

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 "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. 545, footnotes 258: Mk 2:17; cf. 1 Tim 1:15, 259: Lk 15:7; cf. 7:11-32, 260: Mt 26:28; No. 725, footnote 107: Cf. Lk. 2:14.

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

Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

October 1, 2023 ~ 26th 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 18:25-28
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14.
Reading II	Phil 2:1-11
Gospel	Mt 21:28-32

Opening or Closing Prayer

Dear Lord,

The world of temporality constantly pulls on my heart, although I want to seek only God's will for my life.

Thank you for giving me your Mother who teaches me, first of all, how to discover Your Love, and then how to trust in Pure Love.

Transform me with the power of the Eucharist, giving me your Divine Light to penetrate my heart and reveal its deepest truths.

Through Mary, give me hope and lead me to contrition. May my contrition give birth to gratitude for Your constant bestowals, given to me because You Love me just as I am ~ a sinner.

Let every act of gratitude multiply in my heart into new acts of gratitude as Blessed Mother carries me securely under Her mantle toward You, my Redeemer.

I beg for these graces through You, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2006

Spiritual Reflection

*Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you,
tax collectors and prostitutes
are entering the kingdom of God before you. Mt 21: 31*

In this last chapter, I would like to explain “the Theresian little way” because Thérèse of the Child Jesus proposes to us a holiness for the poor and the imperfect. This little way of the imperfect, this road of imperfection that opens the door of holiness to the weak and the poor, is first a consciousness that *God is mercy, par excellence*, to the point that he *descends* toward a soul that recognizes its misery and has confidence in him. Thérèse of the Child Jesus discovered mercy to the extent that God’s Love is a love that thrusts itself from the top to the bottom, that descends, that searches for the poor and the little one – *especially because he is little* – in order to fill him completely. Thérèse says that mercy is *for* the little one because *mercy is great* and *he is little*. Her way, her *little way*, is a call to holiness which opens to all the poor and little ones.

Thérèse thinks that it is a need of God to be able to *descend* as low as possible to transform the poor and the imperfect by the fire of his merciful Love. Thérèse then explains that Love must lower itself because the more Love descends, meaning the more it gives itself to the poor, the more it can shower down holiness. Love’s joy is complete when it can lower itself to nothingness in order to transform it into fire. If holiness consists in entering fully into this desire of the merciful God, it is actualized by a descent into our poverty – that “nothingness” (*nada*) spoken of by Saint John of the Cross – by the theological confidence which transforms into a receptive capacity. Little Thérèse thinks that mercy has such a need of giving freely that it is only satisfied when descending to the depths of misery. . .

Thérèse chose to side with the little ones and the poor and to *eat at the table of sinners*. Her way is the little way of “the imperfect” and the poor. Thus, she chose descent and imperfection. “Let us side humbly with the poor,” she said. Father Bernard Bro tells us to what extent this little way of the poor opens the door of holiness to the wounded:

To adopt this attitude toward oneself, which is to accept suffering without bitterness, to accept being crushed by incompetence, weariness, powerlessness, by sin itself perhaps, all this becomes the way toward poverty of heart that obtains everything from God. In one swoop, Thérèse jumps over many threats that had suffocated many centuries of Christianity . . . Before her, for many

generations of Christians, in order to become a hero, someone good, it was necessary to learn insensibility in the image of the stoic Greek and Roman philosophers. One needed to be “good” to approach God. Thérèse of the Child Jesus cries out to us in an opposite way – from darkness to confidence – her little way offered to all, which can become for all the way to find God. Thérèse shows us that, before her, holiness appeared to be reserved to privileged and distinguished souls – the great souls. This holiness is proposed to all: “Yes,” she said, “your anguish, your fears, your weakness, your temptations can become the way to God.” She opens the door of holiness to the poorest, the most destitute, the most ruined among us.

André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*, pp.120, 128

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 545** Jesus invites *sinners* to the table of the kingdom: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." ²⁵⁸ He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father's boundless mercy for them and the vast "joy in heaven over one sinner who repents". ²⁵⁹ The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life "for the forgiveness of sins". ²⁶⁰
- 725** Finally, through Mary, the Holy Spirit begins to bring men, the objects of God's merciful love, ¹⁰⁷ *into communion* with Christ. And the humble are always the first to accept him: shepherds, magi, Simeon and Anna, the bride and groom at Cana, and the first disciples.

Questions for Reflection

1. How has this reflection enlightened my understanding of God’s need to descend as low as possible to reach me in the depths of my sinfulness and the misery that comes with it?
2. How can accepting suffering without bitterness, or being crushed by incompetence, weariness, powerlessness, by sin itself, be the path of entering fully into the desire of the merciful God for my holiness?
3. In what ways can Mary be my help toward communion of life with Christ in God’s merciful love?

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.