



St Michael & All Angels, Chetwynd

The Collect for the Second Sunday after Epiphany

(Book of Common Prayer)

Almighty and everlasting God, who dost govern all things in heaven and earth; Mercifully hear the supplications of thy people, and grant us thy peace all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This collect is a very accurate translation for the 1549 Prayer Book of the underlying Latin collect for the same Sunday in the eleventh century Sarum Missal. The original collect is very compact, just twenty words. This is a reminder of the nature these Latin collects: they often have a structure as rigid as a sonnet or a haiku. Contributing to these prayers' concentrated nature is the way they usually ask for one thing only, asking it simply and but once. Because of this characteristic, the collects are consonant with Jesus's instruction on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount: *"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking"* (Matthew 6:7).

The translation into English of this collect has preserved its compact nature, with one imaginative exception. Two of the underlying Latin words mean "in our time", but that literal translation results in a rather plodding phrase; Cranmer avoided it. Instead, the 1549 version rendered the Latin as "all the days of our life", words which have a pleasing galloping (or anapaestic) rhythm.

"Mercifully hear the supplications of thy people" echoes the theme of deep prayerfulness evident in last Sunday's collect (Epiphany 1), when the similar words *"mercifully (to) receive the prayers of thy people"* were used. And it is "peace all the days of our life" which is the collect's object.

"Peace" is sought in several of the collects. Sometimes it is clearly the spiritual peace of mind and conscience that is asked for, as in the collect for Trinity 21 in which God is asked *"to grant to thy faithful people pardon and peace"*. But quite often the peace that is craved is a tranquil world, as in the collect for Trinity 5, which asks *"that the course of this world may be ... peaceably ordered"*, and the frequency that this happens may reflect the fact that the former Roman western world was in turmoil when many of the collects were composed.

Praying to God for “thy peace” may be seen as embracing both the desire for internal peace as well as peace in the world in which we live. There is another element to God’s peace, however. It is our positive response to God’s purposes revealed in Christ. For peace is not simply the absence of something, but requires our active engagement in promoting what Jesus called the Kingdom of God.

James Graham January 2026