

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 my 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. 2559, footnotes 2: St. John Damascene, *De fide orth.* 3, 24: PG 94, 1098C; **3:** *Ps* 130:1; **4:** Cf. *Lk* 18:9-14; **5:** *Rom* 8:26; **6:** St. Augustine, *Sermo* 56, 6, 9, PL. 38,381; **No. 549, footnotes 274:** Cf. *Jn* 6: 5-15; *Lk* 19:8; *Mt* 11:5; **275:** Cf. *Lk* 12:13-14; *Jn* 18:36; **276:** Cf. *Jn* 8:34-36.

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February 16, 2020 ~ 6th 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	Sir 15:15-20
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34
Reading II	1 Cor 2:6-10
Gospel	Mt 5:17-37

Opening or Closing Prayer

Dearest Father, Your Son tells us, "Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." I long to be Your smallest child. Help me to rediscover You as the One Who delights in me, Who calls me as His own.

My Jesus, You say to us, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." You are the way to heaven. Thank You for saving me and giving me Yourself in the Holy Eucharist. Reactivate the call of my Baptism to serve the Church in childlike humility, "boasting only in God."

Holy Spirit, reveal to me my weaknesses that I may seek Jesus' strength. Reveal to me my nothingness, that I may await all things from Him. Convince me of Jesus' words, "What is impossible for human beings is possible for God."

Blessed Mother, I entrust my prideful doubt, fear, discouragement and ingratitude to your intercession so that I will believe, as God's beloved child and yours, "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen

Summer Retreat 2007
Families of Nazareth USA

Spiritual Reflection

"We speak a wisdom to those who are mature, not a wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away."...For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God. 1Cor 2: 6,10

God gave you freedom and it is precisely because of this extraordinary gift that you can love God. Love cannot exist without freedom. We cannot force anyone to love. This is why the prodigal son's father agreed to let his son leave and rebel.

Our Lord loves human freedom; it is His wonderful gift, thanks to which we can respond to His love. Being endowed with the gift of freedom entails the risk that we will use this gift against the Lord Himself. The mystery of man's openness to God's love lies in freedom...

In the human heart there is always an intermingling of two opposing realities. One is the richness of the presence of God's grace and the other is the destructive poison of pride. Pride is not only a sin in itself, but also a poison that spreads and contaminates every good thing that is in us. When pride creeps into them, every good deed and virtue become stained and deprived of their own value.

Our pride which concentrates so much on itself, does not even hear the Lord's strong knocking. It is like hard stone – impenetrable to God's love that is trying to rescue us. Therefore, this Light, which knocks on the door of our soul in order to heal it, must first expose the truth about our closed, lifeless, inner self that is full of pride. . .

Does not a human soul permeated with pride resemble the lifeless waters of the Dead Sea? Does not pride oppose God's life-giving graces, which He constantly bestows on the soul just like salt prevents life in the Dead Sea?... Pure water from the River Jordan flows into the Dead Sea, bringing it an entire richness of life. Over 6.5 tons of life-giving water flow into the sea every day... However all that rich life perishes in its salty depths and disappears without a trace...

It does not take much to compare the waters of the Jordan River to the deluge of God's grace, which we unceasingly experience because he knocks on the doors of our hearts every moment of our lives...Because there are approximately 400,000 priests spread out on all continents, we can assume that at every moment somewhere in the world the Eucharist is being celebrated. As a result, the entire world is constantly being immersed in the Divine Sacrifice and flooded with an infinite number of graces. At the same time, the opposition of human hearts to God's grace must be great because this deluge of grace has not transformed us, given us life, or deepened our interior lives.

Is it not pride then which kills all signs of supernatural life within the soul? Is not this pride like the Dead Sea's contaminated and poisonous water that kills every living organism that flows into it? We call ourselves Christians, yet we live as if God does not exist. The lifeless sea of our pride and our disordered self-love destroy countless graces which flow to us from God...Our desire to have a good, easy, comfortable life leads to a lack of radicalism in our service to God. He loves us and He does not agree to this...

When you discover this truth about yourself it is very important to simultaneously invoke in yourself an act of trust, to the point of folly, in God's mercy. When you see how closed you are to God's graces, you can imitate St. Therese of the Child Jesus. When she discovered the truth about herself she would say that remaining a little child before God is "to recognize our nothingness, to [await] everything from God..."

S. C. Biela, *Behold I Stand at the Door and Knock* pp. 33, 35-38.

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

2559 "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God."² But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or "out of the depths" of a humble and contrite heart?³ He who humbles himself will be exalted;⁴ *humility* is the foundation of prayer. Only when we humbly acknowledge that "we do not know how to pray as we ought,"⁵ are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. "Man is a beggar before God."⁶

549 By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death,²⁷⁴ Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below,²⁷⁵ but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage.²⁷⁶

Questions for Reflection

1. When I recognize that I misuse the freedom God has given me, how can I become more mature and yet smaller before my Lord?
2. What is my reaction when learning that I have wasted untold opportunities for God's love to fill me with the graces He wants to bestow?
3. How can Mary the mother of God and my mother, guide me, through her lifelong Fiat, to "recognize my nothingness and await everything from God"?

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.