



The Salutation & Collect

At the start of a brand new year, full of expectation and hope, it is fitting that we look at one of the most familiar phrases from the Divine Service liturgy: **The Lord be with you! And also with you!** (or, *And with your spirit!*)

This exchange of greeting has its origin in the book of Ruth, where Boaz greeted his reapers out in the harvest fields around Bethlehem, **“The LORD be with you!”** and they responded, **“The LORD bless you,”** (Ruth 2:4 ESV). The angel of the Lord also greeted his servant, Gideon, with a similar greeting: **“The LORD is with you,”** (Judges 6:12 ESV), and who can forget how the angel Gabriel first greeted Mary, **“Greetings, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!”** (Luke 1:28 ESV).

The **Salutation**, as it is called, has a very long heritage of use, and most intriguingly for us at this time of year, it is so intimately connected with one of the great themes of Christmas. Matthew references Isaiah’s great prophesy, that **“the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, (which means, God with us),”** (Matthew 1:23 ESV).

This simple **Salutation** greeting we use week after week references that great truth. The Lord is with you! In spirit, in truth, in His Word, in His sacraments, the Lord our God is present here and now to bless you and keep you! And the automatic response to such a greeting, is to share the same in return. And also with you and your spirit!

The Lord our God is with us throughout our lives, but no more especially than in the midst of the Divine Service, and at this point of the service, we

are now approaching the readings from the Holy Bible. God’s Holy Word is about to be opened and we are about to hear the Words of Jesus for us once

more. The Lord is with us! Pastor and people, together, around God’s glorious Word.

As we prepare our ears and hearts to hear that Word of God, a prayer is offered: The **Collect**. The **Collect** is the second of the Propers for the day (the Propers are those elements that change Sunday by Sunday, according to the readings for that day). Many of these Collects are quite ancient, some over 1,500 years old! Through the centuries of use, these prayers have been formed and translated into real theological gems, designed for us to centre our minds on the theme for this particular Sunday.

These simple prayers collect together the thoughts for the specific Sunday of the Church Year. Some are very simple, others are more complex, but all of them call us to focus on one specific request of our Triune God, which the three readings for that Sunday will address.

The purpose behind the **Salutation** and **Collect** is to set our minds upon the specifics of that Sunday. We are calling upon the Lord to send us His Holy Spirit, to guide our hearts and minds to hear His Word and see in Jesus the fulfillment of our eternal need. As we sit down to hear the Scriptures read and then expounded in the Sermon, we are hearing the answer to our prayer! The Lord is with us! In His Word! In this service, time after time!

As we begin a New Year, let us continue to meet in the presence of our Lord! He is here for us, in His Word and precious Sacraments, to bless us and give us every good gift under heaven! The Lord is with you!



Happy New Year!

In Christ’s service,
Rev Joel V. Kuhl