

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 my 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. 540, footnotes 244: Cf. Mt 16:21-23; 245: Heb 4:15; No. 520, footnotes 191: GS 38; cf. Rom 15:5; Phil 2:5; 192: Cf. Jn 13:15; Lk 11:1; Mt 5:11-12; No. 2612, footnotes 72: Mk 1:15; 73: Cf. Mk 13; Lk 21:34-36; 74: Cf. Lk 22:40, 46.

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André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2016). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org
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March 1, 2020 ~ 1st Sunday of Lent ~ Year A Spiritual Reflection on Sunday's Readings

Prepared by:
Families of Nazareth Movement USA
Communion of Life with Christ through Mary

Opening Prayer
Read Decalogue
Read Scripture
Read Reflection

Reading I	Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17
Reading II	Rom 5:12-19 OR Rom 5:17-19
Gospel	Mt 4:1-11

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

Summer Retreat 2007
Families of Nazareth USA

Spiritual Reflection

The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve. Mt 4:10

Beginning in the desert, . . . Jesus finds himself at the junction of two paths: the *wide* path of unlimited deployment of his power, or the *narrow* path of the cross and descent accepted through love; the path of ascent in self-exaltation, or the path of descent in self-effacement and accepted weakness. . .

Desire to Be Admired

“The heads of nations want to make their *power* felt,” Jesus said (cf. Mk 10:42). The Evil One therefore proposes to Jesus three ways by which he can prove that he deserves to be admired by the crowds and show his power: 1. “Do something useful,” he tells him, like changing these stones into bread; 2. “Do something sensational,” like throwing yourself from the height of the Temple so you will be applauded, recognized, and venerated; 3. “Do something that will give you power,” like adoring the Prince of this world so all the kingdoms will be yours. Conceived by the Evil One in order to seduce Jesus, these three temptations have the goal of enticing him to enter a world dominated by logic, competition, and the search for power, and to convince him that in order to succeed in his mission he needs to pursue popularity, power and prestige. Love or power? Love or admiration? Climb the ladder of power or descend into the poverty of a child? This is the choice that Jesus will need to make, and that we all have to make if we want to follow him on his path of descent.

The Great Temptation

In fact, the three temptations of Christ in the desert are three forms of the same temptation faced by the committed Christian or the person in charge of a community. It is what can be called the primordial temptation, the great temptation that desires to elevate oneself above others, and to seek *their admiration* through *ability* and *power*; the temptation to use the spiritual life, and even the apostolate, for one’s own glory instead of being of service to the poor; the temptation to use strong means, even riches, to launch *our* works.

Jean Vanier writes:

Inside of us, there is a little tyrant who wants power and the prestige that is attached to it; one wants to dominate, be superior and control. One fears any criticism, any control; one alone is right (and sometimes in the name of God); one interferes in all matters, doing all, commanding all, and

jealously protecting one’s authority. One permits freedom only to the extent that it does not interfere with one’s authority to be able to control it. . .

There is no true joy without humility and poverty of heart, which was very well demonstrated by Francis of Assisi as he sang the Song of Creation in his most complete denudation.

André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*, pp.42-45

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 540** Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him.²⁴⁴ This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter *for us*: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning."²⁴⁵ By the solemn forty days of *Lent* the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.
- 520** In all of his life Jesus presents himself as *our model*. He is "the perfect man",¹⁹¹ who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way.¹⁹²
- 2612** In Jesus "the Kingdom of God is at hand."⁷² He calls his hearers to conversion and faith, but also to *watchfulness*. In prayer the disciple keeps watch, attentive to Him Who Is and Him Who Comes, in memory of his first coming in the lowliness of the flesh, and in the hope of his second coming in glory.⁷³ In communion with their Master, the disciples' prayer is a battle; only by keeping watch in prayer can one avoid falling into temptation.⁷⁴

Questions for Reflection

1. How is God showing me through this reflection the spiritual path I choose most often in the situations and events of my daily life?
2. When I encounter the temptation of power, control, or admiration, how is God coming to me in this Lenten season? How can I respond to His love?
3. Looking at Mary in her poverty and self-effacement, how can she guide me on the path of true love and true joy?

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.