

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. 1818; No. 1821, footnotes 92: Cf. *Rom* 8:28-30; *Mt* 7:21; **93:** *Mt* 10:22; cf. Council of Trent: DS 1541; **94:** *1 Tim* 2:4; **95:** St.

Teresa of Avila, *Excl.* 15:3. <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism>

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Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, 4th ed. (Fort Collins, CO: In the Arms of

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December 13, 2020 ~ Third Sunday of Advent ~ Year B 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 61:1-2A, 10-11

Responsorial Psalm Lk 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54.

Reading II 1 Thes 5:16-24

Gospel Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

Opening or Closing Prayer

Dear Father, great is Your Mercy.

My true vocation is intimacy with You in the Kingdom of Heaven. May the new model of righteousness Your Son has given me, "as I have done, you should also do," open me more to Your mercy and transform me into Your divine likeness.

Dear Jesus, holy is Your Name.

May your prayer, "that they may be one as you, Father, and I are one," become my own desire. Teach me how to build up the unity of Your Mystical Body by embracing and living out my vocation to authentic holiness and happiness.

Dear Holy Spirit, amazing is Your Grace.

Grant me your gifts in order to "always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks" the reason for my hope. Thank you that, through You, I can encounter Jesus daily in the Eucharist, the source of my hope, even in the situations of my life that are most difficult to understand.

Dear Mother Mary, source of my joy.

"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." As a vessel of the Holy Spirit, teach me to live the Beatitudes of your Son. Wrap me in your mantle, where I can believe in His mercy and fulfill my vocation to be salt of the earth and light of the world.

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

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2011

Spiritual Reflection

In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus...The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it. 2Thes 5:18, 24

Faith, as an expression of our relationship with God, is a dynamic phenomenon resulting from a constant process of change. This process is brought about through God's initiative and our answer, revealing our abandonment to Him. Through difficult situations, God tears down our stability. Through trials of faith and denudations, He challenges the abandonment to Him that we have had until that moment in order to make our trust more dynamic. Difficult situations, internal as well as external, prompt our conversion. They impart dynamism to our reliance on Christ, our dependence on Him for support, our entrusting of ourselves to Him, and our awaiting of everything from God.

Faith can become a buried talent if we do not grow in it, but God will not allow this. He does not want our faith to become static. That is why, in the hope of deepening and imparting dynamism to faith, God allows difficult situations to happen that force us to continually make choices. The dynamism of faith becomes a reality through trials that polarize human attitudes. This leads to either a crisis of faith or to its evident intensification. Our faith is continuously changing. A year ago we believed differently, according to the intensity of our faith, and in a year we will believe still differently. Hence, the very important question arises: Is our faith growing, or is it dwindling? We are not so much faithful, as we are becoming faithful; not so much Christians, as becoming Christians; not so much really living the Gospel, as we are trying to live up to it

Conversion is a permanent and basic dimension of faith. Conversion prevents our faith from becoming static and enables it to undergo a permanent process of deepening. Conversion, as a dimension of faith, is not as much a single act, as it is a process. It means a change in our way of thinking and the apparent transformation of our inner attitudes. During the process of conversion, we turn away from evil and we turn to God. Turning away from evil means not only turning away from sin alone, but also from its source, which is unruly self-love.

Whenever Jesus reproached His apostles, it was almost always due to their lack of faith. Jesus would often reproach them for not believing or for having too little faith. In this, one can perceive an evangelical paradox—it was those who followed Jesus, who believed in Him, that He reproached for their lack of faith, and He did this many times. **The purpose of questioning the apostles' faith was for their conversion.** You have to question your own faith. You have to be

convinced that your faith should constantly grow and that its present condition will not suffice. This follows the principle that what you have achieved today will not be sufficient for tomorrow.

Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, pp 75-77

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1818 The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

1821 We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will.⁹² In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere "to the end"⁹³ and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. In hope, the Church prays for "all men to be saved."⁹⁴ She longs to be united with Christ, her Bridegroom, in the glory of heaven:

Hope, O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one. Dream that the more you struggle, the more you prove the love that you bear your God, and the more you will rejoice one day with your Beloved, in a happiness and rapture that can never end.⁹⁵

Questions for Reflection

1. What situations have I encountered recently that have challenged me to question my faith, to transform my inner attitude?
2. What experience have I had that has tempted me to discouragement, yet strengthened my hope that my faith in Christ is growing?
3. How can I demonstrate my readiness to entrust my trials of faith to Our Blessed Mother?

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.