

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. 1846, footnotes 113: Cf. Lk 15; 114: Mt 1:21; No. 1847, footnotes 116: St. Augustine, *Sermo* 169, 11, 13:PL 38, 923; 117: 1 Jn 8-9; No. 1848, footnotes 118: Rom 5:20; 119: Rom 5:21; 120: John Paul II, *DeV* 31 S2.

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Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith 3rd ed.t* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary

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September 15, 2019 ~ Twenty-Fourth 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	Ex 32:7-11, 13-14
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19
Reading II	1 Tm 1:12-17
Gospel	Lk 15:1-32 OR Lk 15:1-10

Opening or Closing Prayer

Lord, send forth Your Holy Spirit, renew the face of the earth, and renew me in Truth.

Come Holy Spirit, my Consoler, Sacred Bond of the Father and the Son, please dwell in me. Open me fully to the gift of Redemption.

Come Holy Spirit, pour Your light into my heart, my soul, and my mind. In abandoning myself to You, convince me of my sin and lead me to repentance. In the midst of this world where evil is called good and sin is called freedom, allow me to know the truth. For only in You, can I find my true identity.

Come Holy Spirit, capture my heart and free me, that I may live in Your eternal embrace, for Your love casts out all my fears, fills me with joy, and enables me to receive everything as a grace.

Come Holy Spirit, that Your fruits within me may be reflected through service to the Church and concern for all the Mystical Body of Christ.

Come Holy Spirit, enlighten the world and deliver me from sin. Through the intercession of Your Spouse, my Mother, come!

I ask this through 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 2009

Spiritual Reflection

'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."'

Lk15: 11

The Consequences of Evil

Upon returning, he saw his father running out to meet him; he found himself in his father's arms and saw tears of joy in his father's eyes. Then he was clothed in the finest robe, received a ring, and saw that his father was preparing a feast for him. **Only then was there a chance that the son would discover his father's love.** This is how the consequences of evil may be connected with grace. God may want them so that they lead us to conversion. **Sometimes only a failure and the suffering it entails are able to shock us and lead to our conversion.** Conversion requires contrition of heart and longing for forgiveness. God, who wants us to achieve contrition and longing, runs out to meet us first. In His desire to forgive, he lowers Himself so drastically that, as saints say, he sometimes becomes as if a beggar calling out for help.

The scene of the suicide of assistant commissioner Scobie, the main character in Graham Greene's book, *The Heart of the Matter*, is shocking. In the last moments of his life, after he had taken a lethal dose of pills, the dying commissioner seems to hear that "Someone" is desperately searching for him and calling him. He hears calls for help, a cry of distress, groans of pain. Responding to this call, Scobie manages to drag back, through infinite distance, his remaining consciousness to give an answer that will save him, "Good God, I love..."

Roles seem to be paradoxically changed. It is not Scobie who is asking for help. It is God, who has identified Himself with the wretched man, who calls out for help for Himself. In the last moment of Scobie's life, God calls out to Him, *Help me forgive you, allow me to save you!*

We have to first admit to our sin for it to become a happy fault. In his Gospel, St. John tells us about Christ's promise that when the Holy Spirit comes, The Consoler, He will convince the world about sin (Jn 16-8). Therefore, one of the functions of the Holy Spirit, who descends on the world, is to convince us of our sin. This is the initial grace, fundamental to our interior life, which is granted to us by the Holy Spirit so that we can be convinced of the fact that we are sinners.

It is not enough, however, for us to accept this first grace of the Holy Spirit. If we were to know only the reality of our sin, it could ruin us. Our lives would become completely weighed down by our own evil, our lives would be marked with restlessness, stress, and sorrow. There has to be an opening within us for a further gift of the Spirit, for the **discovery through faith of God's love for us.**

Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, pp.77-79

References from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

1846 The Gospel is the revelation in Jesus Christ of God's mercy to sinners.¹¹³ The angel announced to Joseph: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins..."¹¹⁴

1847 "God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us."¹¹⁶ To receive his mercy, we must admit our faults. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."¹¹⁷

1848 As St. Paul affirms, "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."¹¹⁸ But to do its work grace must uncover sin so as to convert our hearts and bestow on us "righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."¹¹⁹ Like a physician who probes the wound before treating it, God, by his Word and by his Spirit, casts a living light on sin:

Conversion *requires convincing of sin*; it includes the interior judgment of conscience, and this, being a proof of the action of the Spirit of truth in man's inmost being, becomes at the same time the start of a new grant of grace and love: "Receive the Holy Spirit." Thus in this "convincing concerning sin" we discover *a double gift*: the gift of the truth of conscience and the gift of the certainty of redemption. The Spirit of truth is the Consoler.¹²⁰

Questions for Reflection

1. In recent weeks, what experience has helped me to discover the Father's love for me?
2. When has a failure or suffering led me to a deeper conversion?
3. What is my relationship with the Holy Spirit? Do I think of the Blessed Mother and am I willing to ask her to help me grow in this relationship? How important is it 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.