

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Be Watchful**      Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time      Friday, November 13, 2015  
8:15 AM      **Wis 13:1-9; Lk 17:26-37**      St. Frances Xavier Cabrini      (So thinking and reflection and time spent in quiet is very important for the workings of reason. And the same is true for trying to understand our faith.)

**“He said to them, ‘Where the body is, there also the vultures will gather.’”**

Both readings today are from the Wisdom tradition. They are about discerning. They are about **seeing reality through signs. In the first reading the sign is the creation itself.** And there has been a long-standing dispute in the Church, or I should say perhaps in Western society, whether or not people can see God through creation. Notice how I put it: whether people can. The way it’s usually framed is: Can reason—**can reason—discern God through the observation of the creation?** The First Vatican Council affirmed that that was possible, but to say it’s possible does not mean everyone is capable of doing it. There have been those who have said, no, reason itself cannot tell anything about God; it’s all a matter of faith. Our Church has veered away from that viewpoint because then that says that the human nature itself is not really constructed in such a way as to seek and look for God. So we affirm that, yes, **human reason can in fact discern God in the creation and through the creation;** however, it may be that people do not, especially if they are extremely busy and never take any time to think, which is very common today. **So thinking and reflection and time spent in quiet is very important for the workings of reason. And the same is true for trying to understand our faith,** which is also the work of reason, trying to understand what is the hidden wisdom that is revealed to us in the word of God. That is also the work of reason. It’s faith seeking understanding. It takes time. It takes quiet. It takes reflection.

In the second reading, Jesus is talking about **all kinds of signs that people ignore because they are just too busy.** They are doing the normal things: planting, buying, selling, marrying,

etc. So he uses this example in the time of Noah, later in the time of Lot. What he is implying is **there are all kinds of reasons to see that things cannot continue the way they are, and people just ignore them.** This is not actually a matter so much of reason as it is more **the spiritual faculty that perceives prophecy, that sees the signs of the times.** You could say this is **reason aided by faith** or reason enlightened or illumined by faith. But nonetheless it's very important that we look at the signs of the times. People in the time of Noah didn't do that. People in the time of Lot didn't do that either, and people aren't doing it today. But it's a similar situation that things cannot continue to go the way they are now. **Human life is in a dire situation.** Violence is erupting all over the world. In fact the story of Noah actually may be a metaphor for the flood of violence and how **some group has to be preserved so that peace can reseed itself after** the flood is over, so that human life can go on after **a long bout of violence.**

So these are things to think about and to become watchful for, to be aware in our daily lives of what is happening, and to try to find meaning in it. The meaning may be negative. It may be that people have lost a sense of purpose or direction or guidance, but that has meaning in a negative sort of way. So the overall focus of both these readings is **be watchful.** You have to wait, but **wait in an alert kind of way.** Don't be like the foolish virgins who got drowsy and fell asleep, unprepared, to awaken unprepared with enough oil to light their lamps to lead the way to the bridegroom.