

Decalogue for the Sharing Group

1. Meetings are led by the Holy Spirit through Mary.
2. Purpose of the meeting:
 - To become aware of my weaknesses and the truth of being loved by God
 - To respond to the desire to deepen my faith
 - To be open to others (brothers and sisters) in the group
 - To share different experiences of my faith and how God is present in my life
3. When I go to the meeting, I will pray to God for others and myself.
 - Prayer of empty hands or that of the tax collector is recommended.
4. I will remember that I am God's child who has the right to trust and await miracles.
5. As a participant in our meeting I will:
 - Serve others and not count my own merits
 - Create the atmosphere of calm, focus/concentration and openness
 - Not impose on others my ways of thinking, reacting and perceiving
 - Avoid giving advice or solving others' problems
 - Speak from my personal "I" rather than use such terms as "you, we, us, people, we should, others do this."
 - Avoid discussion and criticism
6. By keeping what is shared in the meeting confidential, I will preserve each participant's freedom to share openly and protect their dignity as a child of God.
7. I will not be afraid of moments of silence, since I or somebody else may need time to reflect. Moments of silence provide us with unique opportunities for prayer and entrustment to God.
8. I will remember to attentively listen to what my brother or sister is saying in order to help them in the process of sharing.
9. When I give a witness talk or share my faith, God's grace is not only given to me but it is being multiplied and given to others.
10. Above all, God expects from me humility and openness. Even one person who is humble and open to God can create an appropriate climate during a given meeting that will spread to all participants. The most important and desirable goal is not the format of the meeting, but it is to be open to God's grace and presence.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 305, footnote 167: Mt 6:31-33; cf. 10:29-31; No. 2734, footnote 22: Cf. Rom 5:3-5; No.2828, footnotes 113: Mt 5:45; 114: Ps 104:27. New American Bible © USCCB. All rights reserved. <http://www.usccb.org/nab/index.shtml> Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, 3rd ed. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2012). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us*

December 2, 2018 ~ 1st Sunday of Advent ~ Year C Spiritual Reflection on Sunday's Readings

Prepared by:
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Communion of Life with Christ through Mary

Opening Prayer
Read Decalogue
Read Scripture
Read Reflection

Reading I	Jer 33:14-16
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14
Reading II	1 Thes 3:12-4:2
Gospel	Lk 21:25-28, 34-36

Opening or Closing Prayer

Dearest Father, Your Son tells us, "Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." I long to be Your smallest child. Help me to rediscover You as the One Who delights in me, Who calls me as His own.

My Jesus, You say to us, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." You are the way to heaven. Thank You for saving me and giving me Yourself in the Holy Eucharist. Reactivate the call of my Baptism to serve the Church in childlike humility, "boasting only in God."

Holy Spirit, reveal to me my weaknesses that I may seek Jesus' strength. Reveal to me my nothingness, that I may await all things from Him. Convince me of Jesus' words, "What is impossible for human beings is possible for God."

Blessed Mother, I entrust my prideful doubt, fear, discouragement and ingratitude to your intercession so that I will believe, as God's beloved child and yours, "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2010

Spiritual Reflection

"Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap."

Storms in our Lives

An especially privileged time for the development of our faith, is when we experience storms in our lives. The storm at sea described in the Gospel is a certain symbol for our situation. During difficult trials of faith, in the time of lesser or greater storms, it seems to us that Jesus has abandoned us, that He is not there. There can be various storms: the storms of temptations, storms of scruples, storms of worrying about the future, about health, about work, and storms involving discord in marriage. In the face of a storm, two types of attitudes can be observed: fear, as in the case of the terrified apostles, and peace, symbolized by Jesus sleeping in the boat...

Every storm has its purpose. It is God passing by, which will bring with it some great grace – primarily the grace of trust. During a storm you should direct the eyes of your faith on the peaceful face of Christ. A “theology” of God’s sleep can be discussed here. **During our storms God seems to be sleeping.** The revelation of the Bible includes not only God’s word but also God’s gestures. How very rich in context is this gesture of Jesus sleeping during the dramatic moment of threat. Of course, this does not mean that when threatened with danger one should do nothing. Quietism is contradictory to the teaching of the Church. Jesus does not reproach the apostles because they tried to save the boat. He accused them of the lack of an attitude of faith, which caused them to succumb to the temptation of fear or even panic. It is with this gesture of sleep that He wanted to tell them, *But I am with you, you should be calm, for nothing can happen to a boat that I am in.*

The attitude of faith is simultaneously a prayer of faith. It is expressed by calmness in the face of danger, by peace on a spiritual level since we have no direct influence on our psychophysical level. There will be many anxieties that will tear us apart, but that is not important. What is important is that fear, aroused at an emotional and mental level, does not control our spiritual level. It is important that it does not cause a change in our attitude, deeds, thoughts, and desires. Our faith and our belief in the fact that He is present here, close to us, makes us calm in spite of our emotional state. His presence is a presence of eternal power and eternal love. When storms come into your life, internal or external, look at the peaceful face of Jesus. Then you will understand that you are not alone and that, in every situation, He is saying, *This storm will pass, it has to pass.*

During our storms and our trials of faith, we must also never forget about the continuous presence of Mary who is close to us as the Mother of our abandonment to God. Let us ask her to allow us to share in her abandonment to God, so that we may stop trusting ourselves, things, and people, and that we may perceive the continuous presence of her Son who is close to us and is our only security. We ask Mary that, following her example, we trust exclusively in the Lord. *Mother of Great Abandonment, I offer myself to you without reservation – to the end.*

Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, pp.124-126

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 305** Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father who takes care of his children's smallest needs: "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?". . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."¹⁶⁷
- 2734** Filial trust is tested - it proves itself - in tribulation.²² The principal difficulty concerns the *prayer of petition*, for oneself or for others in intercession. Some even stop praying because they think their petition is not heard. Here two questions should be asked: Why do we think our petition has not been heard? How is our prayer heard, how is it "efficacious"?
- 2828** "Give us": The trust of children who look to their Father for everything is beautiful. "He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."¹¹³ He gives to all the living "their food in due season."¹¹⁴ Jesus teaches us this petition, because it glorifies our Father by acknowledging how good he is, beyond all goodness.

Questions for Reflection

1. As we enter a busy time of the year, when tasks seem to multiply and people have more need, in what ways do I allow anxiety, haste or stress to overwhelm me? What is my most frequent attitude?
2. Do I consider “filial trust” something reserved for big events or do I surrender the worries and preoccupations of daily life to my Father in heaven? How is God present in what I experience?
3. In contemplating Mary’s life full of trials and uncertainties, how can she bring me to an awareness of the closeness of Christ?

Prayer after Sharing

Thank you, God, for allowing me to see the truth about my weaknesses and how it calls upon the abyss of your merciful Love.