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MOSAIC - FAVOURITE PRAYERS AND REFLECTIONS

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To outsiders, the Anglican Church must sometimes seem a little quaint. It is as if it cannot make up its mind whether it is Catholic or Protestant. From the very beginning, it has been this way. It is a kind of compromise of a church - very English as one would expect. In the words of the Preface to the *Book of Common Prayer*:

"It has been the wisdom of the Church of England ever since the first compiling of her Public Liturgy, to keep the mean between the two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting any variation from it".

Somewhere between the bells and smells of Rome and the hand waving Hallelujahs of Protestant sects, the Anglican order of service offers a comforting space. At least, this is so for those who grow up with the majestic language of Cramner's *Prayer Book*.

I was raised in Concord, a Western suburb of Sydney. Imagine my puzzlement, then, when I found that the martyred Archbishop

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had something directly to say to me and my neighbourhood every Sunday. He did so in the second Collect for Peace - a prayer said in the service of Morning Prayer:

"O God who are the author of peace and lover of concord in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom; Defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies that we, surely trusting in thy defence may not fear the power of any adversaries, through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*".

With God as lover of Concord, I knew that He was on my side. But how beautiful and peaceful the words are. Just ponder on the use of the word "standeth". Reflect on the "assaults of our enemies". Think awhile on "trusting in thy defence". It is a prayer to strengthen the faint-hearted. Or so it has always seemed to me.

In quiet nights in darkest Afghanistan; in busy days of tumult in the courts, alone and in crowds, I have said this prayer to myself. It is such a reassurance.

When my mother was dying in hospital in Sydney, I said the prayer to her. She was not a specially religious person. But she was certainly spiritual. I know that the image of peace, love and concord were with her at the end. They were also with me and with our family.

Life is but a journey, with ups and downs, joy and pain. But I will always be grateful for the comfort of the *Book of Common Prayer*. And especially for the Collect for Peace. May that Peace be with us all, always.