

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. 1701, footnotes 2: GS 22; 3: Col 1:15; cf. 2 Cor 4:4; 4: Cf. GS 22; 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 de Nyssa, De beatitudinibus 6: PG 44, 1265A.

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January 26, 2020 ~ 3rd 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 8:23-9:3
Responsorial Psalm Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14
Reading II 1 Cor 1:10-13, 17
Gospel Mt 4:12-23

Opening or Closing Prayer

My Lord Jesus,

Thank you for Your gift of the Eucharist in which You desire to meet with me, accept me, and love me just as I am.

Forgive me for constantly submerging myself in the world, seeking its innumerable temporal treasures, proving that You are not my one true treasure.

O my Lord, during Holy Mass, and during every moment of this day, I entrust to You all my affairs, fears, uncertainties and distractions, and I beg You to...

Open my soul to ever deeper contrition for wasting so many graces, and to gratefulness for Your constant bestowals.

Help me to have the attitude of a helpless child and a contrite sinner in need of Your Mercy.

Heal me of my spiritual leprosy.

Help me to discover You in the Eucharist and to desire You as my only true treasure – my only Love.

Transform me that I may decrease and You may increase.

Unite me to You, my Eucharistic Savior.

May our Blessed Mother await and receive in me and through me Your kenosis – Eucharist – and may she always be grateful within me for Your Sacrament of Love.

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

Summer Retreat 2007
Families of Nazareth USA

Spiritual Reflection

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Mt 4:17

Jesus Christ shows us that we have to first become poor in spirit in order to obtain the Kingdom of Heaven...Only the one who is poor truly seeks the Kingdom of Heaven. His heart is free from earthly torments and desires; it is turned toward God...

...We can become poor in spirit on this earth by freely accepting the grace of spiritual purifications. Or, we can become poor in spirit after our death, in Purgatory. Either way, it is not until we redirect our gaze from the illusions of riches and treasures and turn our gaze to God that we will be able to find complete freedom of heart...

Unfortunately, for many of us, giving up material goods seems to be too difficult. Such difficulty leads us to bargain with the Lord for many years, often until we die. This so happens because, even though it is difficult to call ourselves “rich,” we still quickly become accustomed to a particular lifestyle such that we cannot imagine lowering our standard of living. Frequently we are enslaved by what appear to be only small and innocent attachments. In addition, however, we may be rich in desires, full of pretenses, and trapped by the greedy desire to possess things that we do not have but consider necessary for our happiness. Often, without realizing it, we become the slaves of our desires and we create, in our own lives, fears of the following: uneasiness, lack of peace, suffering, or even pain and illness. God’s knocking, or His call to poverty, appears in the background of the living drama of someone who chases after the illusive mirage of riches and who lives as if God does not exist. We will not find peace or happiness until we attempt to detach our hearts from these illusive dreams and direct them toward the One who is knocking.

God’s light tries to show us, who are so tortured by our own selves, the path to freedom and poverty. Following the path to poverty does not necessarily mean losing things. Rather, the path to poverty entails turning our hearts away from the things to which we are attached so that we are not enslaved by them. However, if our attachment is so strong that breaking free from all of the shackles proves to be impossible, then it is necessary to lose some of the things that enslave us so that our hearts can then be free for the Lord in the end...

In our own lives, the external ways in which we call upon our Lord in the attitude of someone who is poor in spirit can take different forms. Sometimes, it is sufficient to say: *Jesus, have pity on me; Jesus, I trust in you! Lord, rescue me!* Our interior act of will permeated with faith and hope is most important so that

our call will not be left unanswered – so that God to whom we call out will come so that we may be united with Him...

A person who is poor in spirit places his entire hope in God and not in the things of this world. Blessed are the poor in spirit because they acknowledge their own total dependence on God and they are open to His all-powerful love (cf. Mt.5:3).

S.C. Biela, *Open Wide the Door to Christ*, pp. 8; 9; 10-11; 18; 12

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1701 "Christ, ...in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, makes man fully manifest to himself and brings to light his exalted vocation."² It is in Christ, "the image of the invisible God,"³ that man has been created "in the image and likeness" of the Creator. It is in Christ, Redeemer and Savior, that the divine image, disfigured in man by the first sin, has been restored to its original beauty and ennobled by the grace of God.⁴

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

Questions for Reflection

1. To what lifestyle and image of myself am I attached, and how does that correspond with how I believe that God sees me?
2. In what areas of my life have I experienced that I am totally dependent on God, or where do I realize that I seem to rely only on myself and need to turn back to the Lord?
3. How can entrusting myself to Mary be a path to becoming poor in spirit, and thus truly seek the Kingdom of Heaven?

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.