

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. 753, footnotes 144: Cf. *Eph* 1:22; *Col* 1:18; *LG* 9; **145:** *LG* 6; **No. 754, footnote 146:** *LG* 6; cf. *Jn* 10:1-10; *Isa* 40:11; *Ezek* 34:11-31; *Jn* 10:11; *1 Pet* 5:4; *Jn* 10:11-16.

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S.C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, revised second edition (Fort Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2005). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org
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May 12, 2019 ~ Fourth Sunday of Easter ~ Year C Spiritual Reflection on Sunday's Readings

Prepared by:
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Communion of Life with Christ through Mary

Opening Prayer
Read Decalogue
Read Scripture
Read Reflection

Reading I Acts 13:14, 43-52
Responsorial Psalm Ps 100:1-2, 3, 5
Reading II Rev 7:9, 14b-17
Gospel Jn 10:27-30

Opening or Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,
You were sent by the Father
to gather together those who are scattered.
You came among us, doing good and bringing healing,
announcing the Word of salvation
and giving the Bread which lasts forever.
Be our companion on life's pilgrim way.

May your Holy Spirit inflame our hearts,
enliven our hope and open our minds,
so that together with our sisters and brothers in faith
we may recognize you in the Scriptures
and in the breaking of bread.

May your Holy Spirit transform us into one body
and lead us to walk humbly on the earth,
in justice and love,
as witnesses of your resurrection.

In communion with Mary,
whom you gave to us as our Mother
at the foot of the cross,
through you
may all praise, honor and blessing be to the Father
in the Holy Spirit and in the Church,
Now and forever.

Amen

50th International Eucharistic Congress Prayer, Dublin 2012

Spiritual Reflection

Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me." Jn 10:27

To believe means to 'entrust' ourselves, like the sheep in the Gospel entrusts itself with all its limitations, frailty and weakness to the One who reveals Himself as the Good Shepherd. He loves without limit, and calls His sheep, inviting them to remain in His outstretched arms in a loving embrace.

[Saint] John Paul II says: "To believe is to 'entrust' this *human 'I,'* in all its transcendence and all its transcendent greatness, but also with its limits, its frailty and its mortal condition, to *Someone* who announces Himself as the *beginning* and the *end*, transcending all that is created and contingent, but who also reveals Himself at the same time as a Person who invites us to companionship, participation and 'communion.'"

Those who recognize their own weakness and helplessness and trustfully await everything from God are likened to, in the Gospel, the "sheep without a shepherd." The relationship of Jesus to such persons is very special, since going out of His way in meeting their expectations, the Good Shepherd is disposed to make for them an additional effort, and even to perform miracles.

St Mark describes it in this way: "The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile.' People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in a boat by themselves to a deserted place. People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them. When He disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things" (MK 6:30-34).

How surprising it is! Jesus beforehand had clearly expressed His will: "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while," and then He changed a decision which He had already made! Here, the attitude of His listeners was decisive: "his heart was moved with pity for them, for they *were like sheep without a Shepherd.*"

The attitude of the **sheep without a shepherd** must be something special before God's eyes; it is the attitude of recognizing one's own incapacity and weakness, the inability to live without the Shepherd...

The attitude of the **sheep without a shepherd** does not mean passivity; on the contrary, it is an attitude full of dynamism. They were listening to Jesus, as St. Mark writes. They were very active. In fact, it was not easy to walk or, perhaps, to run along the coastline and to arrive before Jesus and the Apostles who traveled by boat. They undertook this effort without assurance that Jesus would still want to remain with them. They were certainly not expecting new miracles, either. Nevertheless, they desired to be near Him.

The sheep without a shepherd **is persistently searching** for Him. It is the contrary attitude of the **lost sheep**, who being unfaithful to the will of the shepherd, and in a conscious and voluntary manner, separates itself from the shepherd.

S.C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, pp. 57-61

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 753** In Scripture, we find a host of interrelated images and figures through which Revelation speaks of the inexhaustible mystery of the Church. The images taken from the Old Testament are variations on a profound theme: the People of God. In the New Testament, all these images find a new center because Christ has become the head of this people, which henceforth is his Body.¹⁴⁴ Around this center are grouped images taken "from the life of the shepherd or from cultivation of the land, from the art of building or from family life and marriage."¹⁴⁵
- 754** "The Church is, accordingly, a *sheepfold*, the sole and necessary gateway to which is Christ. It is also the flock of which God himself foretold that he would be the shepherd, and whose sheep, even though governed by human shepherds, are unfailingly nourished and led by Christ himself, the Good Shepherd and Prince of Shepherds, who gave his life for his sheep."¹⁴⁶

Questions for Reflection

1. Have I entrusted myself completely and permanently like the "sheep of the Gospel" entrusts itself to the Good Shepherd? What are the obstacles?
2. Where would I go with Christ if I heard the words to come and rest for a while? When do I ever feel the need to hear these words?
3. Was Holy Mother Mary as a sheep in the arms of the Good Shepherd, and how can I learn from her life the meaning of those terms? How is her presence in my life an aid to enfolding myself in the arms of the Shepherd?

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.