

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. 1014, footnotes 588: Roman Missal, Litany of the Saints; 589: The Imitation of Christ, 1, 23, 1; 590: St. Francis of Assisi, Canticum of the Creatures; No. 1019. www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism
New American Bible © USCCB. All rights reserved. <https://bible.usccb.org/readings>
S.C. Biela, *Behold I Stand at the Door and Knock* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2005). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org
Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

December 3, 2023 ~ First Sunday of Advent ~ Year B 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 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
Reading II	1 Cor 1:3-9
Gospel	Mk 13:33-37

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

"Be watchful! Be alert!

You do not know when the time will come." Mk 13:33

Why are you still alive?

The realization that you are a dead sea of pride should increase your inner awareness and the conviction that you waste more and more of God's graces. In order to prevent you from wasting His gifts, God can take your very life away from you. Should the One Who loves you idly stand by and watch as you constantly trample upon all of the graces that He gives you? God knows that it would be better if He took your life at the most advantageous moment for your soul rather than allowing you to choose a prolonged stay in purgatory. If you want to live in truth, then you should live with the awareness that you may die at any moment. The fact that you are still alive is an expression of God's mercy, but if you died, that too would be a sign of His mercy.

Life in the face of death should be accompanied not only by the fear that you can die as a result of natural causes, but above all else, life in the face of death should be permeated with the consciousness that your death can occur at any moment because God takes into consideration the state of your soul. After all, whether you die now or die later depends totally on God. Any effort on your part to preserve your life, either by living cautiously or taking the best medicine, is futile if God decides, in His mercy, that it is better for your soul if your body is dead.

The moment of your death depends primarily on your soul's disposition. If you are wasting more and more graces, then God, in order to preserve you from wasting more graces, can take away your life.

Under these conditions, what can you do so as not to become discouraged? You have to trust that God is infinitely merciful. Without ceasing to consider that you deserve to die like the Good Thief, do not become discouraged. God desires that, while practicing active renunciations, you await His intervention in your life. If you are still alive, then it means that God has plans for you and awaits your conversion with hope. He awaits your greater perseverance to strike the massive fortress of your pride with the pickaxe of active renunciations. He desires that you will hand yourself over to Him in every aspect of your life and await everything from His merciful love. . .

A person who sees his resistance to God's action more clearly, especially when God's grace discloses the profound discrepancy between the actual state of his soul and the Lord's expectations, while simultaneously recognizing the

richness of grace that God offers him, may conclude that he is regressing in his spiritual life. Even if a person thought that he was entering a more advanced phase of his interior life in the past, when he sees how he wastes the river of graces that God offers him now, the only thing that he can do is to fully trust in God's infinite mercy.

S. C. Biela, *Behold, I Stand at the Door and Knock*, pp. 45-46

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1014 The Church encourages us to prepare ourselves for the hour of our death. In the ancient litany of the saints, for instance, she has us pray: "From a sudden and unforeseen death, deliver us, O Lord";⁵⁸⁸ to ask the Mother of God to intercede for us "at the hour of our death" in the *Hail Mary*; and to entrust ourselves to St. Joseph, the patron of a happy death.

Every action of yours, every thought, should be those of one who expects to die before the day is out. Death would have no great terrors for you if you had a quiet conscience. . . . Then why not keep clear of sin instead of running away from death? If you aren't fit to face death today, it's very unlikely you will be tomorrow. . . .⁵⁸⁹

Praised are you, my Lord, for our sister bodily Death,
from whom no living man can escape.

Woe on those who will die in mortal sin!

Blessed are they who will be found

in your most holy will,

for the second death will not harm them.⁵⁹⁰

1019 Jesus, the Son of God, freely suffered death for us in complete and free submission to the will of God, his Father. By his death he has conquered death, and so opened the possibility of salvation to all men.

Questions for Reflection

1. In my daily life, what does it mean for me to live my life alert and aware that I may die at any moment?
2. What encourages or hinders me in accepting all of God's gifts and graces? How do I perceive God's love in what I experience?
3. The Almighty has done great things for Mary. What do I desire to ask Blessed 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.