

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. 268, footnote 103: Cf. Gen 1:1; Jn 1:3; Mt 6:9; 2 Cor 12:9; cf. 1 Cor 1:18.; **No. 1744.**

<http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism>

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André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary

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Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

JANUARY 3, 2021 ~ THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD ~ YEAR B SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON SUNDAY'S READINGS

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

Reading I	Is 60:1-6
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13.
Reading II	Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6
Gospel	Mt 2:1-12

Opening or Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.

You are the visible face of the invisible Father,
who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy:
let the Church be your visible face in the world.

You willed that your ministers would also
be clothed in weakness
that they may feel compassion
for those in ignorance and error:
let everyone who approaches them
feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit so that the Jubilee of Mercy
may bring good news to the poor,
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed,
and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this through the intercession
of Mary, Mother of Mercy,
you who live and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Prayer of Pope Francis for the Year of Mercy [Abridged]

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2016

Spiritual Reflection

When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled.

Mt 2:3

We have the story of two kings. One is named Herod and the other *Jesus Christ*. I think in all of history there existed no two personalities so opposite.

Herod the Great, king of Judea, who is certainly not known for his humility, was dismayed by a rumor that a child was born and that one day he could become the king of the Jews. Herod was afraid because, if there was one thing he could not accept, it was a rival – even a child – who could overshadow him and take away some of his power. He was then ready to do anything (calumny, lies, and even murder) to eliminate this potential rival.

At first, with a smile and diplomacy, Herod tried to seduce the Magi in order to find where the infant was born. When this attempt did not give any result, Herod abandoned his smile and exposed the claws of a fox in ordering the execution of all male children under the age of two. Thirst for prestige and power blinded him to such an extent that he resorted to killing innocents. . .

The two kings, Herod and Jesus, cross paths with each other but are totally opposite. King Herod represents the search for power at whatever price: “Climb, control, serve yourself and be powerful.” Jesus, God of Love incarnate, *descends* – lowers himself, kneels near the poor, lets himself be dispossessed, and dies abandoned, nailed to a cross – rather than accept a power that could have made him king. He is the *King of Love*.

Herod is a tyrant; Jesus is a servant. One manipulates the weak and the poor; the other serves, heals, empathizes, and loves with total self-denial. We should not forget that these two kings always battle within ourselves. It is the fight between pride and humility.

Jesus is the King of Love in supreme poverty. He always *descends* lower. Everything in him is dispossession. Everything in him is poverty. No one looks or turns toward him. In Jesus, King of Love, we can see that God is not at the top of a hierarchy of domination but a hierarchy of humility. He always *descends*. He is the new Adam who, instead of exalting himself, lowers himself in becoming small and vulnerable.

Fortunately, we can say that we are not like Herod. But if we are honest and truthful, we must admit that sometimes we utilize our gifts, our talents, and our charm to manipulate others in order to obtain what we desire, hiding our deep motivation under charitable or apostolic pretexts.

We greatly desire to be servants, but “useful” servants that God is fortunate to have.

Isn't there a little Herod who prowls somewhere inside us? Like him, we are inhabited by this pride of power which wants to control rather than submit, and we want to be honored rather than lowering ourselves to honor others.

One must choose between *descend* or *ascend*, *lowering* oneself or *elevating* oneself; one must decide who will be king of our hearts: Jesus or Herod.

André Daigineault, *The Way of Imperfection*, pp 45-48

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

268 Of all the divine attributes, only God's omnipotence is named in the Creed: to confess this power has great bearing on our lives. We believe that his might is *universal*, for God who created everything also rules everything and can do everything. God's power is *loving*, for he is our Father, and *mysterious*, for only faith can discern it when it "is made perfect in weakness".¹⁰³

1744 Freedom is the power to act or not to act, and so to perform deliberate acts of one's own. Freedom attains perfection in its acts when directed toward God, the sovereign Good.

Questions for Reflection

1. In what ways do I now see that I may be using my gifts, talents, or charm to manipulate others in order to obtain what I desire?
2. Does my reaction and my attitude to daily events reflect God's love and mercy for me in this realization about myself?
3. How can Mary, the lowly handmaid of the Lord, help me to freely descend to becoming small and vulnerable?

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.