

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. 964, footnote 504: LG 57; No. 969, footnote 512: LG 62.

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S.C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, 2nd ed. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary

Foundation, 2005). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org

Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

December 8, 2019 ~ 2nd Sunday of Advent

Spiritual Reflection on Sunday's Readings

Prepared by:
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Communion of Life with Christ through Mary

Opening Prayer
Read Decalogue
Read Scripture
Read Reflection

Reading I Is 11:1-10

Responsorial Psalm Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

Reading II Rm 15:4-9

Gospel Mt 3:1-12

Opening or Closing Prayer

Holy Mary, full of God's presence

during the days of your life, you accepted with full humility the Father's will,
and the Devil was never capable to tie you around with his confusion.

Once with your Son you interceded for our difficulties, and,
full of kindness and patience,

you gave us the example of how to untie the knots of our life.

And by remaining forever Our Mother, you put in order, and make more clear
the ties that link us to the Lord.

Holy Mother, Mother of God and our Mother,

to you, who untie with motherly heart the knots of our life,
we pray to you to receive in your hands (name), and to free them [him/her]
of the knots and confusion with which our enemy attacks.

Through your grace, your intercession, and your example,

deliver us from all evil, Our Lady,

and untie the knots that prevent us from being united with God,
so that we, free from sin and error,

may find Him in all things,

may have our hearts placed in Him,

and may serve Him always in our brothers and sisters. Amen

Pope Francis' prayer to *Our Lady, Untier of Knots*

FNM Summer Retreat 2013

Spiritual Reflection

“The one who is coming after me is mightier than I.” Mt: 3:11

The fragments in the Gospel that speak about Mary present her to us as poor in spirit. The words in the “Magnificat” say that God “has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness” (Lk 1:48).

Mary, standing before God in the truth, recognizes her “lowliness,” her being very poor.

To put oneself in the truth is to recognize that without the support of God in us, we could be capable of committing every possible sin.

Mary was free from every evil not only by the grace of God but also by her cooperation with grace. **Her cooperation consisted, above all, in remaining humble.** Mary was free from original sin and from internal temptations, but not from external temptations. Even Jesus himself was tempted. So just as Adam and Eve sinned, Mary could have sinned – since in fact she was fully free.

Where is the mystery of this marvelous phenomenon hidden, the most marvelous thing that may have occurred any time on earth to such a creature? Certainly it is not only in the grace of God, but also in the response to this grace.

We can think that Mary, perfectly humble, recognized that she was capable of committing all possible sins. Someone who is truly humble never believes that there are any sins that, with all certainty, one could not commit. God saw the depth of her humility: the abyss of her misery on one side and the abyss of her trust on the other side. For this, “...he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness.”

He preserved her from any sin and filled her with Himself. The Mother of the Son of God became a vessel which God filled, but such a vessel recognized continually her fragility...

We observe that Mary submits herself in everything to the will and to the action of God. She, who always says “yes” to her Lord, the one who calls herself a slave of the Lord, fulfills the will of God in a perfect way. She is like a grain that always submits to some process in accord with the plans of the Creator.

And so it also has to be your attitude in everything that God has planned for you. **You should be like a grain** – so submissive and absolutely obedient

to His will that you may die and grow exactly like He wants. Your will should be submitted totally to the Creator. You will want to die to yourself to the extent that you will want to be like her, the ‘slave’ of the Lord. It is only then that the process of your dying and the growth of new life – God’s life in you – will be realized in the optimal way.

And then you will be an instrument through which God can be served for the realization of His plans – in your neighborhood – in your city – in your country – in the whole world. Such is the plan of God for each one of us.

S. C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, pp. 150-152

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

964 Mary's role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it. "This union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to his death";⁵⁰⁴ it is made manifest above all at the hour of his Passion.

969 "This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation . . . Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix."⁵¹²

Questions for Reflection

1. The words of St. John the Baptist in this Sunday’s Gospel could have been spoken by the Mother of God. In what ways have I spoken these words, in my heart or aloud, with meaning and commitment?
2. How often have I thought or said, on hearing of some great evil committed, that I could never do such a thing? Yet, when I commit evil against others, how often do I fail to recognize my weakness and frailty?
3. In what ways do I turn to the Mother of God in the attitude of a humble child, begging her to begin and continue the work of salvation within me? How do I become aware of and feel her intercession for me and seek to know her and trust her with my life?

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.