

### 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. 27, footnote 1:* Vatican Council II, *GS* 19 S1; **No.506, footnotes 168:** *LG* 63; *1 Cor* 7:34-35; **169:** St. Augustine, *De virg.*, 3: PL 40,398; **No 2677, footnotes 36:** *Lk* 1:43; **37:** *Lk* 1:38.

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S.C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary, second revised edition.* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2005). All rights reserved. – [www.inthearmsofmary.org](http://www.inthearmsofmary.org)

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

### December 23, 2018 ~ 4th Sunday of Advent ~ 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

<b>Reading I</b>	Mi 5:1-4a
<b>Responsorial Psalm</b>	Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
<b>Reading II</b>	Heb 10:5-10
<b>Gospel</b>	Lk 1:39-45

#### Opening or Closing Prayer

**Mary, Virgin and Mother,**  
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,  
welcomed the word of life in the depths of your humble faith –

as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,  
help us to say our own "yes" to the urgent call,  
as pressing as ever,  
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

**Obtain for us now a new ardor  
born of the resurrection,**  
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life  
which triumphs over death.

Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,  
that the gift of unfading beauty  
may reach every man and woman.

**Mother of the living Gospel,**  
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,  
pray for us.  
Amen.

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 288 [Abridged]  
*Families of Nazareth USA*  
*Summer Retreat 2014*

## Spiritual Reflection

*"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.  
May it be done to me according to your word."* Lk 1:38

Mary went through especially difficult trials in her abandonment to God. Her "pilgrimage of faith" was always a constant experience of new situations which surpassed all human understanding. Continuously, she offered a "full submission of intellect and will to God.

The life of Mary

was an **incessant abandonment of herself to God.**

An admirable communion of persons

was realized continuously between Mary and God,  
a communion built on trust,

built on an entire and continuously renewed abandonment,  
and on an increasing and intensifying communion of life.

For Mary, who entrusts herself totally to God –  
the will of God,

even when least comprehensible,

is the supreme value,

In living by the will of God,

**she lives the life of God.**

This singular relationship between God and Mary is revealed very clearly during the Annunciation, when God introduces her into an extraordinarily intimate bond with Him.

God reveals His will to her with an infinite love, and Mary responds with total abandonment of herself, even if she is experiencing something that completely surpasses the capacity of human understanding. Later on, her whole life will be a constant living of her *fiat* declared at the Annunciation, and at the same time, an incessant renewal of her abandonment to God.

As a response to the boundless entrustment of Mary, God bestowed on her an unimaginable grace. When Jesus was conceived, a bond between Mother and Son was born. It was not only a physical bond but also an *extraordinary spiritual bond*, whose depth will always be a great mystery for us.

When we ponder the attitude of the one who leads us in the "pilgrimage of faith," a question comes to mind: of what does the mystery of such great entrustment of Mary and of such perfect submission to the will of God consist?

In looking for the answer, we may meditate on the attitude of Mary, who leads us in the "pilgrimage of faith" and try to look at her life in the light of one

of the indications of Christ: "unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18:3).

S.C.Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, pp 122-123

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

- 27** The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for:

The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.<sup>1</sup>

- 506** Mary is a virgin because her virginity is *the sign of her faith* "unadulterated by any doubt", and of her undivided gift of herself to God's will.<sup>168</sup> It is her faith that enables her to become the mother of the Savior: "Mary is more blessed because she embraces faith in Christ than because she conceives the flesh of Christ."<sup>169</sup>

- 2677** *Holy Mary, Mother of God*: With Elizabeth we marvel, "And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"<sup>36</sup> Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself: "Let it be to me according to your word."<sup>37</sup> By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: "Thy will be done."

## Questions for Reflection

1. What expresses my desire to live in communion with God? What does it mean to me? What challenges me about this desire?
2. In my daily life, what experiences reveal to me that I do or do not have hunger for God and His will? What are the obstacles that prevent me from entrusting myself to God's love?
3. How do I attempt to entrust myself to Mary so that she may obtain everything from God? Do I need anything more?

## 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.*