

### 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. 540, footnotes 244: Cf. Mt 16:21-23; 245: Heb 4:15; No. 1430. <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism/index.cfm>  
*New American Bible* © USCCB. All rights reserved. <http://www.usccb.org/nab/index.shtml>  
Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, 4th ed. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2020). All rights reserved. – [www.inthearmsofmary.org](http://www.inthearmsofmary.org)  
Families of Nazareth Movement – [www.familiesofnazareth.us](http://www.familiesofnazareth.us)

FEBRUARY 21, 2021 ~ FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT ~ 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

|                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Reading I</b>          | Gn 9:8-15            |
| <b>Responsorial Psalm</b> | Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9. |
| <b>Reading II</b>         | 1 Pt 3:18-22         |
| <b>Gospel</b>             | Mk 1:12-15           |

### Opening or Closing Prayer

**Dear Lord,**

**The world of temporality** constantly pulls on my heart, although I want to seek only God's will for my life.

**Thank you for giving me your Mother** who teaches me, first of all, how to discover Your Love, and then how to trust in Pure Love.

**Transform me with the power of the Eucharist**, giving me your Divine Light to penetrate my heart and reveal its deepest truths.

**Through Mary, give me hope and lead me to contrition.** May my contrition give birth to gratitude for Your constant bestowals, given to me because You Love me just as I am ~ a sinner.

**Let every act of gratitude multiply in my heart** into new acts of gratitude as Blessed Mother carries me securely under Her mantle toward You, my Redeemer.

**I beg for these graces** through You, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

*Families of Nazareth USA  
Summer Retreat 2006*

## Spiritual Reflection

*The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. Mk 1:12-13*

**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 self-love.

### The Desert

In biblical symbolism, the desert is a stage on the way toward God. All who are called onto the path of faith must go through this stage...God in His love leads a person into the desert because the desert is His gift. The desert brings about what St. Augustine asked for when he prayed, "Lord Jesus, let me know myself and know You" ...

The situation of a desert reveals what is deeply hidden in a person. It reveals the layers of human passions and evil that manifest themselves only in difficult situations...

The desert not only reveals the truth about yourself, but it also transforms you internally and polarizes your attitudes. **The gift of the desert lets you overcome lukewarmness** because the desert forces you to make choices. By making choices, you will become aware of what you are capable and, thereby, you will come to understand the two most important realities: the reality of the incomprehensible love and infinite mercy of God, as well as the reality of your own sinfulness and helplessness...

A person is transformed in the desert; he becomes different since a true polarization of attitudes is brought about. He therefore becomes either better or worse. A person can become a criminal, but he can also become a saint...

**The desert** is not a dwelling place; it **is only a path, a road on which one comes to know the merciful love of God**. Everyone who seeks God must pass through it since the experience of the desert is closely related to the deepening of our faith in His mercy.

A desert experience is a time when a person becomes formed according to the rule that only what is difficult and gives resistance molds a person. The love of God, which is then born in you, should finally become communion with

God...**The desert** is not only a place where our faith is born, but ultimately **becomes the birthplace and dwelling place of our contemplation**.

**Going through the desert** in your life **you will always meet Mary**. She will be close to you, and will look at you with motherly tenderness and concern. The one who is the Mediatrix of graces and the Mediatrix of mercy will intercede for you with God. She will look at you anxiously to see whether you follow her example and say your *fiat*, your *yes*, and whether you see God in the situations that you experience. The Chosen People did not have Mary with them. She is with you; that is why you will never walk alone. The one who experienced so many difficult situations will walk before you. She will be your light and will show you the road to her Son. Her presence will shine in the darkness of your desert.

Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, pp.73, 135-136; 139,141,145-146

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

**540** Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him.<sup>244</sup> This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter *for us*: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning."<sup>245</sup> By the solemn forty days of *Lent* the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.

**1430** Jesus' call to conversion and penance, like that of the prophets before him, does not aim first at outward works, "sack cloth and ashes," fasting and mortification, but at the conversion of the heart, interior conversion. Without this, such penances remain sterile and false; however, interior conversion urges expression in visible signs, gestures and works of penance.

### Questions for Reflection

1. How do I understand self-love?
2. What desert experiences of mine have affected my way of thinking or my attitude leading to discouragement at my helplessness or deepened my faith in God's love and mercy?
3. How do I identify with a type of desert situation in scripture that our Blessed Mother experienced, so I can ask her to guide me in mine?

### 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.*