

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. 1431, footnote 24: Cf. Council of Trent (1551) DS 1676-1678; 1705; Cf. Roman Catechism, II, V, 4; **No. 1426, footnote 13** *Eph* 1:4; 5:27; **14** Cf. Council of Trent (1546): DS 1515; **15** Cf. Council of Trent (1547): DS 1545; LG 40.

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

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MARCH 21, 2021 ~ FIFTH 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 Jer 31:31-34

Responsorial Psalm Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15

Reading II Heb 5:7-9

Gospel Jn 12:20-33

Opening or Closing Prayer

My Lord Jesus,

Thank you for Your gift of the Eucharist in which You desire to meet with me, accept me, and love me just as I am.

Forgive me for constantly submerging myself in the world, seeking its innumerable temporal treasures, proving that You are not my one true treasure.

O my Lord, during Holy Mass, and during every moment of this day, I entrust to You all my affairs, fears, uncertainties and distractions, and I beg You to...

Open my soul to ever deeper contrition for wasting so many graces, and to gratefulness for Your constant bestowals.

Help me to have the attitude of a helpless child and a contrite sinner in need of Your Mercy.

Heal me of my spiritual leprosy.

Help me to discover You in the Eucharist and to desire You as my only true treasure – my only Love.

Transform me that I may decrease and You may increase.

Unite me to You, my Eucharistic Savior.

May our Blessed Mother await and receive in me and through me Your kenosis – Eucharist – and may she always be grateful within me for Your Sacrament of Love.

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

*Families of Nazareth USA
Summer retreat 2009*

Spiritual Reflection

"I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." Jn 12:24

The Freeing Outlook of Faith

If you attempt to look at the process of dying to yourself with faith, then everything that you so painfully experience will push you toward God. You will see that everything you lose in this process – wealth, honor and status – passes away, or vanishes like rotting garbage.

Is it worthwhile to cry about something that enslaves? Is it worthwhile to cry about that which captivates us, but, when seen in the light of faith, is only garbage and ceases to be the object of our desires and longings? We should only find support for our feet in the goods of this world. In other words, we should consider the goods of this world as footholds on which we may step, and even trample, along our path to God. We do not adore the ground on which we walk. We treat it only as a firm foundation on which we may walk along the way to our goal.

Why is your heart so afraid, so troubled? Our loving Father detaches you as delicately as possible from all that enslaves you and stops you on the path to Him. You still cry instead of thanking Him. St. John of the Cross says: "It makes little difference whether a bird is tied by a thin thread or by a cord. Even if it is tied by a thread, the bird will be held bound just as surely as if it were tied by a cord; that is, it will be impeded from flying as long as it does not break the thread. Admittedly the thread is easier to break, but no matter how easily this is done the bird will not fly away without first doing so." The bird restrained by a cord cannot free itself. Likewise, we are incapable of freeing ourselves from illusions that attract and enslave us. If God destroys our illusions by severing us from all of their entangling threads, should we not be grateful to Him for this great grace?

Do not focus on that which is painful to you in the process of dying. Try to see Christ in every situation with the eyes of faith. For He frees you from wayward illusions, and forms of imprisonment, that lead you away from Him and make it impossible for you to draw closer to Him. Disappointments occur only for those who do not look at their losses through the eyes of faith. They bring about bitterness and suffering, which are actually only the bursting of the soap bubbles of our illusions. Does it make sense to cry when you lose them? If you live only for those soap bubbles, how can you be a pilgrim? How can you strive for and move toward the real goal rather than the illusory one? Acknowledging that dying to yourself is the optimal program of your life will be the result of the efforts of your mind and will. Your emotions and your feelings, however, will defy these efforts. Therefore, you should often repeat to yourself:

I want to believe that everything that happens to me leads me to new life, even though it is so difficult and painful.

The **less you concentrate on yourself**, the more resistance to your wounded self you will develop. Normally, your resistance is as weak as your faith is weak. Saints accepted this process of dying to themselves much like the shedding of dried skin, because their hearts were not attached to anything except for God. Your dying, however, should be subject to certain controls. Even a grain dies most efficiently under the watchful eye of the gardener...The confessor and/or the spiritual guide can be the gardener of your soul and a special instrument in the hands of God. If you desire to cooperate with him, then Christ will be able to take care of you through this instrument in order to ensure that your illusions will die and a *new person* will grow within you according to God's will.

S.C. Biela, *Open Wide the Door to Christ*, pp.170-172

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1431 Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed. At the same time it entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his grace. This conversion of heart is accompanied by a salutary pain and sadness which the Fathers called *animi cruciatus* (affliction of spirit) and *compunctio cordis* (repentance of heart).²⁴

1426 *Conversion* to Christ, the new birth of Baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit and the Body and Blood of Christ received as food have made us "holy and without blemish," just as the Church herself, the Bride of Christ, is "holy and without blemish."¹³ Nevertheless the new life received in Christian initiation has not abolished the frailty and weakness of human nature, nor the inclination to sin that tradition calls *concupiscence*, which remains in the baptized such that with the help of the grace of Christ they may prove themselves in the struggle of Christian life.¹⁴ This is the struggle of *conversion* directed toward holiness and eternal life to which the Lord never ceases to call us.¹⁵

Questions for Reflection

1. What goods of this world attract and enslave me?
2. Which reaction to the loss of these goods have I experienced – sadness or gratefulness? Why?
3. What is my view of God today? How can I trust He is merciful?
4. Do I believe that everything that happens to me leads me to new life, even though it is so difficult and painful? Blessed Mom, I need you!

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.