

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. 1877; No. 520, footnotes: 191 GS 38; cf. Rom 15:5; Phil 2:5, 192 Cf. Jn 13:15; Lk 11:1; Mt 5:11-12.

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

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S.C.Biela, *God Alone Suffices*, 3rd edition. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation,

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September 19, 2021 ~ 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time ~ Year B Spiritual Reflection on Sunday's Readings

Prepared by:
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Communion of Life with Christ through Mary

Opening Prayer
Read Decalogue
Read Scripture
Read Reflection

Reading I	Ws 2:12, 17-20
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 54:3-4, 5, 6 and 8
Reading II	Jas 3:16-4:3
Gospel	Mk 9:30-37

Opening or Closing Prayer

Father of Mercy and of Love,

Thank you for the gift of reconciliation through the Redemptive Sacrifice of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your love is more powerful than my sin. There is no evil that surpasses Your infinite mercy.

Send your Holy Spirit to convince me of my weakness so that I may live with a truth of conscience and a certainty of redemption.

Open me, Gracious Father, to the graces of being personally responsible for my sins, longing for forgiveness, and of being obedient to the call to conversion.

When I seek forgiveness, give me the courage to reveal the abyss of my misery and to accept my sins as "happy faults" so that, as Your child, I may run to Your loving embrace.

Through the help and intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy, may I learn true contrition for the wounds I have caused Her Son.

And may my continual renewal, through the grace of Your sacraments, work to revitalize the Church, so that, as One Body in Christ, we may proclaim Your dominion over all the earth.

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

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2010

Spiritual Reflection

*If anyone wishes to be first,
he shall be the last of all and the servant of all. Mark 9:36*

The process of spiritual purification is so painful because it consists of exposing the truth about our pride. God discloses it gradually and delicately, but with each attempt of disclosure we experience the very dramatic rebelliousness of our ego. The main reason for all of our anxiety is the **pain** of our own **pride**, which is protesting against the truth about ourselves. Therefore, we blame those around us or the circumstances we find ourselves in; we search for a scapegoat to bear what was revealed about ourselves. We go to all of this trouble for one purpose: to keep our ego intact.

This process of purification is described in the words of Jesus: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me!” (Mark 8:34). Indeed, we have to deny ourselves in order to undergo the process of purification from our pride of good impressions about ourselves. This indicates the need to take up the cross of truth about ourselves and imitate Jesus so that we will desire to be the last – **to run for the last place here on Earth.**

We cannot forget that Jesus, though being first, became the last. In this way, He has shown us how we should relate toward everything. In this way, He has shown us what the spirit of this world offers us, and He has revealed to us our attachments to our own ‘perfection.’ He took upon Himself our wretchedness and the sinfulness of our attachments. He waits, however, for us to come after Him so as to fully take advantage of the sacrifice that He offered for us. He expects that in order to imitate Him we will try to lose everything and everybody, which includes the prideful notions that we are good.

This race for the last place on Earth is meant to shape us into persons who will consciously and voluntarily assume and admit, in the posture of the poor in spirit, that we are nothing and that we expect everything from God. It is only such a person who will try to desire this one thing: that he will not live, but that Christ will live in him...

God wants us to begin choosing spiritual poverty as a specific value and gift. Respecting our free will, He expects us to consent to his uninterrupted intervention in our lives so that He can do and achieve in us whatever he wants.

Treating our ego very delicately, our Creator often puts us only on the verge of the abyss, so that we will be convinced that we are incapable of accepting total denudation. When that becomes evident to us, He lowers His expectations toward us and strips us only to a very limited degree.

Seeing our inability to accept various difficulties, our Lord lowers the intensity of our purification process. This should be a very visible sign for us that we are still opposing the working of grace in our lives. The reason for this is our lack of trust. The person who lacks trust closes the gates of his own heart and does not want to rely on God in everything.

This lack of trust becomes our drama. It is important, however, that we try to give up this ‘good impression about ourselves’ and rely on our Father as we truly are. It is important that we turn ourselves over to Him in this weakened state, incapable of withstanding the tests of faith that are sent upon us due to our inability to trust the greatest Love...

Those who desire to seek reliance only in God must be in contempt of their own tendencies to lean on anything that is not God. In the practical sense, it would be advisable to follow the suggestion of St. John of the Cross, who told us expressly that we must hold our own things and ourselves in strong contempt. The more precious the gifts that God gives us, the more strongly we ought to disdain our tendencies to lean on them as if they are God.

S.C. Biela, *God Alone Suffices* pp.106-110

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1877 The vocation of humanity is to show forth the image of God and to be transformed into the image of the Father’s only Son. This vocation takes a personal form since each of us is called to enter into the divine beatitude; it also concerns the human community as a whole.

520 In all of his life Jesus presents himself as *our model*. He is "the perfect man",¹⁹¹ who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way.¹⁹²

Questions for Reflection

1. In what ways do I sometimes desire to be better than others, or **thought of** as better than others? What does it mean to me ‘to sacrifice the good opinion of myself’?
2. What is God’s will for me when I find I have I pointed fingers at others and blamed them for my circumstances?
3. Where can I see in scripture that Mary encourages me by her example of accepting the lower place?

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.