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Memorial of St Augustine, bishop and doctor of the Church

Date: Thursday, August 28, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:7–13
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 90:3–5a, 12–14, 17 | **Response:** Psalm 90:14
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 24:42a, 44
Gospel Reading: Matthew 24:42–51
Preached at: the Chapel of Richartz House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe.

Dear brothers,

What does it mean to truly be awake in a world that often encourages us to sleepwalk through life? Not all wakefulness is fear or worry. Sometimes we stay awake because we care. Like leaving a light on at night, just in case someone comes home. A small sign that someone is welcome. That someone is expected. Today's readings invite us to that kind of love—love that stays awake.

Saint Paul writes to the Thessalonians not with pride, but with deep concern. He had been worried about them. He sent Timothy to visit, unsure how their faith was holding up under pressure. But the news Timothy brought back gave Paul great peace. The Thessalonians were standing firm. They were holding on to faith. Paul is moved. He thanks God, not himself. And he prays—not just that they stay strong, but that their love would grow. Love for one another, and love that reaches beyond them. For Paul, holiness means a heart made firm in love. A life prepared for the Lord's return.

The psalm says, "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love" (Ps 90:14). That phrase, "steadfast love," comes from the Hebrew word *hesed*. It means a love that is faithful and sure. A love that keeps its promise. It is the kind of love God showed Israel in the desert. The kind of love that shows up again and again. Even when we forget. Even when we are tired. God's love is steady.

In the Gospel, Jesus says: "Stay awake, for you do not know the day your Lord is coming" (Matt 24:42). He compares the coming of the Son of Man to a thief arriving in the night—unexpected and unannounced. But this is not meant to frighten us. It is a reminder that we cannot schedule grace. We do not know

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when God will call, or when He will arrive. And so, we stay ready—not with fear, but with attention. The Catechism tells us that real vigilance comes through prayer and love (CCC 2612). The good servant keeps the house in order, not because someone is watching, but because it's what love does. In the Jewish tradition, to stay awake means to live each day with a heart open to God.

Bernard Lonergan put it plainly: "Be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, be in love" (*Method in Theology*, p. 252). That is how we stay awake to God's presence in our lives—not by watching the clock, but by being fully present. He also warned that anyone who ignores this inner life of conscious choice is "a non-responsible, non-reasonable, non-intelligent somnambulist"—someone sleepwalking through life.

Saint Augustine knew what it was like to delay. He famously prayed, "Make me chaste—but not yet." He was pulled in many directions. But later, he saw that even the desire to return to God was already a gift of grace. In his writing on grace (*On the Predestination of the Saints*), he says that even our turning to God begins with God's help. We call this prevenient grace. Grace that comes before. Grace that wakes us up.

In his *Confessions*, Augustine wrote, "You were within me, but I was outside myself" (Conf. X.27). That's the kind of sleep Jesus warns us about. When we forget that God is near. When we stop paying attention to others. When we live only on the surface.

Augustine lived through a time of great change. The Roman Empire was falling apart. People were afraid. Some thought it was the end of everything. But Augustine reminded them—and us—that God's kingdom is not built on power, but on love. Not on fear, but on grace. Even when the world feels uncertain, we can live with hope.

We see this in our own country today. Life is not easy. Many are struggling. It is tempting to say, "I'll wait until things get better." But the Gospel reminds us: now is the time. Every small act of love matters. Every kind word, every quiet choice for good, is a way of staying awake. Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that human dignity is not for later—it is for now. Love is how we keep the light on.

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Let us pray today for Modesto, who is travelling by bus from Zambia to join us. May the Lord keep him safe and bring him here in peace.

Pope Francis once said, “We are not alone; we do not walk alone. We are part of the one flock of Christ that walks together.” To stay awake is not only to watch—it is to walk with others. To notice who is near us. To be attentive. To carry the light together.

Saint Ignatius invites us to step into the Gospel with our imagination. Let’s do that. Am I the servant who stays ready? Or have I let my heart drift? Am I tending what God has given me—my time, my words, my relationships? Or am I waiting for some other time to begin?

Saint Augustine would remind us: the Lord is near. And what He asks is not perfection. He asks us to be ready. To be faithful. To be awake.

Here are three questions for prayer:

- Where in my life have I grown sleepy—and what might Christ be waking in me?
- How am I caring for what God has given me—my thoughts, my words, my daily work?
- If the Lord came today, what would He see in me that speaks of love?

Amen.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today’s readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.