

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. 272, footnotes: 111 I Cor 1:24-25, 112 Eph 1:19-22; No. 2015: 68 Cf. 2 Tim 4, 69 St. Gregory of Nyssa, Hom. in Cant. 8: PG 44, 941C;

No. 2648. <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism>

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André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary

Foundation, 2016). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org

Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

SEPTEMBER 12, 2021 ~ 24TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 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 Is 50:5-9a

Responsorial Psalm Ps 116:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

Reading II Jas 2:14-18

Gospel Mk 8:27-35

Opening or Closing Prayer

Holy Mary, full of God's presence

during the days of your life, you accepted with full humility the Father's will and the Devil was never able to tie you around with his confusion.

Once you interceded for our difficulties with your Son and, full of kindness and patience, you gave us the example of how to untie the knots of our life. And by remaining forever Our Mother, you put in order, and make more clear the ties that link us to the Lord.

Holy Mother, Mother of God and our Mother,

to you, who untie with motherly heart the knots of our life, we pray to you to receive in your hands (name), and to free them [him/her] of the knots and confusion with which our enemy attacks.

Through your grace, your intercession, and your example,

deliver us from all evil, Our Lady,
and untie the knots that prevent us from being united with God,
so that we, free from sin and error,
may find Him in all things,
may have our hearts placed in Him,
and may serve Him always in our brothers and sisters. Amen

Pope Francis' prayer to *Our Lady, Untier of Knots*
He brought this devotion from Augsburg, Germany to Argentina
Novena and history at <http://www.theholynosary.org/maryundoerknots>

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2013

Spiritual Reflection

“Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.” Mt.16:23

It is normal to be fearful of the *descent*, of being fixed on the cross. “Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. At this he turned around and, looking at his disciples, rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do’” (Mk 8:32-33).

For natural man, this message is always difficult to hear. However, there is no other way than the path of humility and of sharing in the cross.

“Then human pride shall be abased,/ the arrogance of mortals brought low” (Is 2:17).

And how did God abase the pride of men? In terrifying them? In demonstrating to them his power? No. He abased it in lowering himself, in *descending*, in annihilating himself and allowing himself to be nailed to the cross, “taking the form of a slave” (Phil 2:7). He was found not only of low estate but he became the poorest of us all.

Holiness is impossible without this *descent* into humility, without this annihilation. It is in the very depths of this descent that Jesus cried out: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mt 27:46).

How many poor, rejected, mocked, and poorly loved people utter this cry of distress in the depths of abandonment? Jesus suffers in them even though they are sometimes unaware. They are, as Paul VI magnificently said: “These poor blessed lambs that save the world without realizing it.” In fact, Christ *descended* and joined all the excluded, the rejected, the cursed ones. He became “a curse for us” (Gal 3:13).

Our wounds and poverty will be transformed one day into a glorious light if we offer them to Divine Mercy. Julian of Norwich, an English mystic, expressed this in terms shocking at first glance, but deeply evangelical:

Any sinful soul must be healed...In front of God her wounds will remain glorious signs. Here below, sin is punished through suffering, but in heaven it will be rewarded through the merciful love of our Lord who desires that no mortal man loses the fruit of his works by any means. In this way, all shame will be transformed into joy and glory.

To descend with Christ into the depths of my wounds, to recognize my state of sinfulness, all this will change my distress into joy, and what was my shame will

become glory and light. We have never arrived at enough depth that the light cannot reach us in the night.

To join Christ so as to be transformed in him, we therefore need to pass through descent and suffering because Christ wants to relive in us the mystery of his *descent* into the abyss. And it is in the darkness of night that the light of the resurrection can radiate.

The true way of holiness is the narrow door that only the weak, the poor, and the children manage to enter by *descending* again and again into the depths of their woundedness and distress.

André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*, pp.36-38

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

272 Faith in God the Father Almighty can be put to the test by the experience of evil and suffering. God can sometimes seem to be absent and incapable of stopping evil. But in the most mysterious way God the Father has revealed his almighty power in the voluntary humiliation and Resurrection of his Son, by which he conquered evil. Christ crucified is thus "the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."¹¹¹ It is in Christ's Resurrection and exaltation that the Father has shown forth "the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe".¹¹²

2015 The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle.⁶⁸ Spiritual progress entails the asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes:

He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows.⁶⁹

2648 Every joy and suffering, every event and need can become the matter for thanksgiving which, sharing in that of Christ, should fill one's whole life: "Give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess 5:18).

Questions for Reflection

1. What event or life situation that I've experienced comes to my mind in reading this reflection?
2. At such a time, what is my reaction, to what is God calling me?
3. In gazing at Mary's life, and in a special way at the foot of the cross, how can she bring me to accept the difficult grace that God offers?

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.