard experience, to doubt our own selves and put our trust in Him. It is like a loving father watching his very young son trying to move a large stone from his sandbox in the playground. The child would strain and exert himself over and over again, but the rock was much too heavy for him to remove from the sandbox. After watching this little drama transpire over a period of perhaps twenty minutes, the father approaches the son and asks if he is having a problem. The son responds, "Yes, father. I am trying to remove this large stone from my sandbox, but I do not have enough strength to move it out of the way!" The father responds, "Of course you do have the strength." "No," said the son. "I have been trying for the longest and I am now too tired to try more." The father answers, "Son, you have not called upon the power available to you. I am your father, and my power is YOUR power." He then removed the rock from the sandbox. God is ALWAYS able, but we are never able apart from His grant of power. *Mercifully grant that by thy power we may be defended against all adversity* All grants of favor from God are not gained by our merits, but by His MERCY. We are not good enough, and so receive the gold star by our names. Justice would condemn us to outer darkness, but God, in His Mercy, provided a means whereby we may be justified and considered spotless in His eyes. The power of God defends us daily from a thousand unseen dangers – dangers of which we may never be aware. He fouts the plans of the wicked gossip that would demean our character and destroy our reputation, and He does it most often without our ever knowing. He stays the diseased organism from entering our body at sundry times so that we feel our good health is owing to our righteous living. Our scheduled arrival at some place of a highway accident, or an act of crime is often delayed by unexplainable events that we chalk up to coincidence. With God, there are no coincidences.

Our defense is not against some singular danger, but from ALL adversities. This does not mean that we shall be spared trials, persecutions, accidents, etc; for that which seems at first and adversity may, in the end, become a great blessing. God will see us through. He may not remove the mountain blocking our way, but He will certainly make us able to climb over that mountain. The story is told of Bishop James Bashford of the Methodist Episcopal Church who, in 1904, was making an Episcopal tour of the mission churches in China. It so happened that decent quarters were not available to the Bishop on a certain night, and he was compelled to sleep under the trees. (Bishops were made of sterner stuff in those days). He was warned by the hotel keeper to beware of marauders in the night. Being watchful and sleepless for a while, the words of the Psalmist came to mind, "*Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand* (Psalms 121:4-5), and so the Bishop said: "There is no use in BOTH of us being awake," so he slept the sleep of the just!

Do you trust even your closest friend not to go to sleep at any time in watching for you? You can trust the Lord. You can trust the "*Friend that sticketh closer than a brother*" (Proverbs 18:24) to see you through, for He already has fought your battle, paid your price, and redeemed you with His own blood. Do you trust Him completely, Friend?