

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. 544, footnotes 253: Lk 4:18; cf. 7:22; 254: Mt 5:3; 255: Cf. Mt 11:25; 256: Cf. Mt 21:18; Mk 2: 23-26; Jn 4:6-7; 19:28; Lk 9:58; 257: Cf. Mt 25: 31-46; No.716, footnotes 87: Cf. Zeph 2:3; Pss 22:27; 34:3; Isa 49:13; 61:1; etc.88: Lk 1:17; No. 2544, footnotes 335: Lk 14:33; cf. Mk 8:35; 336: Cf. Lk 21:4.

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S.C. Biela, *Open Wide the Door to Christ* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2005). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org
Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

September 8, 2019 ~ Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time ~ Year C 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 Wis 9:13-18b

Responsorial Psalm Ps 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 and 17

Reading II Phmn 9-10, 12-17

Gospel Lk 14:25-33

Opening or Closing Prayer

My Lord Jesus,

Thank you for Your gift of the Eucharist in which You desire to meet with me, accept me, and love me just as I am.

Forgive me for constantly submerging myself in the world, seeking its innumerable temporal treasures, proving that You are not my one true treasure.

O my Lord, during Holy Mass, and during every moment of this day, I entrust to You all my affairs, fears, uncertainties and distractions, and I beg You to...

Open my soul to ever deeper contrition for wasting so many graces, and to gratefulness for Your constant bestowals.

Help me to have the attitude of a helpless child and a contrite sinner in need of Your Mercy.

Heal me of my spiritual leprosy.

Help me to discover You in the Eucharist and to desire You as my only true treasure – my only Love.

Transform me that I may decrease and You may increase.

Unite me to You, my Eucharistic Savior.

May our Blessed Mother await and receive in me and through me Your kenosis – Eucharist – and may she always be grateful within me for Your Sacrament of Love.

I ask this through Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2007

Spiritual Reflection

*“In the same way,
anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions
cannot be my disciple” Lk14: 33*

To Agree to Lose

God’s light tries to show us, who are so tortured by our own selves, the path to freedom and poverty. Following the path to poverty does not necessarily mean losing things. Rather, the path to poverty entails turning our hearts away from the things to which we are attached so that we are not enslaved by them. However, if our attachment is so strong that breaking free from all of the shackles proves to be impossible, then it is necessary to lose some of the things that enslave us so that our hearts can then be free for the Lord in the end.

In your daily routine, try to hear the Lord who is knocking. Through difficult situations that deprive you of the material goods to which you are attached, even if you do not know that you are attached to these goods, God desires to give you the freedom of spiritual poverty. Perhaps you lost or misplaced something important. Perhaps someone stole something from you. Perhaps you were in a car accident or you lost a job that paid well. Try to see that this is God’s knocking. This is His way of asking you to accept loss so that you may become poor and free for Him. On the other hand, God may also want you to take advantage of certain material goods. However, He still expects a certain detachment, distance and freedom of heart from all temporary treasures. After all, Jesus reminds us: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth” (Mt 6:19). For the person who is poor in spirit, **things only have meaning insofar as they help him to fulfill God’s will.** God, who is knocking, desires to show us how to turn our hearts from the things of this world toward the one and only true support – God’s will.

Human nature clings to treasures and riches. It is full of greed and lust. Consequently, the attitude of poverty does not come easily to us. Losing is very painful for the *ego* and our pride. Each time we lose something, we have to overcome ourselves in order to accept the truth. When you go after God’s light, which shows you the path to poverty, and you want to surrender something to Him, your feelings or mind may resent this action and suggest to you: “Do not do this because you will lose your life” or, “Look, you are growing old, you are losing your strength, and you will not realize your dreams.” Meanwhile, God desires that we continuously give up our attachments, until we give away our last penny in order to purchase the pearl of eternal life.

A person who is poor in spirit places his entire hope in God and not in the things of this world. Blessed are the poor in spirit because they acknowledge their

own total dependence on God and they are open to His all-powerful love. (cf. Mt 5:3)...

Lacking something does not guarantee a person’s salvation. Nevertheless, it does present a chance for salvation by making it easier to purchase the pearl of the Kingdom. However, it is easy to waste this chance when we rely on and place our hope in material things rather than God.

S. C. Biela, *Open Wide the Door to Christ*, pp.11-13

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

544 The kingdom belongs *to the poor and lowly*, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor";²⁵³ he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."²⁵⁴ To them - the "little ones" the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned.²⁵⁵ Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation.²⁵⁶ Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom.²⁵⁷

716 The People of the "poor"⁸⁷ - those who, humble and meek, rely solely on their God's mysterious plans, who await the justice, not of men but of the Messiah - are in the end the great achievement of the Holy Spirit's hidden mission during the time of the promises that prepare for Christ's coming. It is this quality of heart, purified and enlightened by the Spirit, which is expressed in the Psalms. In these poor, the Spirit is making ready "a people prepared for the Lord."⁸⁸

2544 Jesus enjoins his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone, and bids them "renounce all that [they have]" for his sake and that of the Gospel.³³⁵ Shortly before his passion he gave them the example of the poor widow of Jerusalem who, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on.³³⁶ The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do I relate to material goods and what is my reaction to “losing” something?
2. How can I perceive God’s love when I am deprived of some “material or spiritual” goods? What is my response?
3. Mary was the lowly handmaid of the Lord. How can she help me on the path of freedom from attachments and poverty of spirit?

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.