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Memorial of Saint Joseph Pignatelli

Date: Friday, November 14, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Wisdom of Solomon 13:1–9
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 19:2–5b | **Response:** Psalm 19:2a
Gospel Acclamation: Luke 21:28
Gospel Reading: Luke 17:26–37
Preached at: The Jesuit Institute **in the** Archdiocese of Johannesburg, South Africa**.**

The readings today are about learning to notice God in the ordinary moments of life and choosing a way of seeing that keeps the heart open. Dear friends in Christ, we stand with St Joseph Pignatelli, who helped the Society through years of suppression by trusting the quiet movements of God when others saw only confusion.

Our first reading invites us to look at creation and ask what it is meant to show us. The author speaks of people who admired fire, wind, stars, and animals but never recognised the One who made them. He is thinking of the worship of animals in Egypt and Canaan, and of philosophers who searched for meaning yet did not always rise from created things to the Creator. There is sadness here. People wanted to find God, but they stopped at what they could see and touch. St Paul later said the same in Romans: that the Gentiles could have known God from creation and reason, but instead they turned to idols shaped by their own hands.

This is not only a problem from long ago. Some today believe that science pushes God aside, yet the more closely we look at life and the universe, the more we see order, depth, and purpose that point us beyond ourselves. Here in South Africa, with the wide silence of the Karoo and the restless energy of the coast, creation can draw us toward God. And it can sharpen our sense of each person's dignity. Our country holds great beauty, but also deep struggle: families waiting for proper homes, young people searching for work, communities carrying daily worry and fear. When creation helps us look toward God, it also turns our attention to those who are struggling, and reminds us that justice is not something optional. It is part of our faith.

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The psalm tells us that the heavens speak without words. Their message covers the whole earth. St Ignatius would encourage us to stand under that sky and listen with the heart. To notice God in small things. To let that awareness guide how we use the earth's resources and how we treat one another. This kind of attention is simple, but it opens our hearts to real responsibility for the earth and for those most affected when the land is strained or when opportunity is lacking.

The Gospel shows Jesus turning from the Pharisees' questions to the hearts of his disciples. He goes back to two stories every Jewish family knew well. In Noah's time people lived busy lives without much thought for God. They ate, drank, married, built, and carried on. Noah listened. He responded. He trusted what God asked of him. Jesus points to Noah to say that faith begins with listening.

Then we hear about Lot. Lot and his family were led out of Sodom, but Lot's wife looked back. That look showed her hesitation, her longing for a life she was meant to leave. The early Christians saw in this story a reminder that baptism calls us out of old ways and into new life. We cannot follow God while clinging to what we know is not life-giving.

These stories show that God often moves quietly. The people of Noah's and Lot's time were not judged for everyday actions. They faltered because they were not awake. They did not listen. They hesitated when God called them forward. Jesus invites us to stay alert, not out of fear, but out of love.

Some early Jewish teachers said that God can come like a king walking through a village in ordinary clothes. Only those who know the king's heart recognise him. Jesus invites us to that kind of sight. To notice God in students burdened by study. In families trying to hold things together. In communities struggling with inequality and violence. In people who keep hoping for a better future even when progress is slow.

St Joseph Pignatelli lived with that kind of steady attention. When the Society of Jesus was scattered, he listened for God's guidance, cared for frightened brothers, and helped communities stay together. His life shows us that God often works through patient, everyday faithfulness.

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If we place these readings side by side, an image begins to form: early morning light spreading across the land. The first reading is like the first faint glow on the horizon. It asks us to look again at creation and see not only its beauty but also the One who gives it light. The psalm continues this image. It speaks of the sky telling God's glory without a sound, like morning light that grows quietly yet reaches everywhere. The Gospel asks us to step into this growing light. Noah and Lot had to act once God's light showed them the truth. Others stayed half-asleep, torn between darkness and light. Jesus invites us to live in the light that reveals God's presence and asks for a real response.

South Africa knows both dawn and darkness: landscapes that move the heart and struggles that touch many homes. Into this place Christ brings a steady light, giving us the grace to see clearly and to care for those who are weighed down. To live these readings is to walk in that light, to notice God in ordinary moments, and to share that light with those who feel left behind.

Ignatian prayer helps us on this path. In the examen we look back and ask where God was present today. In imaginative prayer we stand inside the Gospel scene and ask what God is showing us. And in our daily actions we try to respond with kindness, courage, and honesty.

As we pray today, I offer three questions:

- Where today did I sense God's presence, even in a small or ordinary moment.
- What habits or fears keep me looking back instead of moving forward with God.
- How can I offer simple, concrete care to someone who is struggling this week.

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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.

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