

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Collect

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at his coming,
so that, gathered at his right hand,
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Commentary

- The increasing activity of the faithful comes to the fore in this translation, revealing the richness of the Latin prayer that dates to seventh-century Rome and Gaul.
- The prayer begins with the gift of almighty God, but the way in which God gives is part of the gift. The Almighty elicits our cooperation in our own transformation.
- At the beginning of the prayer we are described as Gods faithful. We affirm that we are praying.
- Then the prayer offers a poetic reflection on our Christian lives. Our journey through life is described as running forth to meet Christ.
- Along the way we accomplish righteous deeds by the grace of God. Even as we are on the way to this encounter, Christ is coming to meet us. Not only does this prayer describe our lifelong journey, but it also describes our journey this Sunday to come to the church building where Christ encounters us in his body the living Church, in the word proclaimed, in the ministers, and especially in the communion we share.
- We are gathered at Christ's right hand every time we journey to this encounter with Christ who comes to us not only in the liturgy but also in the least of our brothers and sisters. Our humble service of others in their need provides the righteous needs that accompany us to his coming. Then we process again,

bringing our financial offerings so that with these the Church might continue its good works in society.

- The Almighty elicits our cooperation in our own transformation so that by the gift of God we are deemed worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom. The Almighty elicits our cooperation in our own transformation so that by the gift of God we are deemed worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom.

Prayer over the Offerings

Accept, we pray, O Lord, these offerings we make,
gathered from among your gifts to us,
and may what you grant us to celebrate devoutly here below,
gain for us the prize of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.

Commentary

- Life with the Lord involves an ongoing, reciprocal exchange of gifts. This exchange occurs on two levels in this prayer, on the level of things given and of persons giving themselves. This prayer appears only once in the history of the liturgy, in a sixth century compilation of individual mass booklets developed in Rome, until the prayer was discovered and included in the 1970 Latin edition of the *Roman Missal*.
- When the gifts of bread and wine and financial contributions are brought forward, the bread and wine are prepared and placed on the altar and this prayer is said over them.
- The initial divine gift begins the exchange. The Lord gives life to all things and with human cultivation brings forth the grain and the grape from the earth. By the work of human labor we produce from the fruit of the earth the bread and wine offered at mass as well as food offered to the hungry in their need. The financial contributions offered may also be seen as human collaboration with the divine gifts, whether natural or human resources.
- From these gifts that the Lord has given bounteously to us, we offer a portion in thanksgiving to share in communion and to share with our neighbor in their need. We ask the Lord to accept these gifts.
- The second level of exchange occurs in this prayer when the Lord grants us to celebrate the liturgy devoutly and, by implication, to live life from the liturgy we celebrate. Our collaboration with God by responding to the divine gift is what gains for us eternal redemption. Rather than a simple reward given after death,

eternal redemption in this prayer characterizes our way of living from the Eucharist we are given to celebrate.

Prayer after Communion

May these mysteries, O Lord,
in which we have participated,
profit us, we pray,
for even now, as we walk amid passing things,
you teach us by them to love the things of heaven
and hold fast to what endures.
Through Christ our Lord.

Commentary

- The prayer after communion looks back to offer a reflection on the communion we have just shared, and it looks forward to tell us how to conduct our daily lives in light of the Eucharist we have just celebrated.
- This prayer was newly composed for the 1970 Latin edition of the *Roman Missal* and is based on two sixth-century Roman prayers that were subsequently lost to the liturgical tradition.
- This prayer turns to the language of commercial exchange to indicate that in commerce with our Lord we derive the profit. Simple participation in the mysteries, however, does not bring about automatic profit. Participation needs personal reflection, which, accompanied with the ongoing gift of our Lord, is profitable to us.
- As we prepare to return to our daily lives, our journey is described as a walk among passing things. Even passing things, however, are useful for divine instruction by which we learn to distinguish between the passing things and what endures. Once we have learned to distinguish between them, we learn to love the things of heaven and to hold fast to what endures.
- The prayer does not say that we reject passing things nor does it describe things of this world in a negative light. Rather, the Eucharistic bread and wine we share, these are the enduring things of heaven, the body and blood of Christ. By sharing our daily bread in communion we learn as a community to value, hold fast and even to love the enduring things of heaven.
- The communion we share informs our daily conduct as we learn to value even passing things as bearers of the enduring things of heaven.