

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. 257, footnotes 93: LH, Hymn for Evening Prayer; 94: Eph 1:4-5,9; Rom 8:15,29; 95: 2 Tim 1:9-10; 96: Cf. AG 2-9; No. 2083, footnotes 1: Mt 22:37; cf. Lk 10:27: "... and with all your strength."; 2: Deut 6:4.

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S.C. Biela, *Behold I Stand at the Door and Knock* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary

Foundation, 2005). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org

Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

JANUARY 13, 2019 ~ THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD ~ YEAR C
SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON SUNDAY'S READINGS

PREPARED BY:
FAMILIES OF NAZARETH MOVEMENT
COMMUNION OF LIFE WITH CHRIST THROUGH MARY

Opening Prayer
Read Decalogue
Read Scripture
Read Reflection

Reading I Is 42:1-4, 6-7
Responsorial Psalm Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-106
Reading II Acts 10:34- 38
Gospel Lk 3:15-16, 21-22

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 capable 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 in your hands (name), and to 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*

*Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2013*

Spiritual Reflection

And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Lk 3:22

To Discover God's Image in One's Self

Only when you cease to adore your own reflection in the pond of pride will you begin to be open to the Holy Spirit's action in you. In order to become more like God, you must turn away from your own ego and submit yourself fully to His will.

To submit to God means to live by the grace of Baptism, which gives us back our dignity as God's children and restores our likeness to the Father.

Christ's gifts of the Sacraments show us how much **God desires that we become more and more like Him**. Living by the graces of the sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Matrimony or Priesthood, means to be open to God's humble knocking so that he may transform us and allow us to become more like Him. The extraordinary graces that we receive in the sacraments can enable us to have this kind of supernatural relation to God, to another human being, and to one's self, especially with regard to the call that we have received from God according to our vocation.

Receiving these graces will enable you to adore God in the most profound way and realize your very likeness to Him. He desires to reflect His own image in the mirror of your soul.

When you stop appropriating God's gifts and His actions to yourself, you will more easily notice that Love is knocking on your door. This Love unceasingly takes care of you and becomes active in your life in more or less visible ways. Perhaps when this happens, you will daily discover anew the truth that Jesus safeguards you with the greatest care through all of your experiences. Then you will fall in love with God and you will cease to gaze at your own image.

When this happens, your concept of the need to always defend your own freedom will change. Your greatest treasure will be the imitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the humble servant of the Lord. . . Departing from spiritual narcissism will allow you to spurn your former vision of God, the world, and yourself. You will be more open to a new vision of everything – the vision of a person who is in love with the Lord.

S.C. Biela, *Behold I Stand at the Door and Knock*, pp. 60-62

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

257 "O blessed light, O Trinity and first Unity!"⁹³ God is eternal blessedness, undying life, unfading light. God is love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God freely wills to communicate the glory of his blessed life. Such is the "plan of his loving kindness", conceived by the Father before the foundation of the world, in his beloved Son: "He destined us in love to be his sons" and "to be conformed to the image of his Son", through "the spirit of sonship".⁹⁴ This plan is a "grace [which] was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began", stemming immediately from Trinitarian love.⁹⁵ It unfolds in the work of creation, the whole history of salvation after the fall, and the missions of the Son and the Spirit, which are continued in the mission of the Church.⁹⁶

2083 Jesus summed up man's duties toward God in this saying: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."¹ This immediately echoes the solemn call: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD."²

God has loved us first. The love of the One God is recalled in the first of the "ten words." The commandments then make explicit the response of love that man is called to give to his God.

Questions for Reflection

1. How much am I more or less aware that through my Baptism I have become one with Christ in God, even here, even now? When I think of this, what is my deep reaction to this fundamental truth in my life?
2. How am I helped to understand God's love for me, and my love for God, by my sacramental life, my attendance at Mass, and my prayer life?
3. Mother Mary saw nothing but God's love for her, and she was without the Sacraments to guide her. How is Mary's example relevant to my life? How may I imitate and call on her, first in small things, and later in larger ones, to accept God's love for me as I am and to return it?

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.