

Homily for the Second Sunday of Lent, Year A

Readings:

1. Genesis 12:1-4
2. II Timothy 1:8-10
- G. Matthew 17:1-9

Homily by Fr Kevin McGovern at the 10 am and 5:30 pm Masses at St Cecilia's Church on 1 March 2026:

Friends, in today's Gospel, we're called to see and to hear Jesus. That was easy for Jesus' first disciples. Jesus shone like the sun. The voice of God the Father was heard. The Father said, "This is my beloved Son. Listen – listen to him." Yes, it was easy for Jesus' first disciples, but it's harder for us. We live in a culture which is secular and secularising. Our Australian culture is secular, which means that it functions as if God didn't exist. And our Australian culture is also secularising, which means that this secular culture also shapes us so that we're inclined to live as if God didn't exist. But maybe this secular and secularising culture is wrong. Maybe God does exist – maybe Jesus is with us even now. And even in this secular and secularising culture, if we try, we can still see Jesus and hear him.

That's what we try our best to do when we gather for Sunday Mass. Even the decision to come to Sunday Mass is an act of faith. By coming to Sunday Mass, we're saying that we're making a decision to believe – that despite this culture which is so secular, we're still doing our best to see and to hear Jesus. And when we do gather for Sunday Mass, there are many things which help us to see and to hear Jesus. The community which gathers is one of these helps. We recognise that there are people like us – people like us who are making the effort to believe, and who've gathered with us to see and to hear Jesus. We then listen to readings from God's Word the Bible – ancient readings which have communicated to generations the story of God active in this world, and the stories of Jesus which teach us how to live life well. We take bread and wine, and acting in the person of Christ, I repeat what Jesus did at the Last Supper. And we dare to believe that the bread and wine become the very Body and Blood of Christ – Christ present in a unique way with us in this church. And if we look then with the eyes of faith, we see Jesus – we truly see him. We receive Communion – we receive Jesus. And with Jesus inside us in a special way, we do our best to pray. We speak to Jesus in prayer, and Jesus speaks back to us. And if we truly listen – if we listen inside our heart – we'll also hear Jesus – Jesus speaking to us here and now. And then, at the conclusion of the Mass, we're sent forth. We're sent to live as followers of Jesus should live – caring for one another, caring for those in need, making a difference in this world. Even in our secular and secularising world, when we gather for Sunday Mass, we can still see and hear Jesus.

Friends, that's why Sunday Mass is so important. If we don't make the effort once a week to attend Sunday Mass, the secular culture around us will overwhelm us, and we'll live our lives as if God doesn't exist. This is also why the Catholic Church says that we have an obligation to attend Sunday Mass. There are exceptions, of course. If we're sick, we're not obliged to attend Sunday Mass. Or if we have young children and they need our care, we're not obliged to attend Sunday Mass. But we're only excused from our obligation to attend Sunday Mass for serious reasons. It's not enough if we simply think that we have better things to do. Children's sport is not a valid excuse either. Here at St Cecilia's, we have Mass on Sunday mornings at 10 o'clock, and we have Mass on Sunday evenings at 5:30. We're now partnered with St Michael's at Ashburton, and they also have Mass on *Saturday* evenings at 6 o'clock. Even if we're busy, if we're serious about our faith, with some planning we'll be able to attend Sunday Mass at one of those times.

St Cecilia's Parish is a Catholic organisation. For that reason, we have an expectation that Catholics in this parish should attend Sunday Mass. St Cecilia's School is also a Catholic organisation. It also has an expectation that Catholic families and Catholic teachers should also attend Sunday Mass. I remind you today of this expectation – this obligation. I understand that this might not be easy, especially if you've been away from coming to Sunday Mass for some time. I also understand that life does get busy. But I have to say that if you're not making a genuine effort to come to Sunday Mass at least once a month, I think that you do have to question whether you're really trying. And if you're a parent, you also have to ask yourself if you really are making a genuine effort to pass the Catholic faith onto your children.

Even in the secular and secularising culture of Australia, we can see Jesus and we can hear Jesus. But this does require some effort on our part. Above all, it does require us to make a genuine effort to attend Sunday Mass at least once a month. May Sunday Mass be one way in which you and your family see and hear Jesus.
