

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:2518, footnotes 307: M 5:8; 308: Cf. 1 Tim 4:3-9; 2 Tim 2:22; 309: Cf. 1 Thess 4:7; Col 3:5; Eph 4:19; 310: Cf. Titus 1:15; 1 Tim 2:23-26; No. 2519, footnote 312: Cf. 1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2; No. 2520.

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S. C. Biela, *Open Wide the Door to Christ* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary

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September 10, 2023~23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time ~Year A 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	Ez 33: 7-9
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 95: 1-2, 6-7, 8-9
Reading II	Rom 13: 8-10
Gospel	Mt 18:15-20

Opening or Closing Prayer

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
that I love but what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
to defend all that is holy.

Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,
that I always may be holy. Amen.

A Prayer of Saint Augustine

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2019

Spiritual Reflection

*If today you hear his voice,
Harden not your hearts. Ps 95:7-8*

Purity of heart means purity of intentions, a supernatural relationship to the world. Poverty of heart entails looking at everything that surrounds us as God looks at it. A pure heart is permeated by God, submissive to His action, and cooperative with grace.

Impurity, on the other hand, arises in our hearts when we live as if God does not exist. Impurity of heart means that our will does not conform to God's will. When this happens, our relationships become impure to everything: the world surrounding us, the people, and the things that we encounter. The relationships are impure because we do not take God into account. Instead, we question His unique Lordship. If we looked at flowers in a pure way, then we would be able to see, before all else, God the Creator Himself. In observing the beauty of a flower, we would adore God and His Divine work. We, however, generally look at the beauty of nature in an entirely different way. Greed and possessiveness always taint our gaze. We desire to be satisfied by the fragrance of flowers. We greedily want to absorb their beauty into ourselves. In other words, we want to get drunk off their beauty like off wine, high off their scent like off drugs. In short, we want to possess. Such a way of gazing at the world, regardless of whether we look at a plant, landscape, or works of art, is impure. Impurity always occurs when we want to possess something or appropriate something to some extent, even if only by a gaze. Impurity of heart means that we look at people and things as if they were disconnected from the Creator and His designs. Even our relationship toward work can become impure if we separate our work from God who is hidden in every task that awaits us, in every difficulty that we must overcome, and in any success or failure related to work. When we unreservedly surrender ourselves to work, just as we surrender ourselves to those who are close to us, we do not leave any room in our professional lives for God and His plans. Moreover, our work begins to enslave us. . .

...Purity of heart is a relationship to the world that acknowledges the place in the world that truly belongs to the Creator and Lord of everything. Purity of heart is respect for God's plan, in any given moment, for each creature. Likewise, with regard to our neighbor, purity of heart consists in respecting God, who is hidden in our neighbor and who has His own holy plan for him.

Striving for purity of heart demands that we continually work on ourselves. Maintaining purity of heart requires active renunciation. We must always strive to improve so that we have good intentions in everything that we do. However, if God's light of truth exposes a little of the mystery of the interior of the whitewashed tomb and allows you to see your spiritual misery, then you will begin to understand that you are too weak to live by the virtue of chastity on your own.

S. C. Biela, *Open Wide the Door to Christ*, pp. 188-190

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

2518 The sixth beatitude proclaims, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."³⁰⁷ "Pure in heart" refers to those who have attuned their intellects and wills to the demands of God's holiness, chiefly in three areas: charity;³⁰⁸ chastity or sexual rectitude;³⁰⁹ love of truth and orthodoxy of faith.³¹⁰ There is a connection between purity of heart, of body, and of faith.

2519 The "pure in heart" are promised that they will see God face to face and be like him.³¹² Purity of heart is the precondition of the vision of God. Even now it enables us to see *according to* God, to accept others as "neighbors"; it lets us perceive the human body - ours and our neighbor's - as a temple of the Holy Spirit, a manifestation of divine beauty.

2520 Baptism confers on its recipient the grace of purification from all sins. But the baptized must continue to struggle against concupiscence of the flesh and disordered desires. With God's grace he will prevail.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do I usually encounter the events and persons in my daily life? Are they connected to God? Why or why not?
2. What is Jesus revealing to me? How can I perceive and respond to His merciful love?
3. As I contemplate Mary's surrender to God and His plans, how can she point the way to a deeper awareness and desire to live with purity of heart?

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.