

JANUARY 24, 2026 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

This nice little snippet in the Gospel of Mark: Jesus has been healing and he gets all this attention, and it's a sensation. And his family says, "Uh-oh, we have a problem, we gotta restrain him and call him home, and try to calm things down." And it's very interesting. He's healing all these people, and then, right after this, the leadership, the Pharisees and so on, they accuse him of having the devil in him, of having Beelzebub in him. And, of course, he defends himself on that one.

Next Tuesday, we pick it up again. And then we hear him saying, as they say, your mother and your brothers are waiting outside, and the famous words, "Who are my sisters and brothers? Those who follow me are my sisters and brothers."

But Jesus would be a real oddball in his time. And, actually, saints are usually oddballs, different people out of the norm. They're different and, um, and it's very interesting stuff. And especially mystics, they can be really completely different. Of course, we know St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis who was quite different, too. He was a pretty boy who had a conversion, and he became different, dressing in some old clothes and so on.

Also, in modern times, we have, for example, Sister Faustina. Sister Faustina who's a favourite of mine. And when she had all these visitations of Jesus, all these conversations. And when Father Sopocko, her spiritual director, came in the picture, who had a doctorate in Pastoral Theology, the first thing he did is send her to a psychologist to make sure that she was not crazy, to make sure that this was authentic. And after he knew it was authentic, he became her biggest supporter.

And this is interesting stuff. How people, how God chooses certain people, and they're just different.

And Jesus, too, he just came from a working family and he has all this knowledge. He's the Son of God, but he's different. And, of course, in the first reading we have 2 Samuel that King Saul, King David gets the message that King Saul is killed, and Jonathan, his best friend, Saul's son. And King David actually does something really interesting. Again, completely different, out of the norm, because Saul had been after him to kill him because Saul saw him as an enemy. And instead of King David saying, "Hooray, my enemy has died!" he goes grieving. And he would leave it in God's hands. And this is something also for us, something to learn, of how to leave things in God's hands. And not to take revenge so quick, or to say, "Good riddance." Leave it in God's hands, if something is wrong it will be taken care of.

Of course, today we celebrate St. Francis de Sales. St. Francis, who also was completely different, he was born with a golden spoon in his mouth, and he had this conversion, and rejected what his dad wanted him to do. And he became, uh, he joined the church. And a major figure in the Counter-Reformation. And especially in the Counter-Reformation, also very much preaching against Calvinism, the notion of predestination. And we still see remnants of this predestination that people would say, "Hey, have you been saved? Are you predestined?" No, nobody is predestined, it's a false teaching, and it often has been used also for racism. "Hey, you have a different skin colour than I am and so you must be doomed by God, but I am white and I'm predestined." Gotta be very careful with this stuff.

But St. Francis, he really, um, he also was an incredibly good spiritual director. And he wrote two books, *The Introduction to Devout Life* and

the *Treatise on the Love of God*. Two classics. And I really can encourage you to read them. And his whole spirituality was about that you don't have to be a Carthusian Monk and pray all day to be holy. You can be holy in an ordinary way. You don't have to, uh, to be holy in what we do, in daily life. And he would say there's something wrong if someone, say a mother with children, would spend all day in church praying and neglecting her children. No, in our daily life, as it deals with her children, she can be the sign of Christ for her children. And, of course, pray gently.

But he has some wonderful sayings out of that book which I have read now a few times. I just savour his writings. He says himself, "God desires everyone to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of truth. God never forsakes us, we forsake God." And this is so true how we, in our lives, in the chaos of the world, can forsake God. We can doom ourselves. But God is always there to call us. How are we called... how the ordinary purification, how we grow in our a long life journey into God.

And another saying, another quote I will use of him, "The ordinary purification, whether of body or soul, is only accomplished by slow degrees, step by step, gradually and painful." We don't just have a conversion and everything is good, and we have a conversion and we say, "We are saved." No, coming to God is step by step, little step by little step as we come in touch with our own life journey, as we come in touch with our own shadows, as we also notice that prayer is not something we do, prayer is something we live. We can, in daily life, we can be very busy with things, and then when it slows down a little bit, or we have a cup of coffee, we gently just move our minds back to God. And so we find that rhythm in life. And not to worry, everything will be

fine if we just gently follow God, and we just purify as we come along.  
And God always shows us the way in daily life.

Amen.