

The Divine Service: Thanksgiving & Post-Communion Collect

P O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,

C and His mercy endureth forever.

Psalm 107:1

<p>P We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and fervent love toward one another;</p>	<p>O God the Father, the fountain and source of all goodness, who in loving-kindness sent Your only-begotten Son into the flesh, we thank You that for His sake You have given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament, and we ask You not to forsake Your children but always to rule our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that we may be enabled constantly to serve You;</p>
<p>through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.</p>	

It is only fitting, having received the gifts of our Lord's body and blood, for the forgiveness of our sins, that we should thank him. This is something like the pattern suggested by the Catechism for mealtime, in which God's people first ask the blessing and then, when the meal is finished, return thanks. Some prayer of thanksgiving has, rather naturally, been part of nearly all Divine Service liturgies.

Our hymnal provides us with two options for a post-communion collect of thanksgiving. The left option, "We give thanks to you..." was written by Martin Luther for his "German Mass" of 1526. Rather like Paul's prayer of Ephesians 1:15-23, it moves from thanksgiving to petition. Of course, thankfulness toward God is most evident in our joyfully receiving his benefits and calling upon him in every need. Luther asks that even as we have been refreshed through the Lord's Supper, we would also be strengthened in a two-fold way: in love toward God, and in fervent love toward one another. Christ has given his body to us, for the forgiveness of sins. But he has also given us "the body of Christ," the Church, for the members to care one for another. May the Lord's Supper move us, as Luther prays, to love and cherish both!

The right-hand option is derived from a 13th century English rite. In original usages, it was a private prayer of the priest as he held the body of Christ. Our service takes it over to be a prayer offered on behalf of all the people who have been given "pardon and peace in this Sacrament," and we ask that just as God has here "sanctified us" in the broad sense, making us holy by taking away our sins, so would he also "sanctify us" in the narrow sense, ruling our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit, that we may serve him.

How do these collects (and the Psalm—look up Psalm 107 and read the rest of it!) lead you to think about your life outside these walls? What has the Lord's Supper to do with Monday, or Tuesday, or so on? With the forgiveness of sins, Luther says, come life and salvation. God grant us to live in these!