

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 "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. 301, No. 305, footnote 167: Mt 6:31-33;cf. 10:29-31; No. 273, footnotes 113: Cf. 2 Cor 12:9; Phil 4:13; 114: Lk 1:37,49. .

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism/index.cfm>

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Slawomir Biela, *God Alone Suffices* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation,

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FEBRUARY 28, 2021 ~ SECOND 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

Reading I Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

Responsorial Psalm Ps 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19

Reading II Rom 8:31b-34

Gospel Mk 9:2-10

Opening or Closing Prayer

Dearest Father, Your Son tells us, "Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." I long to be Your smallest child. Help me to rediscover You as the One Who delights in me, Who calls me as His own.

My Jesus, You say to us, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." You are the way to heaven. Thank You for saving me and giving me Yourself in the Holy Eucharist. Reactivate the call of my Baptism to serve the Church in childlike humility, "boasting only in God."

Holy Spirit, reveal to me my weaknesses that I may seek Jesus' strength. Reveal to me my nothingness, that I may await all things from Him. Convince me of Jesus' words, "What is impossible for human beings is possible for God."

Blessed Mother, I entrust my prideful doubt, fear, discouragement and ingratitude to your intercession so that I will believe, as God's beloved child and yours, "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

We 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 2010*

Spiritual Reflection

“Do not lay your hand on the boy,” said the messenger.

“Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son.” Gn 22:12

In what or in whom do I place my trust? On what or on whom do I count? These questions lead us to discover the problem of our false reliances. Seeking reliances is what makes us function and live. It is truly the main engine of our endeavors. This tendency is so intense in us that we can call it the **‘greed of reliances.’** We really cannot free ourselves from this tendency because when we lack reliances it leads to feelings of insecurity and fear and the anxiety of being threatened. On top of that, our need for security is one of the most intense human needs. As a result of this need, human beings intensely seek reliances in the realm of material possessions, placing their hope in different form of riches, whether in the form of discrete objects, money, savings or success in the workplace. For many people, however, the psychological reliances that they find in other people are more important. We know this by the simple fact that we place a great deal of hope in other people, counting on them excessively.

Isn't what we seek and desire an illusion? Perhaps this activity of seeking and desiring reliances becomes just another mirage that endangers us because we then fall into the trap of feeling wounded and disappointed. At the same time, this hinders us from being united with God.

The human tendency to build illusory reliances is amazing. We really do not need much in order to create our own vision of the world, a vision that supposes to back up our plans and concepts. It seems as though we are incapable of existing without some illusory support. As people of weak faith, we cannot live without these illusions because we do not believe that God loves us with all our misery, and we cannot stand the truth either about ourselves or about the world that surrounds us.

Human beings – greedy because of our restless hearts – constantly want to seek support in things that seem measurable and concrete. In this way, we try to create a material system of security for ourselves. For this reason, we continuously look for acceptance, success and the expansion of our own abilities. Consequently, in desiring the approval for our own ego, we raise the ego on a pedestal and elevate it to the rank of an idol that demands praise and service.

Theoretically, we agree that everything depends on God. In day-to-day living, however, we often completely forget this. Only in the light of faith can we see that our reliances on money, material things, the economy, even our good health and our own capabilities become an illusion when we forget that they are meant for God. They are God's gifts that we ought to use according to the intentions of our Creator...

We attribute our achievements at work to our own skills and competency. Have we ever thought that we owe all of our successes to our merciful God? Our Lord Jesus

Christ, through His gratuitous gift of grace, is the One who enables all of our achievements.

As long as everything goes according to our wishes, we continue to nourish the illusion about our own capabilities. God will begin to question our illusions. For example, in our work we may encounter a lack of success caused by our limited intellectual capability or by health problems. Then it may seem to us that everything at work is beginning to fall apart. However, the more a human support fails us, the more we are given the chance to think about the world differently by thinking in the category of faith. Such experiences are opportunities for us to forsake our sense of security in work and in the money we earn. When God undermines human abilities, He desires to show us that, without neglecting our efforts, we should most of all rely on Him.

Slawomir Biela, *God Alone Suffices*, pp.3-7

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 301** With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end. Recognizing this utter dependence with respect to the Creator is a source of wisdom and freedom, of joy and confidence.
- 305** Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father who takes care of his children's smallest needs: "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?". . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."¹⁶⁷
- 273** Only faith can embrace the mysterious ways of God's almighty power. This faith glories in its weaknesses in order to draw to itself Christ's power.¹¹³ The Virgin Mary is the supreme model of this faith, for she believed that "nothing will be impossible with God", and was able to magnify the Lord: "For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."¹¹⁴

Questions for Reflection

1. In this exceptional year of pandemic, what human supports have failed me and how have I seen my reliances being challenged?
2. How have I considered the situations of disappointment and change of plans as opportunities to alter my belief about the world and my way of thinking about the mercy of God?
3. How can the example of Mary's faith in surrendering her own beloved Son lead me to embrace her more fully and allow her to draw me to Him?

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.