

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. 2613, footnote 77: Cf. Lk 18: 9-14; No. 2839, footnotes 133: Cf. Lk 15: 11-32; 18:13; 134: Col 1:14; Eph 1:7; 135: Cf. Mt 26:28; Jn 20:23.

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S.C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary, revised second edition* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2005). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org
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October 27, 2019 ~ Thirtieth 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	Sir 35:12-14, 16-18
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 34:2-3, 17-18, 19, 23
Reading II	2 Tm 4:6-8, 16-18
Gospel	Lk 18:9-14

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 2008

Spiritual Reflection

'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity – greedy, dishonest, adulterous – or even like this tax collector'...
'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' Lk 18:9-14

Prayer takes a very special importance among the different forms of man's meetings with God. It is in prayer, by raising up our thoughts to the Creator, that we are listening intently to His voice and searching for His will...

In this moment we are together – the 'I' and the 'Thou.'
This I, the sinner, before God who loves me...

To whom is this parable [of the tax collector] directed? St. Luke says it clearly: "to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else."

Jesus says to those self-righteous that, before God,
they are in a situation much worse than the great sinners!
Before God, the recognition of the truth about ourselves
is **that alone** which justifies us, and that means:
acceptance of our nothingness
always linked with trust in God's mercy.

Does this not surprise us? Why does God so easily justify the tax collector, a personification of sinfulness? Why does the 'just' Pharisee leave not only unjustified but with the promise of coming humiliations? Is it wrong if someone is not greedy, unjust, or adulterous, that he does not commit sins as grave as those of the tax collectors? Is it wrong of him to fast and pay tithes on everything he receives? Why then did the Pharisee go home unjustified?

What caused him to be so closed to the mercy of God?

In His parable about the Pharisee and the tax collector, Jesus explains this to us. Even the gravest sins do not close a man's heart to God as much as living a lie, that is:

failing to recognize one's nothingness,
glorifying oneself with the gifts God has given,
and considering oneself as superior to others on this account.

While the one who is justified is the person who confesses to God his sins, those committed in his thoughts, and in his words, in what he has done, and what he has failed to do and those sins from which God preserves him;
justified is he who makes an act of contrition and,
believing in God's mercy, prays:

"Oh God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

Frequently, people consider the Pharisee to be just, and the Pharisee considers himself as just. However, the advertence of Christ toward him is that he will be humiliated.

If you begin to attribute to yourself the goodness which God bestows upon you, then you can be deprived of it...

Putting yourself in God's presence, trust in His Mercy
and acknowledge the truth about yourself as the tax collector did.
Then God will look on your wretchedness
and will have pity on you, His creature.
He will transform you,
will sanctify you,
and fill you with Himself.

If you want to imitate Mary's attitude and be like her, a vessel that God fills with Himself, then like her, you must be poor in spirit.

S.C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, pp. 3-7

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

2613 the Pharisee and the tax collector,"⁷⁷ concerns the humility of the heart that prays. "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" The Church continues to make this prayer its own: *Kyrie eleison!*

2839 With bold confidence, we began praying to our Father. In begging him that his name be hallowed, we were in fact asking him that we ourselves might be always made more holy. But though we are clothed with the baptismal garment, we do not cease to sin, to turn away from God. Now, in this new petition, we return to him like the prodigal son and, like the tax collector, recognize that we are sinners before him.¹³³ Our petition begins with a "confession" of our wretchedness and his mercy. Our hope is firm because, in his Son, "we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."¹³⁴ We find the efficacious and undoubted sign of his forgiveness in the sacraments of his Church.¹³⁵

Questions for Reflection

1. In my daily life, what attitudes might I discover that can be similar to this Pharisee?
2. How is God's love present in these situations? What is my response?
3. How can Mary, the lowly Handmaid of the Lord help me with the prayer of the tax collector?

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.