

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. 2074, footnotes 33: Jn 15:5; 34: Jn 15:12; No. 736, footnotes 129: Gal 5:22-23; 130: Gal 5:25; cf. Mt 16:24-26; 131: St. Basil, De Spiritu Sancto, 15,36: PG 32,132. www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism

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Slawomir Biela, *God Alone Suffices* (Ventura, CA: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2002).

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MAY 2, 2021 ~ FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER ~ 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 Acts 9:26-31

Responsorial Psalm Ps 22:26-27, 28, 30, 31-32

Reading II 1 Jn 3:18-24

Gospel Jn 15:1-8

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

"I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing...By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." Jn 15:5,8

When we look at the world with the eyes of faith, we can perceive that it is God's big vineyard, and all of us are workers hired by God; from Him we receive our work and our worthy recompense.

In our work, then, we should take great care to make sure that it is pleasing to God, not to people, and that our work is connected to God's design for us. We have to carry out our work in accordance with the intention of the vineyard's Owner, and then this work can sanctify us and help us on our way to being more united with our Redeemer.

When we work in this way, trying to fulfill God's will, we may either receive the acceptance of those around us or be criticized for it and be met with misunderstanding. But even if we lose our job, it should not matter that much to us. After all, people do not give us employment, but rather God, who can take it away at any moment. Similarly, He can take away our life at any time. Our lack of work and our seeking after it without results can also contribute to our sanctity if we discover God's presence in this experience – God who holds everything in His hands.

Without seeking God's will, our work can internally destroy us and direct our attention toward 'having' at the expense of 'being' for Christ. And so, if much of our time is taken up by work and our salary is bigger than our needs, it is important that we ponder God's will. Perhaps God does not want us to be so involved in our work.

When we stand in truth before God, it is important to admit that we are often burdened with stress and fear because of our desire to gain another person's approval. By seeking reliance on our workplace, we place our hope in something that at any time may cease to exist. Similarly, we can say that the entire world is passing away in accordance with revelation (see 1 Cor 7:31).

Both our work and our leisure time are given to us so that we may deepen our bond with God and seek our support in Him. If we try to see God and to seek His will in everything that He bestows upon us, then our time for rest will strengthen our faith in God's omnipotent love.

When we spend time in front of the television, we very seldom think about God's presence connected to this gift. But isn't it God who has allowed the development of different types of instruments for our use, in spite of the fact that we frequently use them for the wrong reasons? He expects that even these gifts will allow us to discover His will. When we are at the movies, the theater, or in front of the television and we witness human sinfulness portrayed, it indicates that there is evil in the world. Isn't this the way in which God asks us to call upon His mercy for the world? After all, when He speaks to us through the media, He expects that we will awaken in ourselves a deeper, more reflective approach to the world around us.

Slawomir Biela, *God Alone Suffices*, pp. 16-19

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

2074 Jesus says: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."³³ The fruit referred to in this saying is the holiness of a life made fruitful by union with Christ. When we believe in Jesus Christ, partake of his mysteries, and keep his commandments, the Savior himself comes to love, in us, his Father and his brethren, our Father and our brethren. His person becomes, through the Spirit, the living and interior rule of our activity. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."³⁴

736 By this power of the Spirit, God's children can bear much fruit. He who has grafted us onto the true vine will make us bear "the fruit of the Spirit: ...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."¹²⁹ "We live by the Spirit"; the more we renounce ourselves, the more we "walk by the Spirit."¹³⁰

Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of heaven, and adopted as children, given confidence to call God "Father" and to share in Christ's grace, called children of light and given a share in eternal glory.¹³¹

Questions for Reflection

1. When I consider my work and leisure, what does it reveal to me about being connected to the vine of God's will in all things?
2. "Without me, you can do nothing." Where do I see God's love and mercy in what I have discovered in this review of how I spend my gift of time?
3. When I acknowledge the truth about myself in this reflection, what do I need from Mary, what is my response?

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.