



St Michael & All Angels, Chetwynd

The Collect for the Third Sunday after Trinity

(Book of Common Prayer)

O Lord, we beseech thee mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may by thy mighty aid be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Although this collect has come to us by way of the Sarum Missal and the 1549 Prayer Book, it was stylistically improved in the Book of Common Prayer of 1662. One of those responsible for 1662 was John Cosin (1594-1672), Bishop of Durham from the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. As well as composing two of the collects we have inherited (Advent 3 and Epiphany 6), he had a hand in amending and reshaping others, quite possibly including today's (and last week's, Trinity 2). Cosin also wrote prayers for private devotion, and translated hymns. One such hymn (originally nineteenth century, Latin) is *Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire*.

The 1549 collect had ended with the word *defended*; 1662 at that point added "and comforted in all dangers and adversities". This results two complementary pairs of words, "defended and comforted" (where comforted means strengthened) and "dangers and adversities". The prayer thus bears the hallmarks of a well-constructed English collect.

The collect presupposes that we have a "hearty desire" (that is, heart-felt desire) to pray. However, it is a question as to whether we actually get around to praying adequately. Public worship supports our prayer, but for personal praying we need to be disciplined in marshalling our time to organise a prayer routine.

A helpful guide to praying is to be found in a beautiful description of prayer in *A New Revised Catechism* which was published by the Church of England in 1990. In answer to the question "What is prayer?" the catechist is invited to answer: "*In prayer I open my life and my whole self to God who is holy love. I rest in him, and I wrestle with him. I listen to him, and talk with him. I lift up my heart in thanks and praise, and I spread my griefs before him. I confess my sins, and ask to love him and my neighbour more. I bring to him the needs of others and my own. In awe and adoration I seek his blessing.*"

Whoever wrote this knew about the rhythm of words and phrases and had gifts not dissimilar from those of a Cranmer or a Cosin. The phrasing helps provide a memorable check-list for prayer.

Near the start of that list comes the prompt to rest in God and to *“wrestle with him”*. This serves as a reminder that it is natural to wrestle with God in prayer, just as the anguished Jacob did on the night he was renamed *“one who wrestles with God”*, which is what *“Israel”* means (Genesis 32:28). Accepting our need not only to rest in God but also to struggle with him in prayer over the *“dangers and adversities”* that face us and which the world endures could help re-ignite in us *“an hearty desire to pray”*.

James Graham

June 2026