

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. 164, footnotes 49: 2 Cor 5:7; 50: 1 Cor 13:12; No. 272, footnotes 111: 1 Cor 1:24-25; 112: Eph 1: 19-22; No. 1808, footnotes 70: Ps 118:14; 71: Jn 16:33

New American Bible © USCCB. All rights reserved.

<http://www.usccb.org/nab/index.shtml>

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

November 17 2019 ~ 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time 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 Mal 3:19-20a

Responsorial Psalm Ps 98:5-6, 7-8, 9

Reading II 2 Thes 3:7-12

Gospel Lk 21:5-19

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

"See that you not be deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time has come.' Do not follow them! Luke 21:8

Trials of Faith

In order for faith to become strong, it must be tried. It must go through a crucible of experiences, through many trails and storms. A shallow faith dependent solely on education, feelings and certain habits, collapses in the face of difficulties. In trials of faith, God wants a person who believes to become stripped of what is not faith but is only a support of faith. God wants a person to be stripped of what is not true adherence to Christ, what is not reliance on Him, and what is not the entrustment of oneself to Him.

True faith is free from all-natural supports such as understanding, feelings, and intellectual or imaginative experiences. True faith is dependent solely on Him and on His word. God does not accept a situation by which you base your faith on your actions, your feelings, or your experiences. Therefore, He allows trials of faith that differ depending on what, besides God, you place your faith. If you rely on your natural understanding, all clearness of your reason must vanish. At a certain point, what you have believed in starts to make no sense. If you have placed your faith in certain people – laymen or clergymen, and their actions – then even this, at a certain point, must sway or collapse. If your faith has relied on feelings – on the satisfaction and joy experienced in prayer or religious practices – then you must not be surprised when a time comes of spiritual dryness and an aversion to those practices. You have to go through this painful cleansing in order to gain a pure, true faith and eventually, true contemplation.

God, by placing man in difficult situations, provokes him into performing acts of faith. These situations, which make us realize our powerlessness, can deepen our yearning for God. God does not want to come to us uninvited. **Love wants to be looked for;** otherwise, love is pushed away. In this sense, **faith looks for God to come.** The intensity of looking for God to come indicates the greatness of faith in His power and His love. You can never look enough for God to come. Faith intensifies due to your attempts to look for Him to come. However, this occurs primarily due to God's grace that causes your yearning for Him to grow and deepen within you. God has His ways to enliven your looking for Him and for His graces that follow.

When God wants you to reach the depth of faith, He can give you very difficult trials; He can take much away from you and even strip you of many

supports. God may want you to become uprooted so that, not having any human securities, you can look for redemptive help to come from Him alone.

Tadeusz Dajczer, The Gift of Faith, pp.109-112

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 164** Now, however, "we walk by faith, not by sight";⁴⁹ we perceive God as "in a mirror, dimly" and only "in part".⁵⁰ Even though enlightened by him in whom it believes, faith is often lived in darkness and can be put to the test. The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice and death, seem to contradict the Good News; they can shake our faith and become a temptation against it.
- 272** Faith in God the Father Almighty can be put to the test by the experience of evil and suffering. God can sometimes seem to be absent and incapable of stopping evil. But in the most mysterious way God the Father has revealed his almighty power in the voluntary humiliation and Resurrection of his Son, by which he conquered evil. Christ crucified is thus "the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."¹¹¹ It is in Christ's Resurrection and exaltation that the Father has shown forth "the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe".¹¹²
- 1808** *Fortitude* is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song."⁷⁰ "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."⁷¹

Questions for Reflection

1. What are some trials or temptations that cause me to lose inner peace? In these circumstances, do I make an act of faith or do I give in to discouragement or perhaps look mainly for human solutions?
2. What is my response to the trials of this millennium– in our nation– our Church – my family?
3. How do I perceive the difficult trials of Mary? What was her response?

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.