

WEEK 11 “Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit” FOR THE NEWLY BAPTIZED, Book of Common Prayer, p. 308

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

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon *these* your *servants* the forgiveness of sin, and have raised *them* to the new life of grace. Sustain *them*, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give *them* an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. *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.*




Rites of initiation are central to the life of all communities and cultures. In Judaism, baptism was the rite of initiation for converts. The baptismal liturgy in our current 1979 Prayer Book recovers the practices of the early Church, who followed the basic form of the Jewish rite in order to signify a new beginning and incorporation in a new community.

The very first thing that happens in the life of a newly baptized person, whether they are 4 weeks or 40 years old, is that the celebrant leads the gathered community to pray this prayer for them. The Prayer Book defines prayer as “responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words.” This prayer is the community of faith’s essential and foundational response to God for the life of the person who belongs to God’s Beloved Community: gratitude and the request for God’s power to equip them for this new life.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

If you are baptized, when and where did that happen? If you are not baptized, when and where have you experienced a rite of passage that marked a new beginning and connection with others? Who celebrated that occasion with you?

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.*

Isaiah 11. This is a description of God's Kingdom. Verse 2 is traditionally associated with a prayer that became part of the post-baptismal rites hundreds of years ago; a prayer for the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit. Compare and contrast the gifts of God's Spirit as described by the prophet Isaiah and those that our current post-baptismal prayer describes as necessary to sustain people in their new life.

Acts 1:1-8. The apostles experience Jesus – alive and present with them – and now understand themselves as missionaries, or messengers being sent out. Jesus acknowledges that they are going to have to live with some uncertainty about the particulars of what the future holds. Pay particular attention to verse 8; they can take comfort and confidence in God's promise, Jesus assures them, they *will* have the power of the Holy Spirit to do this. How do the spiritual gifts described in this prayer enable people to be loving and powerful?

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. Consider what people need most not just to survive, but to thrive in life. How does this prayer speak to those needs in your life and witness in others' lives?
2. Celebrate the power you've been given. How can you bless others by practicing this prayer in your daily life? Be specific about the people or situations in which your actions could join with the good news that God is sharing this week.

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon *these* your *servants* the forgiveness of sin, and have raised *them* to the new life of grace. Sustain *them*, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give *them* an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. *Amen.*