

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. 2744, footnotes 38: Cf. *Gal* 5:16-25; 39: St. John Chrysostom, *De Anna* 4,5: PG 63, 585; 40: St. Alphonsus Liguori, *Del gran mezzo della preghiera*; No. 2745, footnotes 41: *Jn* 15:16-17; 42: Origen, *De orat.* 12: PG 11, 452c.

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February 9, 2020 ~ 5th 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 58:7-10
Responsorial Psalm Ps 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9
Reading II 1 Cor2:1-5
Gospel Mt 5: 13-16

Opening or Closing Prayer

Holy Mary, full of God's presence during the days of your life,
you accepted with full humility the Father's will,
and the Devil was never able to tie you around with his confusion.

Once with your Son you interceded for our difficulties, and,
full of kindness and patience,
you gave us the example of how to untie the knots of our life.
And by remaining forever Our Mother, you put in order, and make more clear
the ties that link us to the Lord.

Holy Mother, Mother of God and our Mother,
to you, who untie with motherly heart the knots of our life,
we pray to you to receive (name) into your hands, and free them [him/her]
of the knots and confusion with which our enemy attacks.

Through your grace, your intercession, and your example,
deliver us from all evil, Our Lady,
and untie the knots that prevent us from being united with God,
so that we, free from sin and error,
may find Him in all things,
may have our hearts placed in Him,
and may serve Him always in our brothers and sisters. Amen

Pope Francis' prayer to *Our Lady, Untier of Knots*
Summer Retreat 2013
Families of Nazareth USA

Spiritual Reflection

“When a Christian, as a disciple of Christ, stops being a person of prayer, he becomes useless to the world, he becomes like tasteless salt worth only to be ‘trampled underfoot.’” cf. Mt 5:13

In the light of faith, the most important activity in our day is prayer. It must take precedence over all other activities. **Contact with God determines the value and importance of our work.** Its efficacy depends on what is, as it were, in the back room; therefore it may depend on your knees that might be hurting very much from kneeling.

According to [St] John Paul II, it is not important what you do; it is important who you are. It is important that you are like this pope, a person of faith and prayer. When a Christian, as a disciple of Christ, stops being a person of prayer, he becomes useless to the world, he becomes like tasteless salt worth only to be “trampled underfoot” (cf. Mt 5:13).

The issue of prayer is a major issue in our Christian vocation. By praying, we not only pay homage to Christ on our own behalf, but we worship Him in the name of the whole world, which either does not know how, is unable to, or does not want to pray. One thing is certain: if we do not pray, no one will need us. The world does not need empty souls and hearts. When we ask what the relationship is between prayer and action, then the priority of prayer and sacrifice should be emphasized more than action. We can bring God into the lives of children whom we catechize at home or in school only to the extent of our having begged for it earlier on our knees. The issue of the relationship between prayer and action can be summarized in this statement: all authentic action is born of prayer and contemplation. For everything that is great in this world comes from God; everything that is great in this world is born of sacrifice and prayer.

Prayer is the crucial issue for every Christian. **You are as much a Christian as you are capable of praying.** Prayer and its particular stages are signs and indications of your closeness to or distance from God. The stages on your path to God are indicated by various stages of prayer. At each one there is a different form and kind of prayer because prayer is the expression of your bond with God...

We must continuously learn to pray. It is a task that stands before us at all times. The actual form of our prayer cannot be sufficient for us. We should continually advance and develop it. When we speak of prayer, **praying in words** most often come to mind. In this form of prayer, we should emphasize the important value of ejaculatory prayers in which we humiliate ourselves before God, expressing our gratitude or asking for the grace of holiness. While praying in

words, we must remember that we should pray for that which God expects from us. It cannot be prayer drowned in words. Jesus clearly warns us that we should not pray as pagans who “think that they will be heard because of their many words” (Mt 6:7).

Faith has a decisive influence on **what you pray for** and on the **intensity** of your prayer. If faith changes our mentality and tells us to put God in first place then, to the extent of its growth, our prayer will be increasingly simplified. It will become more and more subordinate to the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rm 8:26-27) and ever more concerned with matters of the Kingdom.

Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, pp. 227-230

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

2744 *Prayer is a vital necessity.* Proof from the contrary is no less convincing: if we do not allow the Spirit to lead us, we fall back into the slavery of sin.³⁸ How can the Holy Spirit be our life if our heart is far from him? Nothing is equal to prayer; for what is impossible it makes possible, what is difficult, easy. . . . For it is impossible, utterly impossible, for the man who prays eagerly and invokes God ceaselessly ever to sin.³⁹ Those who pray are certainly saved; those who do not pray are certainly damned.⁴⁰

2745 Prayer and *Christian life* are *inseparable*, for they concern the same love and the same renunciation, proceeding from love; the same filial and loving conformity with the Father's plan of love; the same transforming union in the Holy Spirit who conforms us more and more to Christ Jesus; the same love for all men, the love with which Jesus has loved us. "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he [will] give it to you. This I command you, to love one another."⁴¹

He "prays without ceasing" who unites prayer to works and good works to prayer. Only in this way can we consider as realizable the principle of praying without ceasing.⁴²

Questions for Reflection

1. In my daily life, do I experience prayer and my Christian life as inseparable realities or are they somewhat apart or disconnected? Why?
2. How does God come to me in my difficulties in prayer?
3. How can Blessed Mother, who “pondered all these things,” be my help and guidance in deepening and unifying my prayer with my Christian life?

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.