

WORK OF THE PEOPLE: THE CATHOLIC MASS

SNAPSHOT 1: COLLECTING OUR PRAYERS

VIDEO SUMMARY

The Collect, sometimes called the Opening Prayer, is a time for collecting the prayers of the gathered assembly. The priest says, “Let us pray.” This is an invitation for all of us, together with the priest, to call to mind our prayer intentions in a moment of silence. In this space, we become aware of being in God’s presence. We call to mind the things we want to thank God for or ask God for in prayer. We consider how we can respond to God’s grace in our lives. We offer all of our prayers together as one body in one act of worship and praise. After the silence, the priest extends his hands and prays the Collect prayer from the Roman Missal. This brief prayer is an ancient tradition of the Church. It is usually addressed to God the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and is concluded with a Trinitarian ending. The people make their assent to this prayer by all acclaiming together: “Amen.”

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Praying together in one place emphasizes the communal nature of our celebration; it is a powerful expression of our faith.
- Even in silence, we have full, conscious, and active participation in the Mass.
- The Collect prayer of the Mass unifies all our individual prayers together in one act of worship.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- When we lift our prayer intentions to God, how does God call us to put our prayers into action?
- Do you ever feel like the prayers, readings, or music of the Mass are speaking directly to you and your situation? Give an example.
- Why is it important to pray together as a community as well as by ourselves?

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

- On the way to Mass, think about or discuss some specific prayer intentions that are on your mind.
- Talk to other parishioners or read the bulletin or book of intentions at your church to learn about some of the needs present in your community.
- Make a plan for putting your prayers into action.

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH SAY?

- “[At the Collect,] the priest calls upon the people to pray and everybody, together with the Priest, observes a brief silence so that they may become aware of being in God’s presence and may call to mind their intentions.” (*The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 54)
- “The prayers addressed to God by the priest who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ are said in the name of the entire holy people and of all present. ... when the Church prays or sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their minds are raised to God, so that they may offer Him their rational service and more abundantly receive His grace.” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 33)
- “The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full collaboration.” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 48)