

## 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.2444, footnotes: 235: CA 57; cf. Lk 6:20-22, Mt 8:20; Mk 12:41-44; 236: Eph 4:28; 237: Cf. CA 57; No. 2445, footnote 238: Jas 5:1-6; No. 2446, footnote 239: St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Lazaro* 2, 5: PG 48,992; 240: AA 8 S5; 241: St. Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*. 3, 21: PL 77, 87.

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

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André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection, holiness for the poor* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2016). All rights reserved. – [www.inthearmsofmary.org](http://www.inthearmsofmary.org)  
Families of Nazareth Movement – [www.familiesofnazareth.us](http://www.familiesofnazareth.us)

APRIL 2, 2023 ~ PALM SUNDAY ~ YEAR A  
SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON THE SUNDAY 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** Is 50:4-7  
**Responsorial Psalm** Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24  
**Reading II** Phil 2:6-11  
**Gospel** Mt 26:14-27:66

### 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 2008*

## Spiritual Reflection

*Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 2 Phil 6-8*

In truth there is real love only in the one who lowers himself to reach the one he loves, who descends into the abyss to join those who are lost. In order to understand the Gospel, to understand true love, there is first a *scandal* because one must totally question what was thought at first. Love descends; Love lowers itself. God's wisdom is folly. God descends. God is at the lowest. He "delivered Himself for us." One must accept that love lowers itself, that love becomes a descent and self-emptying. The mystery of the Cross is a scandal for our human wisdom. One must contemplate this mystery of descent by looking at Jesus in his Passion.

Jesus hangs on the wood totally naked,  
stripped of his clothing,  
stripped of his human dignity,  
stripped of honor and admiration,  
stripped of every place and function,  
stripped even of his capacity to announce the Good News,  
stripped of his disciples and their confidence,  
stripped of everything  
except the presence of Mary.  
And those who were there  
only saw his broken body.  
Then his body was put in a tomb.  
He had to descend  
into the deepest experience of death.  
(Jean Vanier, *Broken Body*)

This is the Gospel of the Cross that we fear to proclaim because it is scandal and madness.

"For since in the wisdom of God the world did not come to know God through wisdom, it was the will of God through the foolishness of the proclamation to save those who have faith" (1Cor 1:21).

That is to say, since the world did not recognize God when he revealed himself through the power, splendor and richness of creation, God has now chosen to save humanity by the opposite means: through *descent*, poverty, weakness, self-lowering and humiliation.

One must not forget that this poverty of Jesus is the renouncing of all prestige and *descending* into humility. . . Therefore, when Jesus said to his disciples to meet him in the poor, he reminds us that this is himself, the totally deprived "first poor."

André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*, p.67-68

## Reference from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

**2444** "The Church's love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition." This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor.<sup>235</sup> Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to "be able to give to those in need."<sup>236</sup> It extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty.<sup>237</sup>

**2445** Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use:

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you.<sup>238</sup>

**2446** St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs."<sup>239</sup> "The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity":<sup>240</sup>

When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.<sup>241</sup>

## Questions for Reflection

1. In contemplating Jesus' descent in his Passion, what is my most frequent attitude toward my human and spiritual weaknesses and how do I encounter others in theirs?
2. In the light of faith, how have I been spending my time in the present circumstances? Am I storing up material or spiritual treasures or opening myself to descent and self-emptying?
3. How can the lifelong "fiat" of Mary, Mother of God and my Mother, guide me in these times of denudation? How can I stand at the foot of the cross with 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.*