

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 my 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. 305, footnote 167: Mt 6:31-33; No. 2677, footnotes 36:

Cf. Lk 1:43; 37: Lk 1:38. www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism

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March 26, 2023 ~ 5th Sunday of Lent ~ Year A 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	Ez 37:12-14
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8
Reading II	Rom 8:8-11
Gospel	Jn 11:1-45

Opening or Closing Prayer

Dearest Father, Your Son tells us, "Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." I long to be Your smallest child. Help me to rediscover You as the One Who delights in me, Who calls me as His own.

My Jesus, You say to us, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." You are the way to heaven. Thank You for saving me and giving me Yourself in the Holy Eucharist. Reactivate the call of my Baptism to serve the Church in childlike humility, "boasting only in God."

Holy Spirit, reveal to me my weaknesses that I may seek Jesus' strength. Reveal to me my nothingness, that I may await all things from Him. Convince me of Jesus' words, "What is impossible for human beings is possible for God."

Blessed Mother, I entrust my prideful doubt, fear, discouragement and ingratitude to your intercession so that I will believe, as God's beloved child and yours, "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

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

*Summer Retreat 2010
Families of Nazareth USA*

Spiritual Reflection

“Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?” Jn 11:40

Maturity in faith means the willingness to surrender to the Lord everything that He gives us, entrusting ourselves totally to Him. We should not attach ourselves to anything, not to spiritual gifts, and not even to Holy Communion. God’s will is a gift and a means to reach the goal, but it is not the goal. If we claim the gift for ourselves, God will either destroy it or – through giving us the experience of suffering – show us that we have nothing to offer, that we are helpless, and that it is God who gives us everything.

A truly expressive testimony of St. Leopold Mandic’s faith was his gesture of showing empty hands. Those empty hands turned toward God symbolized his expropriation of any gifts – an expression of extraordinary faith. This faith enabled God to perform miracles through him in the confessional. Our gesture of showing empty hands can be directed toward God not only in spiritual matters, as in the case of St. Leopold Mandic, but it can also indicate our attitude of awaiting everything from God. It should accompany us in everything we do in life: in work, in raising our children, in our influence on others, and in prayer. The gesture of empty hands should also accompany us when looking for the greatest of God’s gifts to come – the gift of Himself for He is Love that embraces us and in which we are immersed.

Abandonment to God

Your reliance on God by entrusting yourself to Him will not be completely pure unless it takes the form of **abandoning yourself to Him**. It could be that you entrust yourself to Him, expecting that He will fulfill your will. If you say, *God, I entrust myself to you, my will be done*, this is still the constant seeking of oneself. Reliance on God has to become the abandoning of oneself to Him. **Lord, let it be as you want** since *You love me and know best what I need and what those whom I love need and what those whom I pray for need*. In our spiritual life and on our way to God, our entrusting of ourselves to Him must become a way of total abandonment to the Lord. . .

The theology of spiritual life says that only the abandonment of oneself to God begets internal peace within a person. As long as you do not abandon yourself to the Lord, you will be uneasy, and your heart, filled with unrest, concerns, and problems, will flutter like a moth against a light bulb. **There is no other way to peace than to abandon yourself completely to His will, to His love.**

To St. Gertrude, who was praying for the health of her friend, Christ said, “You interfere, Gertrude, asking for her health since this illness is a great grace, and she is surrendering to My will and is quickly being sanctified.” The French word *abandon*. . .has a very profound meaning. It means renouncing one’s own plans and visions, **leaving everything behind so that one can devote oneself totally to the Lord**. We are so full of our own plans and our own visions; but God’s will and God’s plans are often different. Then God must foil our plans. **This foiling of our plans is blessed because His love** always wants what is best for us.

Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, pp. 40-42

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

305 Jesus asks for childlike abandonment to the providence of our heavenly Father who takes care of his children's smallest needs: "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?". . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."¹⁶⁷

2677 *Holy Mary, Mother of God*: With Elizabeth we marvel, "And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"³⁶ Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself: "Let it be to me according to your word."³⁷ By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: "Thy will be done."

Questions for Reflection

1. Looking at my daily life, and looking at the crises throughout the world and my country, what does surrendering everything to the Lord mean to me? In what ways do I hold back?
2. How can I experience God’s love in my present situation and my country’s situation? How do I want to respond?
3. During her entire life and especially at the foot of the Cross, Blessed Mother’s attitude was to await with trust the fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan. Through this humble awaiting, how can Mary guide me to ‘await,’ with open hands in trust, the miracles that God wants to perform in my life and the life of 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.