



A COLLECT FOR CLUB WOMEN

Mary Stewart • April 1904

Keep us, O God, from pettiness; let us be large
in thought, in word, in deed.

Let us be done with fault finding
and leave off self-seeking.

May we put away all pretense and meet each other
face to face, without self-pity and without prejudice.

May we never be hasty in judgment
and always be generous.

Let us take time for all things;
make us to grow calm, serene, gentle.

Teach us to put into action our better impulses,
straightforward and unafraid.

Grant that we may realize it is the little things that
create differences; that in the big things of life we are at one.

And may we strive to touch and to know
the great common human heart of us all, and,
O Lord God, let us forget not to be kind.

Compliments of

WOMAN'S CLUB OF RAMSEY

ABOUT THE COLLECT FOR CLUB WOMEN

A Collect is a short prayer. The word comes from the Latin *collecta*, which means “the gathering together of the people.” In Roman times, people would say a short prayer while they gathered together to go to church. Today, throughout the year, many church services are begun with special Collects.

A Collect is also a collective prayer — a sentence or two that pulls together everyone's requests. A Collect asks for specific things related to what a group of people need.

The Collect used by women's clubs was written in 1904 by a young woman named Mary Stewart.

Mary was born in 1876 in Ohio and spent her childhood in Georgetown, Colorado, high in the Rockies. When she was just out of college and starting her first job as a high school principal in Longmont, Colorado, she was described as a little bundle of energy, dignity and personal charm.

Mary belonged to the Fortnightly Club, the forerunner of the Business and Professional Women's Club now in Longmont. She was part of the rapidly growing women's club movement, and she thought that her prayer might give clubwomen a sense of unity.

Mary decided to offer her Collect for publication. It was first printed in *The Delineator*, a women's magazine published by Butterick, a company that also printed sewing patterns.

A Longmont printer made copies of the Collect for the local women's club.

Mary recalled: "It was written as a prayer for the day. I called it a 'Collect For Club Women' because I felt that women working together with wide interests for large ends was a new thing under the sun, and that perhaps they had need for special petition and meditation of their own.

This must have been true, for the Collect has found its way about the world, especially wherever English-speaking women get together. Indeed, it has been reprinted in many forms in many lands."

The first women's organization to use the Collect was the General Federation of Women's Clubs.

The Collect spread nationwide, and it was adopted by the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs in 1920. Soon it was being used by women's groups throughout the world.

It was read into the Congressional Record in 1949, and it has even been set to music.

Mary Stewart continued to work with women's groups and was active in the woman's suffrage movement. She held several special teaching posts in Colorado and Montana, and in 1921 she became a guidance and placement officer for the new government employment services. And, she went on writing for newspapers and magazines.

In 1927, Mary Stewart's Alma Mater, the University of Colorado, gave her an honorary degree to recognize her distinguished work in education, social and civic service.

She kept active in women's clubs until her death in Ohio in 1943 at the age of 67.

Today, we honor Mary Stewart and her Collect for Clubwomen — a beautiful prayer that lives on wherever women's clubs gather.