

## 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. 706, footnotes 68: Cf. Gen 18:1-15; Lk 1:26-38, 54-55; Jn 1:12-13; Rom 4:16-21; 69: Cf. Gen 12:3; Gal 3:16; 70: Cf. Jn 11:52.; 71: Eph 1:13-14; cf. Gen 22:17-19; Lk 1:73; Jn 3:16; Rom 8:32; Gal 3:14; No.1655, footnotes 166: Cf. Acts 18:8; 167: Cf. Acts 16:31; Acts 11:14.

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

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S.C.Biela, *Open Wide the Door to Christ*. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary

Foundation, 2005). All rights reserved. – [www.inthearmsofmary.org](http://www.inthearmsofmary.org)

Families of Nazareth Movement – [www.familiesofnazareth.us](http://www.familiesofnazareth.us)

## DECEMBER 27, 2020 ~ THE HOLY FAMILY ~ YEAR B SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON SUNDAY'S READINGS

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

### Reading I

Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or Gn 15:1-6; 21:1-3

### Responsorial Psalm

Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5 or Ps 105:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

### Reading II

Col 3:12-211 or Col 3:12-17 or Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19

### Gospel

Lk 2:22-40 or Lk 2:22, 39-40

### 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

*Abram put his faith in the LORD,  
who credited it to him as an act of righteousness. Gen 5:6*

Spiritual poverty is a characteristic of every saint; for, all saints were completely alone when they were united with God here on earth...

Abraham, the Father of Faith, was also alone when God directed him to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. Abraham was unable to rely on his memory, his reason, or even his understanding of God's will. After all, Abraham was convinced that, upon offering such a sacrifice, he would nullify God's promise that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in heaven. Nevertheless, this Patriarch, and saint, was ready to question his own understanding of God's ways. In complete poverty, he surrendered to the Lord, and he accepted His unfathomable will (cf. Gen 22:1-13)...

No one, however, experienced so strongly the depths of poverty or understood it as well as Mary. Therefore, we can always ask her to accept loneliness in us. Otherwise, we will either always fearfully run away from this grace, or we will suffer a painful defeat by summoning up our own strength to make attempts to control loneliness. Mary experienced poverty throughout her entire life. During the Annunciation, she was alone and unable to rely on anyone or anything, not even on her own knowledge and reason. In poverty, the Mother of our Lord uttered her *fiat*. In solitude, she accepted the God-Man into her body and experienced the unfathomable mystery of the Incarnation (cf. Lk 1:26-38). She was also alone as she awaited the birth of her Son. For, St. Joseph learned nothing from Mary about the Annunciation. If God had not revealed this mystery to him, Mary would have never revealed to her husband what had happened to her (cf. Mt 1:18-25).

Mary was also alone during Jesus' childhood. While raising Him, she observed how the Savior of the world grew and developed. In solitude, she pondered the great works of God (cf. Lk 2:50-51). Later, she continued to live in a spirit of poverty as Jesus departed from home and began teaching in order to fulfill the Father's will. Her communion with her Son was permeated with spiritual poverty and with a complete lack of reliance on created things. For Mary, only faith remained.

Loneliness is given to us also so that we may learn how to find support in faith. Mary was completely alone at the foot of the Cross. Of all people, she participated in the most perfect way in the Passion of the Crucified One. Later, in solitude, she awaited His Resurrection. None of the apostles understood the mystery of Redemption like Mary; only she believed so strongly in Christ's words that she did not even run to His tomb in order to convince herself by seeing with her own eyes that it was empty.

The Blessed Mother was also alone as she waited with the apostles for the coming of the Holy Spirit. As Mary prayed, were the apostles able to understand how she – the temple of the Holy Spirit – awaited His descent upon the Church? After Pentecost, in silence and solitude, Mary accompanied the birth of the Church as its Mother. Because Mary is the Mother of the Church, it is so important for us to be open to her action in us. It is crucial that we hand ourselves over to her and to everything that God wants to accomplish in our souls through her. On our own, we will not accept the grace of loneliness. We will either fear it, or we will try to take control of it. Such a response only ends in defeat.

Loneliness is the place of encounter with God. At the same time, it is a difficult trial of faith. Therefore, we should never face it by relying on our own strength. Love for poverty, as solitude or loneliness because of love for the Lord, can only be built upon trust in God's mercy. Any attempt to choose solitude with our own strength is doomed to failure. If we try to imitate Jesus by relying on our own strength, then this will result in a great catastrophe, a psychological breakdown, or an escape and reliance on sin. We can love spiritual poverty only by uniting ourselves with God. Otherwise, it will always be a torment.

S.C.Biela, *Open Wide the Door to Christ*, pp. 185-188

## References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

**706** Against all human hope, God promises descendants to Abraham, as the fruit of faith and of the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>68</sup> In Abraham's progeny all the nations of the earth will be blessed. This progeny will be Christ himself,<sup>69</sup> in whom the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will "gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad."<sup>70</sup> God commits himself by his own solemn oath to giving his beloved Son and "the promised Holy Spirit . . . [who is] the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it."<sup>71</sup>

**1655** Christ chose to be born and grow up in the bosom of the holy family of Joseph and Mary. The Church is nothing other than "the family of God." From the beginning, the core of the Church was often constituted by those who had become believers "together with all [their] household."<sup>166</sup> When they were converted, they desired that "their whole household" should also be saved.<sup>167</sup> These families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world.

## Questions for Reflection

1. What is God inviting me to during this quarantine time of isolation?
2. In what ways must I be converted in order to help those around me live well under this pandemic?
3. How can I hand myself over to Mary and to everything that God wants to accomplish in our souls through her?

## 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.*