

Homily for the Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

Readings:

1. Exodus 17:8-13
2. II Tim 3:14–4:2
3. Luke 18:1-8

Homily by Fr Kevin McGovern at the Sunday Masses at St Cecilia's, Camberwell South on 19 October 2025:

Friends, you've probably read the letter about the partnering of St Cecilia's and St Michael's. At this time, I'll preach more briefly about today's Gospel, and then I'll invite Trudy Maiden who is part of our Partnership Team to speak with you.

In today's Gospel, Jesus spoke about a widow who pestered a judge until she got what she wanted. He then told us to pray continually and not to give up. Now a foolish person might draw the wrong message here. They might say, "I want God to give me a hundred million dollars. And it seems that all I have to do is continue to pester God, and eventually God will give me what I want."

Those of us who've had more experience in following Jesus know that it doesn't work that way at all. Some of the things we ask for, might indeed harm us. For example, getting a hundred million dollars might lead someone to focus only on the material pleasures that such great wealth could bring. It could make them very self-centred and very selfish. And if we ask for something which might really harm us, all we will hear – all we will hear – is the silence of God.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is an important and authoritative statement of what Catholics believe. It offers us three guidelines about these prayers of petition – that is, the sort of prayer in which we're asking for something not for others but for ourselves.

Firstly, it tells us that our first prayer for ourselves should be to ask God's forgiveness – God's forgiveness for all the ways and all the times in which we've failed. Sometimes when we pray, we sense that we really are in the presence of God – God who created the universe; God who loves us; God who created us with a mission that no one else can fulfill. And in the presence of this awesome God, we recognise how different we are from the person God intended us to be. Above all, we recognise all our failings. And so, our first prayer for ourselves should be to ask God's forgiveness. (CCC, n. 2631)

Our second prayer begins with a focus on God's Kingdom – God's Kingdom which is how God wants this world to be; God's Kingdom which we believe is slowly coming into this world. And our second prayer of petition should be that we're able to focus not on what we want but on what God wants – or in other words, that we're able to see what God is asking us to do to help in the coming of God's Kingdom. We pray that we're able to focus our lives not on what we want but on what God wants. (CCC, n. 2632)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says thirdly that after all this, there are still many other things that we can ask for ourselves. But they're now petitions which are very different from a prayer to get a hundred million dollars. An elderly lady might pray that she lives long enough to see her granddaughter after she's born. Someone with a serious problem might pray that they have the courage and hope to take the steps which are needed to address their problem. Someone else caught up in a quarrel which has gone on for too many years might pray that they're able to let go, forgive, and be reconciled. God doesn't always answer even these prayers. But these are the prayers of petition which God is most likely to grant. (CCC, n. 2633)

I said that I'd preach more briefly today so there's time for Trudy Maiden to speak with us about the partnership of St Cecilia's and St Michael's. But before I ask Trudy to come forward, let me remind you of what I've said. When we pray, we should recognise our failings and ask God's forgiveness. We should also pray that we're able to focus not on what we want but on God wants. And within this context, there are still many other things which we can ask God for. Perhaps we can keep these three messages in mind as we think and pray about the partnership between St Cecilia's and St Michael's. Trudy, please come forward along with another member of our Partnership Team Helen Dee to speak with us.
