

### 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:270, footnote 109: 2 Cor 6:18; cf. Mt 6:32; No. 271, footnote 110: St. Thomas Aquinas, STh 1, 25,5, ad 1.*

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

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S. C. Biela, *The Two Pillars* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2006).

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### September 24, 2023 ~ 25<sup>th</sup> 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** Is 55:6-9

**Responsorial Psalm** Ps 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18

**Reading II** Phil 1:20c-24, 27a

**Gospel** Mt 20:1-16a

#### 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

*“Are you envious because I am generous?  
Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last”. Mt 20:15*

. . . The truth. . . is important – the truth that from a human point of view, God is neither democratic or just. “Are you envious because I am generous?” (Mt 20:15). In this parable, those who came at the end of the day and worked for only one hour were also given a day’s wage. There is another important truth in this Gospel story – the truth that, although contrition leads to gratitude in the usual order of things, God, in His infinite mercy, can suspend this order. You may experience that only God’s touch gives birth to gratitude in you, and this gratitude will guide you to the first pillar of contrition.

Everything is grace. The entire bumpy path to God is grace. The gift of the two pillars is grace. Grace is your repeated discovery of the action of the One who loves you more than life. This action is quite surprising and astonishing.

The tendency to want to be autonomous and absolutely free is clearly visible in the prodigal son when he was leaving his father’s home (see Lk 15:11-13). He believed in himself and only in himself. Leaving the father’s home, the prodigal son appreciated his father to a certain extent because, after all, the father did divide the inheritance earlier than customary. But then the prodigal son wanted to manage on his own. He tried to be his own master. . .

“The prodigal son is man – every human being,” says John Paul II. The temptation to have faith in oneself appears as a constant endangerment to the faith of the prodigal son who, having built (in his own estimation) strong, yet illusory structures, is completely at peace with himself. This is a temptation of faith that lasts only until a certain stage of a person’s life; it lasts as long as the structure of illusions does not collapse and thereby disclose the real abyss of weakness and evil that exists in him. . .

“Man – every human being – is also this elder brother,” says John Paul II. The older brother was convinced that he served his father well and was faithful to him. He wanted to follow the path of fulfilling his duties well – of faithfully carrying out his father’s orders – to the end. However, he did not do everything in a spirit of filial love. He had in himself something of the spirit of a hired person. What he did served to gain him praise and merit, rather than to strengthen his filial ties with his father. This pharisaic construction had to collapse. The older son’s rebelliousness was clear evidence of how insincere his “faithfulness” to his father was. In the end, his “faithfulness” revealed all of its illusoriness. . .

The pharisaism evident in the attitude of the older brother is not only a historical event, but it is an attitude that will remain in us for a long time. We will have to struggle with this attitude for a long time because it will constantly reemerge just like human pride. As long as we do not allow Christ to live in us, both pharisaism and pride will constantly resurface. They reappear until we, who are following the Marian path, allow Mary to stand in her deep humility and become in us the way that opens us to God’s infinite mercy – she who is, according to the words of Christ’s servant Cardinal S. Wyszyński, the most direct action of God in us. If the spirit of pharisaism and fear of God’s justice continuously torment you, and if you are unyielding about wanting to mean something in God’s eyes and in your own, then do not forget that Our lady of Guadalupe wants to embrace you, such a sinner, just as you are.

S. C. Biela, *The Two Pillars*, pp.101-105

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

- 270** God is the *Father* Almighty, whose fatherhood and power shed light on one another: God reveals his fatherly omnipotence by the way he takes care of our needs; by the filial adoption that he gives us ("I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty");<sup>109</sup> finally by his infinite mercy, for he displays his power at its height by freely forgiving sins.
- 271** God's almighty power is in no way arbitrary: "In God, power, essence, will, intellect, wisdom, and justice are all identical. Nothing therefore can be in God's power which could not be in his just will or his wise intellect."<sup>110</sup>

## Questions for reflection

1. In my daily life, what experiences have led me to discover that God’s ways are not the same as my ways? How have I accepted or responded?
2. What is Jesus trying to tell me about God’s love in this Gospel and reflection?
3. When I contemplate Mary “in the crowd”, standing in deep humility and open to God’s action, how can I be embraced by Her, just as I am – a sinner?

## 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.*