

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. 1823, footnotes 96:** Cf. *Jn* 13:34, **97** *Jn* 13:1, **98:** *Jn* 15:9, 12; **No. 1825, footnotes 100:** *Rom* 5:10; **101:** Cf. *Mt* 5:44; *Lk* 10:27-37; *Mk* 9:37; *Mt* 25:40, 45; **No. 2444, footnotes 235:** *CA* 57; cf. *Lk* 6:20-22, *Mt* 8:20; *Mk* 12:41-44; **236:** *Eph* 4:28; **237:** Cf. *CA* 57. www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism

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October 29, 2023 ~ Thirtieth 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	Ex 22:20-26
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51
Reading II	1 Thes 1:5c-10
Gospel	Mt 22:34-40

Opening or Closing Prayer

Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life in the depths of your humble faith –

as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own "yes" to the urgent call,
as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

**Obtain for us now a new ardor
born of the resurrection,**
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life
which triumphs over death.

Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,
that the gift of unfading beauty
may reach every man and woman.

Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,
pray for us.
Amen.

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 288 [Abridged]
Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2014

Spiritual Reflection

*"You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul,
and with all your mind...
You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Mt 22:37, 39*

Based on "forgetfulness of self," certain commitments and sacrifices can result in surprising catastrophes. Fear of living can sometimes hide behind a rejection of the world. Jesus Christ said:

"Love your neighbor **as** yourself." Let us note that he never said: "Love your neighbor instead of yourself." This is very different.

The long journey toward serenity, and human and Christian maturity, starts primarily with the acceptance of our basic humanity, of this "earthly" being that we all are, and by the rejection of that persona that we have fabricated a little at a time to protect the wound in our heart of a child. "I am not like the rest of humanity," said the Pharisee of the Gospel. "You will be like gods," said the serpent of Genesis. As mentioned by Claude Dagens, in *Eloges de notre faiblesse [Praise for Our Weakness]*: "Holiness begins where the obsession of perfection ends – the simple discovery that we are weak human beings in need of love and assistance. True joy does not consist in striving toward super-human perfection but, to the contrary, in accepting the limitations of one's humanity. One who dreams of perfection, without succeeding, is inevitably hard on himself and, consequently, hard on others."

The beginning of a real human and Christian spirituality is our acceptance of being flesh and blood – incarnate – the acceptance of reality and our own limitations. We cannot give ourselves to others if we have not found and accepted ourselves in our wounded humanity. . .

I like meeting people who accept themselves; I am not speaking about vain persons, but those who are reconciled with their limits and their fragility. Their life is not always easy; they are sometimes judged to be naïve; they know their sufferings and their failures. Those who have accepted themselves are conscious of their errors; they acknowledge them without blaming others; they admit them without resentment and even with a certain sense of humor. These people know how to love their neighbor because they know how to love themselves; they are capable of mercy, the kind that liberates and invites to go beyond. They are people of goodness who accept themselves as imperfect. . .

Accepting ourselves is a long journey. One must first accept this part of our *shadow*, this desire for power that Jung speaks of, this hidden violence, this aggressiveness repressed beneath gentleness, this jealousy that cannot be admitted

for fear of having to face it. Accepting ourselves with our poverty, accepting our character defects, accepting to lose face, accepting to be fragile and sinful, is never easy. Accepting reality as it is, without falling into passivity, discouragement, or revolt, is often the first act of humility that leads us on the journey toward serenity.

The second act of humility that brings us reconciliation with ourselves, together with some wisdom, is a sense of humor which is to not take ourselves too seriously.

Thérèse of the Child Jesus was filled with humor toward herself and even knew how to make fun of her faults. Would this not be the beginning of humility? Have we noticed how the proud take themselves so seriously?

André Daigneault, *The Long Journey toward Serenity*, pp. 24; 50,53

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1823 Jesus makes charity the *new commandment*.⁹⁶ By loving his own "to the end,"⁹⁷ he makes manifest the Father's love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." And again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."⁹⁸

1825 Christ died out of love for us, while we were still "enemies."¹⁰⁰ The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our *enemies*, to make ourselves the neighbor of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself.¹⁰¹

2444 "The Church's love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition." This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor.²³⁵ Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to "be able to give to those in need."²³⁶ It extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty.²³⁷

Questions for Reflection

1. In my daily life, what are signs of my love for God and others? What encourages or hinders me from a full life of Love?
2. What does it mean for me that, in order to love others, I need to descend into humility, accepting my weakness and loving myself as God does?
3. The Almighty has done great things for Mary. How can she teach and guide me to be more self-emptied, yet self-respectful, so that Jesus can live and love others in me?

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.