

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 "you, 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. 501 footnote 160: LG 63; cf. Jn 19:26-27; Rom 8:29; Rev 12:17; No. 970, footnotes 513: LG 60.

www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism

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S.C.Biela, *The Two Pillars*. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2006). All

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December 5, 2021 ~ 2nd Sunday of Advent ~ Year C 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	Bar 5:1-9
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6
Reading II	Phil 1:4-6, 8-11
Gospel	Lk 3:1-6

Opening or Closing Prayer

*Listen. Put it into your heart,
my smallest child,
that the thing that frightened you,
the thing that afflicted you is nothing:
Do not let it disturb you...
Am I not here, I who am your mother?
Are you not under my shadow and protection?
Am I not the source of your joy?
Are you not in the hollow of my mantle,
in the crossing of my arms?
Do you need something more?*

– Our Lady of Guadalupe, 1531 A.D.

Spiritual Reflection

*The winding roads shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Lk 3:5-6*

While we journey along the difficult path that involves the destruction of the barriers within us, we must not count on ourselves to accept everything that God gives us as a gift, as the grace of purification and as something rightly due us. It is best if, like St. Juan Diego, we try to live in Mary's arms, or on her back, according to the words she addressed to him. Do we not resemble conquered men lying on a battlefield? Do we not continually suffer many defeats in the battle against the pride of the old man in us? Do we not constantly convince ourselves that we cannot overcome our weaknesses?

You lie on the battlefield of your own spiritual struggle against the one enemy who defeats you, and you do not even have the strength to call out for help...Now, following the example of St. Juan Diego, you can count only on the Mother of God and believe that she will come, stoop down to you, place you on her back, and carry you. You are unable to advance toward holiness on your own because you are so wounded.

Just as she did in the case of St. Juan Diego, the Blessed Mother places you, too, on her back and carries you through your life as someone defeated by your own pride. While carrying you on her back, she unceasingly adores her Son, Jesus Christ, your Savior who constantly blesses both her and you whom she carries as her beloved child. You should not forget why you are being carried: you lost the fight; you could not manage on your own. Without her you would have never advanced from the point of defeat.

In due time you might even cease to see the path along which God leads you. If you are like St. Juan Diego on Mary's strong and wide back, then you are unable to see much in front of you. All that you can see is Mary's back. You know that someone is carrying you. You know that this person is the Blessed Mother and that she always cares for you. Yet, you do not see even her face. You see only her back. But nothing threatens you on Mary's back. Even though you cannot see anything ahead of you, you may feel safe like St. Juan Diego...If the future is hidden, then it is because you do not have enough faith. If you looked without faith at what is before you, then you could become terrified. As it is, however, the Mother of God carries you throughout your life. She certainly will bring you safely to the goal, just as she brought St. Juan Diego to sanctity.

This particular help of Mary – being carried on her back – is possible only when you assume an attitude of contrition and gratitude...

In order to cling to Mary's back, to snuggle your head between her shoulders, your heart must be **contrite** – as St. Juan Diego's heart was certainly contrite – for Mary carries only someone who is very small and very contrite. Only such a person allows himself to be carried on her back. Nothing substitutes for contrition. Contrition is a pillar of interior life that demolishes the barriers of the heart and opens us up to Love...

God calls and beckons us to communion of life – to union – with Him. This call, however, is directed to those who are marked by both original sin and by personal sin. Therefore, the answer to God's call demands that we unceasingly discover the truth about our evil, turn away from it through contrition, and submit to grace. These three elements form a cycle of feedback – the process of which is endless. We will never be completely converted and submissive to grace because this same grace exposes new dimensions of the evil in us, demands deeper contrition in the face of our evil and, in relation to this, calls for even deeper openness to God's action and to His purifying grace in our life.

S.C. Biela, *The Two Pillars*, pp.36-42

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 501** Jesus is Mary's only son, but her spiritual motherhood extends to all men whom indeed he came to save: "The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, that is, the faithful in whose generation and formation she co-operates with a mother's love."¹⁶⁰
- 970** "Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men . . . flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it."⁵¹³

Questions for Reflection

1. What is my posture or attitude when I find myself unable to progress on the path of holiness? How is God present in these difficult situations?
2. How can I try to live in Mary's arms as the best way? Does it mean to simply relax and free myself from effort?
3. How do I recognize the holy Mother of God doing the work of salvation in my soul? In what areas of my life am I becoming more aware of her intercession and her begging to allow her to carry me? How do I cling to her?

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.