

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 1723; 1724 footnote 25: Cf. the parable of the sower: *Mt 13:3-23*.

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Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

SEPTEMBER 16, 2018 ~ 24TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ YEAR B
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 Is 50:5-9a
Responsorial Psalm Ps 116:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9
Reading II Jas 2:14-18
Gospel Mk 8:27-35

Opening or Closing Prayer

Dear Lord,

The world of temporality constantly pulls on my heart, although I want to seek only God's will for my life.

Thank you for giving me your Mother who teaches me, first of all, how to discover Your Love, and then how to trust in Pure Love.

Transform me with the power of the Eucharist, giving me your Divine Light to penetrate my heart and reveal its deepest truths.

Through Mary, give me hope and lead me to contrition. May my contrition give birth to gratitude for Your constant bestowals, given to me because You Love me just as I am ~ a sinner.

Let every act of gratitude multiply in my heart into new acts of gratitude as Blessed Mother carries me securely under Her mantle toward You, my Redeemer.

I beg for these graces through You, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

*Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2006*

Spiritual Reflection

“Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.” Mt.16:23

Any human benevolence, shown to us against God’s will, may become **poison** for us. When St. Peter told Jesus: “God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you,” (Mt 16:22) certainly he wanted to show concern and kindness to his Divine Friend; he wanted to give Jesus psychological support. Subsequently, the words: “Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do,” (Mt 16:23) precisely classify this deed of St. Peter. This is an example of how human benevolence shown against God’s will can be compared to ‘satanic’ actions, even if it clothed in the beautiful robes of concern and care. In actuality, it is capable of being destructive – a spiritual poison in a very dangerous form.

It behooves us to be certain that those with whom we are in relationships want only to do God’s will; that they will not go against God’s will in any way. When what we receive from others is the simple carrying out of God’s will, only then will our spiritual lives not be wounded or destroyed. It is only God’s will that has a healing impact at all times and only His will that can become a true source of reliance for us and a rescue for our souls. Every situation constitutes something that is best for us even if it is difficult to accept, for example, when somebody who is doing God’s will refuses to offer us help. This desire of the Creator, who loves us infinitely, is always an expression of His purest love directed toward us.

In the meantime, because we are sinful and weak, we often desire the poison of exultation and lean on our illusions. From this desire springs our hidden perverse longing for others to take care of us in order to satisfy our egoism, even when it means that we are going against God’s will. Our egoism is hungry for this kind of food, even though we know that it is poisonous. When we do receive it, the effect, unfortunately, is always the same – it closes us to the truth about ourselves and once again we fall.

How are we to respond when God reminds us, once again, that we are full of pretenses toward other people, that we are leaning on illusions, and that we are weak and sinful? Furthermore, what are we to do when we are overwhelmed with the greed of human reliances that is poisoning our souls? Fortunately, there is a very helpful medicine for this condition. We have to try to stand in truth and admit the following before God: *My problem is based on the fact that I am filled with the pride of pretenses. I constantly expect*

mutuality and love from other people instead of counting only on You – this bitterness and regret that is filling my heart comes from unfulfilled expectations. And, then, with ever increasing humility and faith, we have to frequently repeat: Thank you, Lord, that you love me as such, that you embrace me as such, Lord Jesus.

St. Thérèse considered it a **grace** that she was unable to find reliance on another person. She said: “How can I thank Jesus for making me find ‘*only bitterness in earthly friendships!*’” It did not get in the way of her love that she showed her family most dearly, but at the same time she was free from any attachments toward them.

S.C. Biela, *God Alone Suffices*, pp.49-51

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 1723** The beatitude we are promised confronts us with decisive moral choices. It invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to seek the love of God above all else. It teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement - however beneficial it may be - such as science, technology, and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love.
- 1724** The Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, and the apostolic catechesis describe for us the paths that lead to the Kingdom of heaven. Sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we tread them, step by step, by everyday acts. By the working of the Word of Christ, we slowly bear fruit in the Church to the glory of God.²⁵

Questions for Reflection

1. In what situations have I, like Peter, told friends or family members that they don’t have to suffer or that “everything will be all right”?
2. How do I see that I long for others to take care of me in order to satisfy my ego? In my Family? With my Friends? My Parish Priests? Confessor/Spiritual Director?
3. If I find I cannot trust that Jesus loves me with this truth of my bitterness and my regret from unfulfilled expectations do I call on Blessed Mother to accept this truth of His Love for me?

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.