



## *St Michael & All Angels, Chetwynd*

### The Collect the First Sunday of Lent

*(Book of Common Prayer)*

*O Lord, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.*

Like the collect for Ash Wednesday, this collect for Lent 1 was also composed by Cranmer and his learned prelate companions for the Prayer Book of 1549. It was closely related to the day's Gospel reading. The collects that the Reformers composed, as opposed to translated, often relate to the set Scriptural readings for the day. There is a contrast here with the Latin collects found in the Sarum Missal. Many if not most of those are what you might call stand-alone – that is, they tend not to relate to the set readings for the Sunday or feast in the lectionary, nor to be thematic except perhaps at major feasts.

The reason why this is the case could well be the circumstances of the times in which the Latin collects were written. The Latin collects may be ultimately traced back to three Sacramentaries (service books for the officiant) attributed to three great Popes, Gelasius (492-496), Leo I (440-461) and Gregory I (590-604), sources which contain material from probably the fourth to the eighth centuries. These centuries saw many upheavals through conflict, invasions, disease and poverty. It seems natural that collects were composed to relate to the special needs of the troubled times, rather than to reflect particular themes in a systematic way. The Book of Common Prayer retains this tradition of stand-alone collects (as does Common Worship). However, as this collect for Lent 1 shows, the Reformers' new compositions (of which there are twenty-five out of more than eighty) did not necessarily follow the stand-alone pattern. Their belief in the supreme authority of Scripture lies behind their different approach.

The Scripture this collect depends on is Matthew's account of Jesus tempted in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights (4:1-11). Unusually, the opening address is to Jesus, whose story we follow in Lent. "Motions" seems an odd word to choose; Cranmer perhaps derived it from Romans 7:5, where Paul writes "*For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death*".

These 'motions of sins' are the motives and desires that lead to sin: the collect seeks to replace them with "godly motions", motives and desires inspired by the Spirit.

Fasting was traditionally referred to in earlier, Latin, Lenten prayers; but in this collect the word "abstinence" has been chosen instead. Abstinence includes fasting, but it is a wider concept. The collect envisages us abstaining from our normal routines, habits and self-indulgences so that we can concentrate on following the Gospel story of Jesus's self-giving and suffering, which unfolds throughout Lent and comes to a head in Holy Week.

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