

### 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: 1432, footnotes 25: Cf. Ezek 36: 26-27; 26: Lam 5:21; 27: Cf. Jn 19:37; Zech 12:10; No. 2097, footnote 14: Cf. Lk 1:46-49.*

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

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S. C. Biela, *The Two Pillars: Contrition and Gratitude* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2006). All rights reserved. – [www.inthearmsofmary.org](http://www.inthearmsofmary.org)

Families of Nazareth Movement – [www.familiesofnazareth.us](http://www.familiesofnazareth.us)

### October 8, 2023 ~ 27th 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

<b>Reading I</b>	Is 5:1-7
<b>Responsorial Psalm</b>	Ps 80:9, 12, 13-14, 15-16, 19-20
<b>Reading II</b>	Phil 4:6-9
<b>Gospel</b>	Mt 21:33-43

### Opening or Closing Prayer

**My Lord Jesus,**

**Thank you** for Your gift of the Eucharist in which You desire to meet with me, accept me, and love me just as I am.

**Forgive me** for constantly submerging myself in the world, seeking its innumerable temporal treasures, proving that You are not my one true treasure.

**O my Lord**, during Holy Mass, and during every moment of this day, I entrust to You all my affairs, fears, uncertainties and distractions, and I beg You to...

**Open my soul** to ever deeper contrition for wasting so many graces, and to gratefulness for Your constant bestowals.

**Help me** to have the attitude of a helpless child and a contrite sinner in need of Your Mercy.

**Heal me** of my spiritual leprosy.

**Help me** to discover You in the Eucharist and to desire You as my only true treasure – my only Love.

**Transform me** that I may decrease and You may increase.

**Unite me** to You, my Eucharistic Savior.

**May our Blessed Mother** await and receive in me and through me Your kenosis – Eucharist – and may she always be grateful within me for Your Sacrament of Love.

**I ask this through Christ our Lord** who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

*Families of Nazareth USA  
Summer retreat 2008*

## Spiritual Reflection

*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;  
by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes.*” Mt 21: 42

God who knocks is the light of Christ, His grace, which gradually penetrates, purifies, and transforms Man. It is also the divine fire that St. John of the Cross mentions in his writings. This fire encounters spheres of evil in man, and it summons the soul to cooperate with grace, to make acts of contrition, and to be grateful for the blessed light. If your contrition and gratitude – the two pillars of interior life – are superficial and exterior contrition and gratitude, then do not deceive yourself with regard to your interior life. If your interior life lacks depth, then it is a sign that it is only beginning. Because of your resistance to grace, there is never enough light to understand the dimensions of the evil in you, to perceive the depth of your hypocrisy, to notice the deceptiveness of your ideas and aspirations. It is very necessary for you to discover the Only Love in order to understand what it means to wound Him! . .

Contrition and gratitude make up a long path that must lead you to the point where you can see, in the light of God’s grace, the entire truth about who you are before God. When the force of this truth hits you over the head like a sledgehammer, you will come to know what it really means to be contrite. Thanks to contrition, the divine fire will then evoke in you a distrust of yourself, a reserve in relation to your own initiatives, uncertainty, and a type of fear and hesitation to intervene in exterior matters unless you are impelled to do so by evident duty.

Gratitude is a path to God. So, too is contrition. They make up the two pillars of interior life. Not everyone sets foot on this path. So many of our pretensions, so much of our faith in ourselves – the attribution of God’s gifts to ourselves and concentration on ourselves – must collapse! How much we must believe in Love in order to want to discover His unceasing gift, which is poured out upon us . . . How much deeper humility and contrition must be born in us through numerous trials, failures, and disappointments in order for us to allow ourselves to be healed of the leprosy of misery. . .

Normally it is easier to come and beseech God than to return to thank Him like the leprous Samaritan (see Lk 17:11-19). It is not easy to ask; but it is even more difficult to show gratitude. The capital of divine humiliations must be great in order for us to notice the need to be grateful for every, even the smallest but always priceless, gift. When we delude ourselves by thinking that we are better than we really are, we do not notice divine gifts and we do not thank God for them. Proudful self-assurance and the conviction (perhaps unconscious) that we deserve everything that we receive and what we receive is definitely far too little,

grow in us instead of gratitude. Only when we see that we are like beggars in rags whom God desires to redeem in His mercy, will we know that we deserve nothing. And only then will we receive every crumb of mercy as an undeserved grace.

Think about how contrition and gratitude are your path to holiness. Think about how contrition and gratitude are the two very important pillars of interior life. But are you capable of living by them? The prophet Isaiah exposes the truth that all of your “deeds are like polluted rags” (Is 64:5). You are incapable of being contrite on your own. You will never master being grateful by your own strength. There is only one thing left for you to do: implore Jesus to live in you and act in you...for everything. A deep concern that others not attribute to you any kind of good or merit that is due to God will push you to constantly plead for gratitude for the gift.

S. C. Biela, *The Two Pillars*, pp.93-96

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

- 1432** The human heart is heavy and hardened. God must give man a new heart.<sup>25</sup> Conversion is first of all a work of the grace of God who makes our hearts return to him: "Restore us to thyself, O LORD, that we may be restored!"<sup>26</sup> God gives us the strength to begin anew. It is in discovering the greatness of God's love that our heart is shaken by the horror and weight of sin and begins to fear offending God by sin and being separated from him. The human heart is converted by looking upon him whom our sins have pierced.<sup>27</sup>
- 2097** To adore God is to acknowledge, in respect and absolute submission, the "nothingness of the creature" who would not exist but for God. To adore God is to praise and exalt him and to humble oneself, as Mary did in the Magnificat, confessing with gratitude that he has done great things and holy is his name.<sup>14</sup> The worship of the one God sets man free from turning in on himself, from the slavery of sin and the idolatry of the world.

## Questions for reflection

1. In my daily life, what do I consider to be “my own” or “my doing” as opposed to what has been given to me?
2. In my spiritual life, how can I recognize the width of my contrition and the depth of my gratitude? How is God present in my discoveries?
3. In her Magnificat, Mary, a little more than a child, proclaimed the greatness of the Lord. How can she guide me to a deeper understanding of her gratitude and the desire to praise God in all things??

## 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.*