11.8.26
32nd Sunday of Ordinary time
Fr. Christopher Calderon

As parishioners of St. Ignatius Church, we know how Ignatian spirituality relies heavily on the senses for the sake of noticing where God is at work. Noticing is a fundamental part of our faith journey. We can move through an entire day looking at all sorts of things without really seeing much at all. We can pass people we know without noticing that something is troubling them. The same can be said of listening and hearing. We can listen to someone speak without really hearing what they are saying. We can move from one responsibility to the next, checking things off our lists, and somehow miss what is happening around us, and even within us.

And yet, so much of our faith depends on learning how to notice.

In our first reading from the Book of Wisdom, we hear that wisdom is readily found by those who seek her. She makes herself known to those who desire her. She even anticipates those who are searching for her.

I find that a beautiful image of the spiritual life. God is not hiding from us. God's presence is not reserved for extraordinary moments or dramatic encounters. God is constantly making himself known, often in ways that are quiet, ordinary, and easily overlooked. The challenge is not necessarily that God is absent. Sometimes the challenge is that we are not paying attention.

That brings us to Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. Paul is writing to a community grieving the loss of loved ones. They are worried about those who have died and what will become of them when Christ returns. Paul responds with words of reassurance: "We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope."

Notice what Paul does. He does not dismiss their grief. He does not tell them that faithful people should not be sad. Rather, he invites them to see their grief differently.

He reminds them that death does not have the final word, that Christ has conquered death, and that those who have died in Christ are not forgotten or abandoned by God.

And then comes that extraordinary image: the Lord himself will descend from heaven, and those who have died in Christ will rise. And we will be with the Lord forever.

Paul is reminding us that the God we worship, the God who is transcendent and beyond our understanding, is also a God who draws near. A God who comes to meet us. A God who stands shoulder to shoulder with us.

That is a tremendous source of hope. But it also invites something of us: to live attentively, recognizing the ways God is already present in our lives.

Which brings us to the Gospel.

Jesus tells the parable of ten bridesmaids waiting for the bridegroom. All ten have lamps. All ten have come to the wedding feast. All ten are expecting the bridegroom. But five have brought extra oil, while five have not.

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And when the bridegroom is delayed, all ten fall asleep. Eventually, at midnight, the announcement comes: "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!"
The difference between the wise and foolish bridesmaids is not that some were more enthusiastic, more religious, or even more attentive at the beginning. They were all there for the same reason. The difference was that some had prepared. They had brought what they needed to sustain their light.

I think there is something worth considering here. The oil is not something we can simply borrow at the last minute. It represents something that has to be cultivated over time: our relationship with God, our habits of prayer, our capacity for compassion, our willingness to forgive, our commitment to serve others. The interior life that sustains the light we are called to carry into the world.
And that kind of preparation does not happen overnight.
We are nearing the end of the liturgical year. In two weeks, we will celebrate Christ the King, and shortly after that, we will begin Advent. The Church, in its wisdom, gives us these readings at this particular moment to remind us that our lives are moving toward something. We are not simply passing time. We are preparing to meet the Lord.
But preparation does not mean living anxiously, constantly looking over our shoulders, or worrying about when the end will come. It means living intentionally. It means making room for the things that matter most.
And perhaps this is where the invitation to attentiveness becomes especially important. Because if we are not careful, we can become so preoccupied with what is next that we miss what God is doing right now. We can become so consumed by our responsibilities, our schedules, our worries, and even our good intentions that we overlook the person sitting across from us, the opportunity to offer kindness, or the quiet invitation to pause and pray.
The oil that keeps our lamps burning is not accumulated through grand gestures or occasional bursts of religious enthusiasm. It is cultivated in the ordinary rhythms of our lives. It is found in the few moments we give to prayer before the day begins, in the patience we extend when someone tests us, in the generosity we offer without expecting anything in return, and in our willingness to recognize Christ in the people and circumstances we might otherwise overlook.
And this is where I think all three readings come together.
Wisdom invites us to seek God. Paul reminds us that God is near and that our hope is ultimately in Christ. And Jesus challenges us to prepare ourselves, not simply by what we say we believe, but by how we actually live.
So perhaps the question worth taking with us this week is a simple one: What am I doing, day by day, to keep the oil in my lamp?
Am I making time for prayer, even when my schedule is full? Am I attentive enough to notice someone who needs a word of encouragement, a listening ear, or a helping hand? Am I

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cultivating the patience, compassion, and generosity that allow me to recognize Christ in the people I encounter?

My brothers and sisters, the bridegroom is coming. We do not know the day or the hour. But we do know the One we are waiting for. And even as we wait for him, he is already drawing near to us.

May we have the wisdom to recognize his presence, the faith to trust his promises, and the attentiveness to keep our lamps burning brightly. Amen.