

### 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. 1224, footnotes 19: Mt 3:15; 20: Cf. Phil 2:7; 21: Mt 3:16-17; No. 900, footnote 433 Cf. LG 33.*

[www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism](http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism)

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S.C. Biela, *Behold I Stand at the Door and Knock* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary

Foundation, 2005). All rights reserved. – [www.inthearmsofmary.org](http://www.inthearmsofmary.org)

Families of Nazareth Movement – [www.familiesofnazareth.us](http://www.familiesofnazareth.us)

### JANUARY 9, 2022 ~ THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD ~ YEAR C SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON SUNDAY'S READINGS

PREPARED BY:  
FAMILIES OF NAZARETH MOVEMENT  
COMMUNION OF LIFE WITH CHRIST THROUGH MARY

Opening Prayer  
Read Decalogue  
Read Scripture  
Read Reflection

**Reading I** Is 42:1-4, 6-7 OR Is 40:1-5, 9-11

**Responsorial Psalm** Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-106 OR Ps 104:1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29-30

**Reading II** Acts 10:34- 38 OR Ti 2:11-14; 3:4-7

**Gospel** Lk 3:15-16, 21-22

### Opening or Closing Prayer

**Dear Father**, great is Your Mercy.

My true vocation is intimacy with You in the Kingdom of Heaven. May the new model of righteousness Your Son has given me, "as I have done, you should also do," open me more to Your mercy and transform me into Your divine likeness.

**Dear Jesus**, holy is Your Name.

May your prayer, "that they may be one as you, Father, and I are one," become my own desire. Teach me how to build up the unity of Your Mystical Body by embracing and living out my vocation to authentic holiness and happiness.

**Dear Holy Spirit**, amazing is Your Grace.

Grant me your gifts in order to "always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks" the reason for my hope. Thank you that, through You, I can encounter Jesus daily in the Eucharist, the source of my hope, even in the situations of my life that are most difficult to understand.

**Dear Mother Mary**, source of my joy.

"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." As a vessel of the Holy Spirit, teach me to live the Beatitudes of your Son. Wrap me in your mantle, where I can believe in His mercy and fulfill my vocation to be salt of the earth and light of the world.

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

*Families of Nazareth USA  
Summer Retreat 2011*

## Spiritual Reflection

*And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Lk 3:22*

By lowering himself, John the Baptist was not limited only to making room for the coming Messiah and giving up his public activities. Thanks to Jesus' surprising attitude toward John – surprising from a human point of view – this great prophet progressed in lowering himself. When John the Baptist found himself in prison, he was humbled not only by his lack of personal freedom but also in his lack of understanding regarding what was happening to him and around him.

When John the Baptist was told that, "the one. . .to whom you testified. . .is baptizing and everyone is coming to him"(Jn 3:26), he answered and said, "He must increase; I must decrease" (Jn 3:30). . .The words of John the Baptist indicate the way by which we can lead others to open the door to Christ. We have to lower ourselves and disappear, to become small like children of the Gospel, in order to make room for the Lord.

It is unusual that, regarding the necessity to *lower oneself*, Christ emphasizes the one whom He Himself called great: "Among those born of women, no one is greater than John"(Lk 7:28). The entire greatness of this prophet was, however, that he removed himself: he was willing to cast himself into the shadows and be forgotten. . .

Jesus did not visibly demonstrate any gratitude or special interest in John. He did not call John to follow Him. On the contrary, He left His most faithful herald in loneliness and uncertainty. . .From where did John's doubts come? After all, was he not the person who heard God's voice from heaven during Jesus' baptism saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17)? . . .

Forgotten by those who had listened to him in the past, he accepted being forgotten by Jesus and he accepted that he did not fully understand Him. Deprived of Jesus' interest in him – the very same Jesus to whom John himself had witnessed – John must have felt abandoned and forgotten not only by others, but also by the Son of God. . .

John the Baptist also wants to teach you something very important: in order for Christ to grow in you and in others, you must first die to yourself.

Apostolic work does not prevent us from contemplating ourselves in the pool of the pride of human regard. It does not shield us from striving to attain the recognition of others. Do you not catch yourself sometimes wanting to impress others or win their esteem? Or, are you indifferent to the fact that your words and behavior evoke others' sympathy, respect or gratitude?

In each one of us there is a very strong desire to gain the approval of others, to be noticed by them, and to be held in their high esteem. The human 'I' demands that it be in first place. It continuously wants to reflect its own ideal image in the eyes of others and

it does not want to be small like a child. If you do not oppose these aspirations, then you are taking the place that belongs to Christ; **you conceal Him within yourself.**

Meanwhile, John the Baptist teaches that the greatest joy for an apostle is to see that Christ increases while he or she decreases on behalf of Him. . .It is not easy to decrease and disappear in such a way that nobody will remember or miss you. St. John the Baptist spoke about "rejoicing greatly" when his disciples and the multitude of his flock abandoned him to follow Jesus. However, the opposite aspirations are within each person.

Our apostolate, nevertheless, becomes authentic and fruitful only to the degree to which we do not allow our 'I' to occupy the place belonging only to Christ. . .If you want your human heart to open up before the One Who is knocking, then you cannot occupy His place. You must decrease. You must convert and become like a child (cf. Mt 18:3). Only then will Christ increase in you and in the persons to whom you want to give Him.  
S.C. Biela, *Behold I Stand at the Door and Knock*, pp. 103-108

## References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

**1224** Our Lord voluntarily submitted himself to the baptism of St. John, intended for sinners, in order to "fulfill all righteousness."<sup>19</sup> Jesus' gesture is a manifestation of his self-emptying.<sup>20</sup> The Spirit who had hovered over the waters of the first creation descended then on the Christ as a prelude of the new creation, and the Father revealed Jesus as his "beloved Son."<sup>21</sup>

**900** Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it.<sup>433</sup>

## Questions for Reflection

1. Recall a life experience when I have been forgotten, ignored or overlooked. What was my inner reaction?
2. With this reflection's perspective, how do I now see God's presence in such events and the way he can accomplish to be "well pleased" in me?
3. When we ask Mary to pray for us "at the hour of death," how can I rely on her help in order to die to my desire for esteem and recognition by others?

## 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.*