

JULY 21 2025 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

That nobody filmed it when Jesus was there. But, well, 2,000 years ago, there were no movie cameras and so on. It would have been nice to see what his body, what Jesus' body language was when he was being tested by the Pharisees.

Was he really like an angry face, like, "You silly people, now you're after me again?" Or was he just calm and steady in his thoughts? I presume that Jesus was fairly steady. Instead of showing any signs of anger—he probably was kind of angry inside, but without showing it—he just answered them. He actually foretold his own death and resurrection, his three days between his crucifixion and the resurrection. It's good stuff to pray with.

In Ignatian spirituality, of course, we have that prayer of imagination, putting yourself in the scene.

In the first reading, we also have Moses being on the spot. The Israelites are by the Red Sea, and the Egyptians are coming. Moses clearly says, "Just stay calm, stay calm," while the Israelites were saying, "Well, it would have been better for us to stay in Egypt and die there as slaves. What? Are there not enough graves in Egypt that we have to die here?" But Moses says, "Stay calm."

This is the great gift we get from our faith. The more we grow in our faith, the more we trust in Jesus, the more calm we can be in difficult situations.

Today, we celebrate the memorial of Saint Lawrence Brindisi, a Franciscan, who actually died on July 22nd, tomorrow, but he was bumped by Mary Magdalene, whom we celebrate on the 22nd. So we celebrate St. Lawrence Brindisi today, on the 21st.

He was a man of great intellect and calm. He is very much known for leading the Holy Roman Empire with a crucifix in his hand in battle against the Ottoman Empire, in one of the crucial battles against Islam in Europe. Reposed and totally trusting that God would take care of things. An extremely intelligent person. He spoke seven languages. I'm glad I can speak two languages. Sometimes, when I go back to the Netherlands, I feel like I only speak one-and-a-half languages, and Dutch is not really my first language anymore. But he could speak seven languages. Incredibly intelligent and a true leader—a leader who could stay calm and be decisive.

When he was re-elected in 1605 to lead the Franciscan Order, he said, "No, thank you. Once was good enough. Let me go back into prayer, and let me just be with God." But, of course, it never works like that, and so he became a diplomat very much for the Vatican.

But what is the source? And this is something each one of us has to discover in our own lives. It is so easy to get caught up in the daily drama. "You said this, or you poked me, and I'm angry right now." But how can I keep my own calm disposition and be there for others?

One of the ways to really learn that is through centring prayer. Centring prayer: focus on God, focus on an icon or a mantra. It's not mindfulness. Mindfulness is Eastern, but centring prayer is really Christian. You focus on God and become in touch with our thoughts and thought patterns.

As you quietly sit with Jesus, or an icon, you become more and more aware of your thought patterns and all the garbage that goes through your mind. All this garbage—and also to become aware of how the devil is at work in our lives, how unpleasant thoughts all of a sudden pop into our minds. The more we become aware of it, the more we can counteract it.

"Okay, here, I'm just making this up. Here, my sister-in-law again came into my mind," or "My husband, again, I'm angry with him because he always does the same thing, and here I am focusing on it again. Let me stop. Let me, as I'm sitting with this icon or with the crucifix, refocus on the crucifix."

Continually centring ourselves in Christ—the more we do that, the more we grow in Christ, the more we can be people for others, the more we can be signs of Christ in our families. To be steady, and especially when things are difficult, that we are the sign of Christ in a lot of emotional upheaval.

Amen.