

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. 1443, footnote 44: Cf. *Lk* 15; 19:9; **No. 1864, footnotes 136:** *Mt* 12:31; cf. *Mk* 3:29; *Lk* 12:10; **137:** Cf. John Paul II, *DeV* 46.

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S. C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2003).

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April 7, 2019 ~ Fifth 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	Is 43:16-21
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6
Reading II	Phl 3:8-14
Gospel	Jn 8:1-11

Opening or Closing Prayer

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

Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more." Jn 8:11

With Eyes Fixed on the Cross

Try frequently to put yourself before the reality of the Cross. Then you will comprehend more deeply the mystery of God's forgiveness; it is the standard of the mystery of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ, which gives us an idea of the extent of human evil.

In adoring the Cross and recognizing your evil, the Crucified One embraces you toward His wounded Heart...

...The Redemptive Sacrifice of Jesus includes Mary as well. It was by the grace of God that she was preserved from sin. It can be said that in some manner God pardoned her in anticipation of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ, preserving her from any fall. And if He pardons her, He also takes her in His arms, just as the Good Shepherd does to the lost sheep.

Mary was consciously living her own nothingness, aware that God was constantly preserving her from sin, The Magnificat and other fragments of the Gospel speak about this clearly. Because of this, she was always humble, trusting, and grateful, In answer to this kind of attitude, God continuously bestowed upon her His greatest love, and she received it wholeheartedly.

God also forgives us our sins beforehand, by preserving us from them through the power of Jesus' sacrifice. St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus said: "I know that without Him, I could have fallen as low as St. Mary Magdalene, and the profound words of our Lord of Our Lord to Simon resound with great sweetness in my soul. I know that *'he to whom less is forgiven, LOVES less,'* but I also know that Jesus *has forgiven me more* than St. Mary Magdalene since He forgave me *in advance* by preventing me from falling.

When we are grateful for having been preserved from sin by the power of Christ's sacrifice, we benefit from the special grace of the forgiving love of God. For this, we ought to thank God, not only because He forgives the sins committed but also because He preserves us from many sins. If He would not do so, with certainty, we would have committed them...

It can be said that by forgiving us the sins from which we were preserved, Jesus does it with the same gesture. He takes us in His arms to show us His **greatest** love. S. C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, 90-92

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1443 During his public life Jesus not only forgave sins, but also made plain the effect of this forgiveness: he reintegrated forgiven sinners into the community of the People of God from which sin had alienated or even excluded them. A remarkable sign of this is the fact that Jesus receives sinners at his table, a gesture that expresses in an astonishing way both God's forgiveness and the return to the bosom of the People of God.⁴⁴

1864 "Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven."¹³⁶ There are no limits to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit.¹³⁷ Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss.

Questions for Reflection

1. In my daily life, have I ever felt 'preserved' from the power of sin? How was this manifested?
2. What is my interior motivation for avoiding sin? How do I experience God's love in my attitudes and experiences?
3. In a state of sin, when I feel separated from God and fellow Christians, what is God telling me and how do I attempt to respond? In what ways can I glance at Jesus' mother and mine, and cry out for help on these occasions?

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.