

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. 544, footnotes 253 Lk 4:18; cf. 7:22, 254 Mt 5:3, 255 Cf. Mt 11:25, 256 Cf. Mt 21:18; Mk 2:23-26; Jn 4:6-7; 19:28; Lk 9:58, 257 Cf. Mt 25:31-46.; No. 588, footnotes 364 Cf. Lk 5:30; 7:36; 11:37; 14:1, 365 Lk 18:9; 5:32; cf. Jn 7:49; 9:34, 366 Cf. Jn 8:33-36; 9:40-41.

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 15, 2023 ~ 28th 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 25:6-10
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6
Reading II	Phil 4:12-14, 19-20
Gospel	Mt 22:1-14

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

*My friend, how is it that you came in here
without a wedding garment? Mt 22: 14*

Is holiness reserved for the virtuous and the perfect? Can the poor, the injured of all kinds – the sinners with their wounds and through their falls – honestly aspire to holiness?

If the word of Jesus – “the good news is announced to the poor” – is true, then holiness must be offered and be accessible to the most wounded and destitute. One must never confuse holiness with moral perfection realized through human virtues. Any person, poor or wounded, even marginal psychologically or morally, can aspire to holiness starting with his real situation.

In his beautiful book, *La nuit comme le jour illumine*, Wilfrid Stinissen explains poverty of heart as a privileged way toward holiness:

Poverty of heart is not always very “beautiful;” it is not necessarily the fruit of ascetic virtues. It can be a physical or psychological handicap. But what renders a person incompetent in the eyes of the “world” is precisely that which can give a person access to the reign of God. If we say “yes” to God, we choose the narrow path that brings us to the reign of God. Our poverty then becomes “blessed,” and we become humble servants or servants of the Lord through whom he can do great things. One thing is central to the Gospel: God became man to save the poor. Poverty and weakness are never an obstacle. He did not come for those who are well but for those who are ill. When we are ready to not repress our poverty and anxiety, but to welcome it freely, Jesus can become what His name signifies: the One who saves.

One must not forget that the most neurotic of persons could, through his poverty and suffering, be closer to God than a person with the best equilibrium. All of this turns our human wisdom upside down. From the poor fishermen of Galilee, full of faults, to the Cure of Ars, the sublime wounded child haunted by despair, by what strange miracle could this multitude of saints attain the supreme degree of Christian maturity: *holiness*?. ..

Jesus’ disciple is not called to virtue but to holiness, and holiness is not the search for human perfection, concentrated on our efforts or generosity. This is why the spiritual Masters “consider the search for perfection for itself a demonic narcissism” and do not cease to denounce it as a religious trap.

In the Gospel, doesn’t Jesus say that the last will come first? And doesn’t he summon the most miserable and wounded to sit in the wedding banquet hall?. . .

In the *Magnificat*, the Virgin Mary says that God has cast down from their thrones those who have placed themselves on the pedestal of their false virtue, those who have thought themselves to be mighty and able to do great things by themselves. And what did he do? He went to look for the little ones – the lowly, the humble, the poor, the wounded – and he exalted them.

André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*, pp. 3-5

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

544 The kingdom belongs to *the poor and lowly*, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor";²⁵³ he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."²⁵⁴ To them - the "little ones" the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned.²⁵⁵ Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation.²⁵⁶ Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom.²⁵⁷

588 Jesus scandalized the Pharisees by eating with tax collectors and sinners as familiarly as with themselves.³⁶⁴ Against those among them "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others", Jesus affirmed: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."³⁶⁵ He went further by proclaiming before the Pharisees that, since sin is universal, those who pretend not to need salvation are blind to themselves.³⁶⁶

Questions for Reflection

1. What wounds or poverty have opened my soul to spiritual life?
2. What are the natural virtues that I still rely on or have confidence in? How does God show me His light in these discoveries?
3. In what way has Our Blessed Mother led me to be open to God’s mercy?

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.