

## 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. 51, footnote 2: DV 2; cf. Eph 1:9; 2:18; 2 Pet 1:4; No. 526, footnotes 205: Cf. Mt 18: 3-4; 206: Jn 3:7; 1:13; 1:12; cf. Mt 23:12; 207: Cf. Gal 4:19; No. 148, footnotes 12: Lk 1:37-38; cf. Gen 18:14; 13: Lk 1:45; 14: Cf. Lk 1:48.

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Families of Nazareth Movement – [www.familiesofnazareth.us](http://www.familiesofnazareth.us)

## December 22, 2019 ~ 4th Sunday of Advent 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 7:10-14

**Responsorial Psalm** Ps 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

**Reading II** Rom 1:1-7

**Gospel** Mt 1:18-24

### 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.

*Families of Nazareth USA*  
*Summer retreat 2007*

## Spiritual Reflection

*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:  
Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,  
which means "God is with us." Mt 1:24*

### The Difficult Silence toward Joseph

Being silent to her betrothed Joseph about the mystery of God, i.e., that "she was found with child through the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:18), must have been a very difficult trial for Mary, since she foresaw with certainty his pain and confusion.

How difficult must it have been to remain silent – a silence about God's mystery, as well as about her love and fidelity to Joseph.

She included in that silence the acceptance of the suffering of the one she loved, an acceptance that stemmed from the fortitude of faith.

Mary knew the Jewish law and customs. Mary also knew that conceiving a child before marriage could lead to her being stoned. "If within the city a man comes upon a maiden who is betrothed, and has relations with her, you shall bring them both out to the gate of the city and there stone them to death" (Deut 22:23-24).

The one who exemplifies for us the way of self-abandonment to God in every situation was not free from the prosaic situations in life, from the all-too-common suspicions and accusations.

The difficult experiences did not diminish her faith. God led her through them in a way known only to Him.

Moreover, she accepted every design of God.

### The Acceptance of the Difficult Experience in Bethlehem

When Mary is directed to go to Bethlehem, she knows that the time to give birth is near. But submitting herself to the will of God, she nevertheless sets out on the long and difficult journey. She sets out with the attitude of the evangelical child and abandons herself in everything to the will of the Father, whom she loves and in whom she trusts, despite not always understanding His will.

Later, too, at the moment of the birth, she fully accepts everything that occurs and the extreme conditions, which were totally inappropriate from a human point of view.

Any mother who would find herself in similar circumstances would have many questions and doubts, perhaps even rebellion against the will of God – so incomprehensible and so difficult to accept. In every situation, Mary realized the will of God with full inner peace, because she accepted everything with childlike trust.

S. C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, pp. 126-128

### References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 51** "It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will. His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature."<sup>2</sup>
- 526** To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom.<sup>205</sup> For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become "children of God" we must be "born from above" or "born of God".<sup>206</sup> Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us.<sup>207</sup> Christmas is the mystery of this "marvelous exchange"
- 148** The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith. By faith Mary welcomes the tidings and promise brought by the angel Gabriel, believing that "with God nothing will be impossible" and so giving her assent: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word."<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth greeted her: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."<sup>13</sup> It is for this faith that all generations have called Mary blessed.<sup>14</sup>

### Questions for Reflection

1. In this reflection, what is God trying to share with me about His will?
2. What divine qualities do I see in Mary's response to her difficult situations? What qualities have I seen in my own response to difficult events or situations?
3. This Christmas, what spiritual gifts do I desire from Jesus through Mary?

### 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.*