

### 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. 273, footnotes 113:** Cf. 2 Cor 12:9; Phil 4:13; **114:** Lk 1:37, 49; **No. 277, No. 537, footnote 238:** Rom 6:4.

[www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism](http://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). - [www.inthearmsofmary.org](http://www.inthearmsofmary.org) All rights reserved.

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### November 5, 2023 ~ Thirty-First 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** Mal 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10

**Responsorial Psalm** Ps 131:1, 2, 3

**Reading II** 1 Thes 2:7b-9, 13

**Gospel** Mt 23:1-12

### Opening or Closing Prayer

**Dearest Father**, Your Son tells us, "Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." I long to be Your smallest child. Help me to rediscover You as the One Who delights in me, Who calls me as His own.

**My Jesus**, You say to us, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." You are the way to heaven. Thank You for saving me and giving me Yourself in the Holy Eucharist. Reactivate the call of my Baptism to serve the Church in childlike humility, "boasting only in God."

**Holy Spirit**, reveal to me my weaknesses that I may seek Jesus' strength. Reveal to me my nothingness, that I may await all things from Him. Convince me of Jesus' words, "What is impossible for human beings is possible for God."

**Blessed Mother**, I entrust my prideful doubt, fear, discouragement and ingratitude to your intercession so that I will believe, as God's beloved child and yours, "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

**We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord** who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen

*Families of Nazareth USA*  
*Summer retreat 2010*

## Spiritual Reflection

*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled;  
But whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Mt 23:12*

Since the Pharisee always wants to climb the ladder of his idealized image, one can say that he suffers from “performance syndrome.” All his spirituality is centered on his virtues, his works, and his performance. He wants to climb the ladder by displaying his works and his virtues.

If he had accepted to lower himself, he would have found salvation, but he always wanted to climb higher through his false greatness.

One can also sense that, for the Pharisee, others’ opinions – what people think of him – has much importance. “All their works are performed to be seen,” Jesus says in the Gospel (Mt. 23:5).

The Pharisee is very preoccupied by *his image* and he even uses prayer in order to improve it. On this point, Jesus says: “When you pray, do not be like hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them” (Mt 6:5)...

Exteriorly, from the top of the ladder of his works, the Pharisee seems perfect, powerful, and sure of himself. When he is alone, however, without his admirers to worship him, he is always afraid of making a mistake, and feels weak, anxious, inferior, and powerless. I would say that the Pharisee’s wound is that he searches for greatness and power to compensate for his lack of trust in God, and it is his insecurity that always brings him to pursue the first place beside influential and powerful people...

The greatest obstacle to holiness is spiritual pride and a certain pharisaism. Some people never want to recognize the least weakness in themselves. Exteriorly, the life of these persons may seem very generous because they work hard and make great efforts, but they are always inflexible. There is something strained in them. They lack flexibility and compassion. If they do not lower themselves, one day they may find themselves on the edge of hardness and spiritual blindness. One must accept, even in the eyes of others, being exposed as weak and wounded creatures and, at the same time, handed over to God’s mercy. One must *descend*, not ascend.

It is always at *the bottom*, in the depths of our weaknesses, that God awaits us. This is why the disciple who wants to follow Jesus must himself descend and accept his weakness. God’s power cannot act in us as long as we oppose our weakness or deny it.

Often we rely on our own energy and our willful temperament, and we try to climb the ladder of perfection starting with our generosity; this can last a certain amount of time, but it is not the path of evangelical holiness. We need to lower ourselves and descend into our poverty so that God’s power may be deployed in our weakness.

André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*, pp 20-23

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

- 273** Only faith can embrace the mysterious ways of God's almighty power. This faith glories in its weaknesses in order to draw to itself Christ's power.<sup>113</sup> The Virgin Mary is the supreme model of this faith, for she believed that "nothing will be impossible with God", and was able to magnify the Lord: "For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."<sup>114</sup>
- 277** God shows forth his almighty power by converting us from our sins and restoring us to his friendship by grace. "God, you show your almighty power above all in your mercy and forgiveness. . ." (*Roman Missal*, 26th Sunday, Opening Prayer).
- 537** Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus, who in his own baptism anticipates his death and resurrection. The Christian must enter into this mystery of humble self-abasement and repentance, go down into the water with Jesus in order to rise with him, be reborn of water and the Spirit so as to become the Father's beloved son in the Son and "walk in newness of life":<sup>238</sup>

## Questions for Reflection

1. In this reflection, what most clearly reveals what is Jesus trying to tell me?
2. In what ways do I experience Jesus’ love in my daily experiences of fragility, imperfection and weakness?
3. What do I want to ask Mary, Virgin and Mother, in response to this reflection?

## 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.*