

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. 2547, footnotes 341: Lk 6:24; 342: St. Augustine, De serm. Dom. In monte 1, 1, 3: PL 34, 1232; 343: Cf. Mt 6:25-34; No. 2548, footnote 344: St. Gregory of Nyssa, De beatitudinibus 6: PG 44, 1265A; No. 2549, No2550, footnote 345: Cf. Rev 22:17.

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September 23, 2018 ~ 25th 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	Ws 2:12, 17-20
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 54:3-4, 5, 6 and 8
Reading II	Jas 3:16-4:3
Gospel	Mk 9:30-37

Opening or Closing Prayer

Father of Mercy and of Love,

Thank you for the gift of reconciliation through the Redemptive Sacrifice of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your love is more powerful than my sin. There is no evil that surpasses Your infinite mercy.

Send your Holy Spirit to convince me of my weakness so that I may live with a truth of conscience and a certainty of redemption.

Open me, Gracious Father, to the graces of being personally responsible for my sins, longing for forgiveness, and of being obedient to the call to conversion.

When I seek forgiveness, give me the courage to reveal the abyss of my misery and to accept my sins as "happy faults" so that, as Your child, I may run to Your loving embrace.

Through the help and intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy, may I learn true contrition for the wounds I have caused Her Son.

And may my continual renewal, through the grace of Your sacraments, work to revitalize the Church, so that, as One Body in Christ, we may proclaim Your dominion over all the earth.

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

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2010

Spiritual Reflection

“If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”

Mk 9:35

The process of spiritual purification is so painful because it consists of exposing the truth about our pride. God discloses it gradually and delicately, but with each attempt of disclosure we experience the very dramatic rebelliousness of our ego. The main reason for all of our anxiety is the **pain of our own pride**, which is protesting against the truth about ourselves. Therefore, we blame those around us or the circumstances we find ourselves in; we search for a scapegoat to bear what was revealed about ourselves. We go to all of this trouble for one purpose: to keep our ego intact.

This process of purification is described in the words of Jesus: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me!” (Mark 8:34). Indeed, we have to deny ourselves in order to undergo the process of purification from our pride of good impressions about ourselves. This indicates the need to take up the cross of truth about ourselves, and imitate Jesus so that we will desire to be the last – **to run for the last place here on Earth.**

We cannot forget that Jesus, though being first, became the last. In this way, He has shown us how we should relate toward everything. In this way, He has shown us what the spirit of this world offers us, and He has revealed to us our attachments to our own ‘perfection.’ He took upon Himself our wretchedness and the sinfulness of our attachments. He waits, however, for us to come after Him so as to fully take advantage of the sacrifice that He offered for us. He expects that in order to imitate Him we will try to lose everything and everybody, which includes the prideful notions that we are good.

S.C. Biela, *God Alone Suffices*, pp.106-107

Any attempt at true reform in the Church must aim at rediscovering the God of weakness, the God-child, the God who *descends* and offers himself to us, *helpless*; the God whose authority consists in choosing the last place, losing his life, and kneeling at the feet of the poor and little ones; the God with open arms who allows his heart to be pierced in a gesture of offering and love; the pierced Lamb which, in its weakness, offers its afflictions and its wounds like a Source that is seeking the person who is thirsty.

The way of the spirit is a path of descent and poverty. It is a question of self-emptying, of abandoning oneself, and not of self-satisfaction. One must forget oneself, and what can better self-forgetting than the joy of loving and serving like Jesus?

André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*, p.49

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 2547** The Lord grieves over the rich, because they find their consolation in the abundance of goods.³⁴¹ "Let the proud seek and love earthly kingdoms, but blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven."³⁴² Abandonment to the providence of the Father in heaven frees us from anxiety about tomorrow.³⁴³ Trust in God is a preparation for the blessedness of the poor. They shall see God.
- 2548** Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God. "The promise [of seeing God] surpasses all beatitude . . . In Scripture, to see is to possess. . . . Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive."³⁴⁴
- 2549** It remains for the holy people to struggle, with grace from on high, to obtain the good things God promises. In order to possess and contemplate God, Christ's faithful mortify their cravings and, with the grace of God, prevail over the seductions of pleasure and power.
- 2550** On this way of perfection, the Spirit and the Bride call whoever hears them³⁴⁵ to perfect communion with God.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is God telling me in this Gospel and in this reflection?
2. Has the truth about my pride been exposed lately? In what events do I recognize this? How do I take advantage of Jesus' sacrifice in these situations?
3. Blessed Mother, I need you. How often do I call on our Heavenly mother to help me accept the truth that God loves me unconditionally?

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.