

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, May 25th 2024

Falling asleep in Father's arms

The sacrament of the anointing of the sick, as mentioned by James today, has a rich historical context. It was the precursor to our modern sacrament of the sick, known in the past as “the last rites”. This sacrament was once reserved for those on the brink of death. However, its purpose has evolved. Today, it is bestowed upon those grappling with serious or prolonged illnesses, often during a Mass dedicated to the sick members of our community.

James emphasises the significance of prayer, not just in times of sickness but particularly during difficult situations. It can be challenging to pray when there seems to be no human solution. However, we must remember that God's ways are not our ways.

Heaven does not ask for academic qualifications but rather for a childlike spirit. This is the message conveyed in today's Gospel. Jesus receives children and sees them as the prototype of openness and total dependence. Children have no doubts about their needs and the role their parents play in fulfilling them.

In her autobiography 'Story of a Soul', St. Therese of Lisieux talks about her unwavering trust in God. Having childlike trust in the Lord means putting complete faith in Him and not solely relying on oneself. It's about having so much trust in God that you can peacefully fall asleep in His arms. St. Augustine wisely cautioned us to be careful not to despair about ourselves and to place our trust in God instead of solely relying on ourselves.

Therefore, we should keep our eyes on the Lord, who is our constant refuge throughout the journey of life. The realisation that all good flows from God is the key to eternal life.