

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. 947, footnotes 480: St. Thomas Aquinas, *Symb*, 10; 481: *Roman Catechism* 1, 10, 24; No. 953, footnotes 489: *Rom* 14:7; 490: *1 Cor* 12:26-27; 491: *1 cor* 13:5; cf. 10:24.

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Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith* 3rd ed. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2012). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org

Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

January 19, 2020 ~ 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time ~ Year A 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 49:3, 5-6
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10
Reading II	1 Cor 1:1-3
Gospel	Jn 1:29-34

Opening or Closing Prayer

Dear Father, great is Your Mercy.

My true vocation is intimacy with You in the Kingdom of Heaven. May the new model of righteousness Your Son has given me, "as I have done, you should also do," open me more to Your mercy and transform me into Your divine likeness.

Dear Jesus, holy is Your Name.

May your prayer, "that they may be one as you, Father, and I are one," become my own desire. Teach me how to build up the unity of Your Mystical Body by embracing and living out my vocation to authentic holiness and happiness.

Dear Holy Spirit, amazing is Your Grace.

Grant me your gifts in order to "always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks" the reason for my hope. Thank you that, through You, I can encounter Jesus daily in the Eucharist, the source of my hope, even in the situations of my life that are most difficult to understand.

Dear Mother Mary, source of my joy.

"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." As a vessel of the Holy Spirit, teach me to live the Beatitudes of your Son. Wrap me in your mantle, where I can believe in His mercy and fulfill my vocation to be salt of the earth and light of the world.

I ask this through Jesus 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 2011

Spiritual Reflection

*John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said,
"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." John 1:29*

Our faith deepens when we are being stripped of our own systems of security, of all that begets feelings of strength, power, and importance in us. By stripping us of our power and strength, God brings us closer to Him, places us in the truth, and causes us to need Him more. This is an extraordinary grace.

St. John of the Cross has said that God loves a **soul most when He strips it**, for one can then achieve **the fullness of faith**. When you have no support from any of your systems of security, then God can attract you to rely solely on Him, the only rock of your salvation. **The grace of denudation is a special gift of the Holy Spirit who, before descending onto a person, strips him**. Often, we do not fully understand the work of the Holy Spirit. We know that he is the Power, the Paraclete, and the Love of the Father and the Son; but we often forget that it is **He who is the principal author of our holiness**. Therefore, He is the One who brings about the entire process that is indispensable to us on our path toward unity with God. This process has elements of attraction and elements of purification. It is the Holy Spirit who denudes us; it is **He who causes us to become poor**. It is He who endows the poor since He is called "Father of the poor," as professed in the hymn of Pentecost.

Does the Holy Spirit endow us in order to make us rich? This would make no sense because, according to the Gospel, being rich in spirit is a curse. Stripping us and making us even poorer is His gift so that we may be more open to His strength and to His love. Only then will He Himself become a gift for us, since then He will be able to descend into the emptiness of our nakedness and fill us with His infinite power and love.

A particularly important kind of denudation by which the Holy Spirit prepares us for His descent is the process of stripping us of the false image we have of ourselves and freeing us from living in falsehood. In the Gospel, St. John relates Christ's promise to us that the Paraclete – the Holy Spirit – will convince the world about sin when He comes (cf. Jn 16:8). This is one of the functions of the Holy Spirit who descends upon us in Confirmation – to convince us of our sin, to bestow the grace of humility. This is a fundamental grace of the Holy Spirit. It is because of this grace that we come to know who we really are, and we become convinced that we are sinners and people of little faith.

If you are self-confident – if up until now you have not yet discovered your own sinfulness and are self-sufficient in everything – then, in reality, you do not

need the Holy Spirit. Your attitude of self-confidence and your lack of humility close your heart to His descent upon you. If you do not feel that you are a sinner, you will not desire the redeeming action of the Holy Spirit in your life, and then you will not receive the graces of the sacrament of Confirmation. **Humility and faith**, the fundamental gifts of the Holy Spirit, **open us ever more fully to His descent upon us and to acceptance of the Holy Spirit Himself as a gift**.

Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, pp. 184-186

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 408** The consequences of original sin and of all men's personal sins put the world as a whole in the sinful condition aptly described in St. John's expression, "the sin of the world".³⁰⁰ This expression can also refer to the negative influence exerted on people by communal situations and social structures that are the fruit of men's sins.³⁰¹
- 1989** The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is *conversion*, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."³⁸ Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man."³⁹
- 2631** The first movement of the prayer of petition is *asking forgiveness*, like the tax collector in the parable: "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"¹⁰⁵ It is a prerequisite for righteous and pure prayer. A trusting humility brings us back into the light of communion between the Father and his Son Jesus Christ and with one another, so that "we receive from him whatever we ask."¹⁰⁶ Asking forgiveness is the prerequisite for both the Eucharistic liturgy and personal prayer.

Questions for Reflection

1. In order to help me to become more humble, with what gifts or experiences has the Holy Spirit endowed me?
2. In the past, how have I perceived humiliations? What is my attitude today? Are they a curse, a necessity, or a gift?
3. How can I ask Blessed Mother to open my heart to the redeeming action of the Holy 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.