

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. 753, footnotes 144: Cf. *Eph* 1:22; *Col* 1:18; *LG* 9; **145:** *LG* 6; **No. 754, footnote 146:** *LG* 6; cf. *Jn* 10:1-10; *Isa* 40:11; *Ezek* 34:11-31; *Jn* 10:11; *1 Pet* 5:4; *Jn* 10:11-16. www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism
New American Bible © USCCB. All rights reserved. www.usccb.org/nab/index.shtml
S.C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, revised second edition (Fort Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2021). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org
Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

May 8, 2022 ~ Fourth Sunday of Easter ~ Year C 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 13:14, 43-52

Responsorial Psalm Ps 100:1-2, 3, 5

Reading II Rev 7:9, 14b-17

Gospel Jn 10:27-30

Opening or Closing Prayer

My Lord Jesus,

Thank you for Your gift of the Eucharist in which You desire to meet with me, accept me, and love me just as I am.

Forgive me for constantly submerging myself in the world, seeking its innumerable temporal treasures, proving that You are not my one true treasure.

O my Lord, during Holy Mass, and during every moment of this day, I entrust to You all my affairs, fears, uncertainties and distractions, and I beg You to...

Open my soul to ever deeper contrition for wasting so many graces, and to gratefulness for Your constant bestowals.

Help me to have the attitude of a helpless child and a contrite sinner in need of Your Mercy.

Heal me of my spiritual leprosy.

Help me to discover You in the Eucharist and to desire You as my only true treasure – my only Love.

Transform me that I may decrease and You may increase.

Unite me to You, my Eucharistic Savior.

May our Blessed Mother await and receive in me and through me Your kenosis – Eucharist – and may she always be grateful within me for Your Sacrament of Love.

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

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer retreat 2007

Spiritual Reflection

*Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice;
I know them, and they follow me." Jn 10:27*

If you want to walk toward God along the path of the helpless sheep, you do not have to force yourself to be like the **eagles**. By adopting the attitude of the helpless sheep, you too can imitate the highest model of sanctity – the One whose only desire was to be the servant – slave of the Lord.

The Most Blessed Virgin lived the attitude of the helpless sheep in a most perfect manner. It was she who knew best that, without God, nothing is possible. She was, in her own “yes,” like an **abyss of helplessness and poverty**, and at the same time an **abyss of trust in God**.

When you begin to imitate Mary – by recognizing your weakness and yearning trustfully to see the Good Shepherd, who is invisible to you – you will be able to follow Him with perseverance and live with the hope that He will take care of you, even if you are the last. . .

The attitude of the *helpless sheep* will not become permanent in your life without prayer – without the prayer of the *helpless sheep*. Desiring to live this form of prayer, try to put yourself trustfully before God with the awareness of your frailty or even your total weakness:

*Lord, here I am last,
dragging myself along,
because I am the worst.
Nevertheless, I believe that you are waiting for me
and you love me.
Lord, I will die if you abandon me,
if you do not take me in your arms.
Without You I am a useless instrument,
without You I cannot live.*

This prayer need not be accompanied by the feeling that Jesus takes you into His arms or the awareness of being like a helpless sheep gifted with the ‘pearls’ of special graces. Even if this may happen it is better that He would hide these things from you, so that you will not appropriate to yourself the ‘pearls’ given you. . .

Try to begin the day with the prayer of the *helpless sheep*: kneel before the Lord and in the presence of the Crucified Jesus, or before another of His images, pray with the prayer of empty hands or with a focused gaze directed at the Cross. Remain in the presence of Jesus with the attitude of the **helpless sheep**. This prayer should accompany you throughout your whole day. . .

You are the last one, dragging yourself – your prayer is so poor, you are accompanying Jesus in such a miserable manner. It does not matter!

It is critical that you **put your hope totally in Him**, when in response to your attitude, God fills you with His presence, then according to how you remain in the attitude of the **helpless sheep**, you await everything from Him. *He Himself can live in you and act through you*. Thanks to the attitude of the *helpless sheep*, you can continuously discover more fully your weakness, your poverty, and your spiritual misery.

You can also discover more fully the truth that God really loves the sinner in a special way, and the truth about the lost sheep whom the Shepherd carries on His shoulders.
S.C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, pp75-79

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 753** In Scripture, we find a host of interrelated images and figures through which Revelation speaks of the inexhaustible mystery of the Church. The images taken from the Old Testament are variations on a profound theme: the People of God. In the New Testament, all these images find a new center because Christ has become the head of this people, which henceforth is his Body.¹⁴⁴ Around this center are grouped images taken "from the life of the shepherd or from cultivation of the land, from the art of building or from family life and marriage."¹⁴⁵
- 754** "The Church is, accordingly, a *sheepfold*, the sole and necessary gateway to which is Christ. It is also the flock of which God himself foretold that he would be the shepherd, and whose sheep, even though governed by human shepherds, are unfailingly nourished and led by Christ himself, the Good Shepherd and Prince of Shepherds, who gave his life for his sheep.¹⁴⁶

Questions for Reflection

1. Have I entrusted myself completely and permanently like the “sheep of the Gospel” entrusts itself to the Good Shepherd? What are the obstacles?
2. Where would I go with Christ if I heard the words to come and rest for a while? When do I ever feel the need to hear these words?
3. Holy Mother Mary was as a sheep in the arms of the Good Shepherd – how can I learn from her life the meaning of those terms? How is her presence in my life an aid to enfolding myself in the arms of the Shepherd?

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.