

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. 211, footnote 21: Ex 34:7; 22: Eph 2:4;

23: Jn 8:28 (Gk.); No. 270, footnote 109: 2 Cor 6:18; cf. Mt 6:32.; No. 277.

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S.C. Biela, *The Two Pillars* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2012). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org

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March 24, 2019 ~ Third Sunday of Lent ~ 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 Ex 3:1-8a, 13-15

Responsorial Psalm Ps 103: 1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11

Reading II 1 Cor 10:1-6, 10-12

Gospel Lk 13:1-9

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

God replied, "I am who am," then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you...This is my name forever; thus am I to be remembered through all generations." Ex 3: 14,15

Contrition and gratitude are born on the foundation of truth. The truth is twofold: the truth about God and the truth about man. The Lord Jesus spoke about this twofold truth to St. Catherine of Siena:

Do you know, daughter, who you are and who I am? If you know these two things you have beatitude in your grasp. You are she who is not, and I AM HE WHO IS. Let your soul but become penetrated with this truth, and the Enemy can never lead you astray; you will never be caught in any snare of his, nor ever transgress any commandment of mine; you will have set your feet on the royal road which leads to the fullness of grace, and truth, and light. (Raymond of Capua, The Life of Catherine of Siena)

These words spoken to St. Catherine of Siena lay bare the truth about your weak faith. You look at the tabernacle, but do you believe that there, barely a few yards away from you, is the One who holds your history and the history of the entire world in His hands...the One on whom everything depends? In His presence you worry about various problems and how to resolve them. When you kneel before the God of impossible things and you worry about your problems, there is a kind of falsehood in this type of prayerful attitude. You are acting as if you were God and as if you yourself had to solve everything – you who are *who is not*.

If you lived according to these words of Jesus, then an attitude of contrition and gratitude in His presence would always be in you. If you lived according to Christ's words, then you would be contrite and grateful in His presence, which is actualized in the holy sacraments, fills the world with His power, and directs all events...

However, you continually do not believe in the power of contrition and gratitude. Unfortunately, the sins of omission of an attitude of contrition and gratitude, which are the fundamental dispositions that open you to the power of the merciful God, are continually committed. After all, if these two pillars reached the depths, then they could open you to the immeasurable power of God's mercy. If the words that Jesus directed to St. Catherine became the program of your life, if you lived according to them, then you would quickly achieve union with God just like St. Catherine who was mystically espoused to Jesus when she was only twenty years old.

What power is hidden in these words of Jesus! Jesus promised St. Catherine that He would never allow her to be led along the path of any form of unfaithfulness to God's will. He promised that she would obtain all graces, the fullness of truth, and the entire world without difficulty. Astonishing are Christ's words that tell about fear of God and about the importance of humility based on the foundation of truth. Amazing are His words that call us to live only in, through, and for God, the ONE WHO IS.

S.C. Biela, *The Two Pillars*, pp. 80-83

References from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

211 The divine name, "I Am" or "He Is," expresses God's faithfulness: despite the faithlessness of men's sin and the punishment it deserves, he keeps "steadfast love for thousands."²¹ By going so far as to give up his own Son for us, God reveals that he is "rich in mercy."²² By giving his life to free us from sin, Jesus reveals that he himself bears the divine name: "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will realize that "I AM."²³

270 God is the *Father* Almighty, whose fatherhood and power shed light on one another: God reveals his fatherly omnipotence by the way he takes care of our needs; by the filial adoption that he gives us ("I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty").¹⁰⁹ finally by his infinite mercy, for he displays his power at its height by freely forgiving sins.

277 God shows forth his almighty power by converting us from our sins and restoring us to his friendship by grace. "God, you show your almighty power above all in your mercy and forgiveness. . ." (*Roman Missal*, 26th Sunday, Opening Prayer).

Questions for Reflection

1. What events has God allowed this week to convince me about the truth of His almighty power – that He is the *One Who Is* and I am the *one who is not*?
2. How do I want to respond, in this season of Lent, as I may recognize some areas in my life that prevent me from standing before Christ with the attitude of contrition and gratitude?
3. How can the attitude of Mary throughout her life and especially at the foot of the cross inspire me to be more open to God's mercy?

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.