

WEEK 3 “Keep Watch” FROM COMPLINE, Book of Common Prayer, p. 134

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. *Amen*

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.




CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

This collect is found in the service of Compline which originated in the fourth century as the night prayers used by monks in their dormitories. Compline was revived in Anglican communities in the mid-20th century. Its inclusion in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer is the first time it has been included in our prayer book.

The prayer itself was composed by Augustine of Hippo [354-430]. Arguably one of the most influential theologians in western Christianity, Augustine also authored one of the first Christian autobiographies entitled “Confessions.” In “Confessions,” Augustine speaks candidly and courageously about his life with God. Today’s collect reflects his understanding of God’s ongoing presence and participation in the various seasons of human life. It may be helpful to take a few minutes to recall the context of the fifth century Roman Empire during which Augustine lived and authored this prayer. It is not too much of a stretch to say that the world was falling apart.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Psalm 139. Like the collect, this is a psalm that acknowledges the presence and participation of God in all the seasons of life. No matter where we are, no matter how far we wander, no matter how deep the darkness, God will not lose us. As you study the psalm, what verse[s] resonate in your life?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. Speak to which phrase in the collect that connects most clearly and closely to the context of your life? Why?
2. What does it mean to you to “shield the joyous”?
3. What is your theology of angels?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. *Amen*