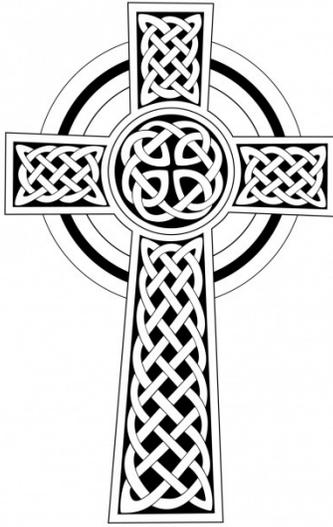


Effective Prayer

4th Wednesday of Lent



Mark 11:20-26

In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. Then Peter remembered and said to him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered.' Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God. Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, "Be taken up and thrown into the sea", and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 'Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.'

When you wish upon a star, makes no difference who you are; when you wish upon a star, your dreams come true. Both the lyrics and the music are captivating and have inspired many to look beyond the present realities of their lives to what they wish they might become. While attitude always has a lot to do with anything—healing, success in some venture, overcoming problems, achieving your goals—and while there is considerable power in positive thinking, this passage is not about wishful dreaming of positive thinking; rather it speaks to the difference made in one's life through prayer and faith in God. Here faith means believing without doubt, trusting God completely. Such faith opens us to the phenomenal power of God. What we may have long believed impossible is nonetheless possible with God. Indeed, God's power is so great and God's faithfulness is so trustworthy that *whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*" Live as though your prayer is already answered.

But, whether your prayer is answered as you requested or as God thinks best—which may sometimes be *no*—know this: God deals with us in mercy and grace, and is at work in our lives to accomplish his good purpose in and for and through us. That gives us hope for today and tomorrow.

Prayer

My times are in Thy hand; My God, I wish them there; my life, my friends, my soul I leave entirely to Thy care. My times are in Thy hand; whatever they may be; pleasing or painful, dark or bright, as best may seem to Thee.

William F. Lloyd, 1824